The Great Tradition of Texts: How to Break the Mould? A Study of English Education in Australia & England

Melissa Reshma Jogie

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"Literature is where I go to explore the highest and lowest places inhuman society and in the human spirit, where I hope to find not an absolute truth but the truth of a tale, of the imagination and of the heart"

- Salman Rushdie

(Interview, *London Observer*, 19 February 1989)

Declaration

I, Melissa Reshma Jogie, certify that this thesis is my own original work. It contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made. It has not been submitted for any other degree.

Signed: Melissa R. Jogie

Melissa R. Jogie
College of Arts and Social Sciences
Australian National University

Date: January 19th 2017

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Abstract

In both Australia and England, English is the common subject for all students. This fact presents particular challenges to curriculum developers. For example, it is a vexed question considering how to select texts that will be of relevance and interest to students from the culturally diverse backgrounds now resident in both countries. Presently, secondary English curricula in Australia and England determine that senior students will read and interpret meanings in texts while learning about different cultural groups in society. This research explores the current challenges inherent in the selection and teaching of prescribed English texts to contemporary students.

Four areas of English education are explored; curriculum, prescribed texts, pedagogical methods and students' responses to the selection and teaching of English texts in secondary classrooms to contemporary students from diverse cultural backgrounds. This research hypothesises that a postcolonial theoretical approach might be beneficial when selecting and teaching English texts, as it has the potential to accommodate broader interpretations and perceptions of culture in both traditional and newer texts, and to facilitate discussions of cultural issues such as ethnicity, social class and gender.

The sample includes both academically high- and lower-performing schools in England and Australia. Students' responses to the English texts they are required to study at schools are collected and analysed to discern the extent to which they find these texts appealing or useful when making comparisons of cultural issues in texts to those in current society. To understand the processes of facilitating both curriculum and texts by educators in schools, I probe the main pedagogical issues encountered by teachers when mediating topics raised by these texts to engage students in conversations about cultural differences.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the extant lists of prescribed texts in both curricula are dated and infrequently revised, albeit not necessarily to incorporate new or culturally diverse texts. In essence, this research compares the process and rationale used by two examination boards (Board of Studies, New South Wales and the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance) in matching learning aims with English texts; it maps existing patterns for repeating texts on reading lists.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Context of Research

In 2001 on the tropical shores in the Caribbean, more specifically Trinidad and Tobago, I was preparing to sit my final secondary English examination, formally known as Cambridge A-Level English Literature.[1] One of the prescribed texts listed was Achebe's *'Things Fall Apart,* where we focused on the protagonist, a brave male Nigerian warrior named Okonkwo.[2] Through his story, we discussed themes of cultural traditions, identity, pride and shame, all culminating in the rise of colonialism and Okonkwo's suicide. As students, we were not encouraged to discuss how our West Indian history, particularly indentureship and slavery, were related to any of the themes in the text. Rather the text was studied as an object to understand but not to relate to.[3] There we were living on a post-colonial[4] island, using a British curriculum to study a text discussing the rise of colonisation, and the destructive impacts of this on fictional tribal societies in Nigeria. At that time, I did not appreciate the irony of the situation; in order to pass our exams, we had to be good at retelling the tribulations of colonialism on other countries, but we were not encouraged to reflect on our own situation of also being post-colonial. Many years later this led me to question—how *are* English literary texts selected and

[1] From 1972 to 2006 General Certificate of Education (GCE) A-Level Curriculum was administered in all English-speaking Caribbean Islands. In 2006 the A-Level program was replaced by the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE). Based on information from the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization International Bureau of Education (2010/2011). World Data on Education.

[2] Achebe, C. (1959). Things Fall Apart. New York, Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.

[3] East Indian migrants from India were brought to Trinidad in 1854 to 1917 as indentured labourers. In Trinidad Slave registers started in 1812 and records were kept until 1834. Slaves were mostly brought from Africa to work on the plantations. Information from Williams, E. (1984). From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean, 1492-1969. London, Vintage Books.

[4] In this thesis, the spelling of *'post-colonial'* is to represent the time after colonisation, which is different to *'postcolonial'* which refers to postcolonial theoretical scholarship.

taught to culturally diverse students in secondary schools?

Immediately after my A-Levels, much to my relief things *didn't* fall apart, so at university, I revisited this novel accompanied by critical resources. I realised there were different perspectives on this text, ones that we were not actively encouraged to explore at school. As a secondary student, I believed this text to be a literary representation of another culture, in that it held some honest significance to the people of Nigeria. After all, this book was written by a Nigerian and must have spoken to the world of Nigerian cultures and colonial experiences. However, at university I found that Achebe's novel was more than a fictional story about Nigerian cultures; he can be seen as "writing in language borrowed, out of turn and out of time" (40)[5] to communicate the experiences of one culture by using the language of another. Through this perspective, his novel encapsulates a story for Western audiences, which perhaps does not translate into an accurate representation of the people from his country.[6] As Marx explains,

> We treat Achebe's book as a documentation of Igbo politics and culture, we empower its writer to represent local life and imagine a readership that deems fiction an appropriate venue for such representation. Invariably, this procedure begs the question of who is authorized to write and who is the privileged reader for such a text (84).[7]

These perspectives encouraged me to question the voice of the author, his authority for the culture on whose behalf he spoke and the audience receiving the text. Since then I have considered why, at secondary school, we did not actively engage Achebe's text to draw parallels to our experiences growing up in a post-colonial nation. Was it not an objective of the A-Level curriculum?

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[5] Eze, E. C. (2008). "Language and Time in Postcolonial Experience." Research in African Literatures **39**(1): 24-47.

[6] In this thesis 'Western' defines developed societies with a philosophy, language and culture derived from colonial empires (colonisers). This definition is based on Edward Said's description of East and West; "The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies …the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience." (See Said, E. W. (1979). Orientalism. New York, Random House Inc.

[7] Marx, J. (2004). Postcolonial Literature and the Western Literary Canon. The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies. N. Lazarus. United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press**:** 83-96.

Did our teachers choose not to discuss such issues? Alternatively, might it not have been important to broaden our discussions of cultural differences in society through texts? To borrow from Moran *et al.*, the term *'cultural differences'* is defined as variances in human behaviour in terms of the "means of adapting to circumstances and transmitting this coping skill and knowledge to subsequent generations. Culture [itself] gives people a sense of who they are, of belonging, of how they should behave, and of what they should be doing" (11).[8]

As an educator, I reflect upon the fact that the capacity for student engagement with texts was somewhat limited during my secondary schooling. While foreign texts were introduced, they were approached as some *'other'* distant story that shared few or no similarities to West Indian cultural identity. As well, secondary pedagogical practices in the Caribbean seemed to abide strictly by the curriculum and rarely ventured beyond discussions deemed necessary to pass examinations. The A-Levels were renowned for their difficult marking scheme, so we were warned that our written performance, unlike our spoken dialect,[9] had to be exceptional to pass. My teachers used somewhat archaic methods, such as encouraging us to read the novel ten times, rote learn quotations, and practise writing model essays in preparation for our examinations.

It must be noted though that, while this is a personal example, it is neither a targeted nor blanket reflection on, or criticism of, current practices at secondary schools in the Caribbean or elsewhere. It is interesting, 15 years later, that the narrative of my English secondary education—the texts studied and methods of learning—resonates with the practices of many current English teachers. One can ponder the question as to whether the resources and methods of teaching English literature have changed to accommodate more

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[8] Moran, R. T., N. R. Abramson and S. V. Moran (2014). Managing Cultural Differences, Routledge.

[9] Carsten Levisen and M. R. Jogie (2015). "The Trinidadian Theory of Mind: Personhood and Postcolonial Semantics." International Journal of Language and Culture. This publication refers to the differences in the spoken *('Trini'* creole) and written (Standard English) used in Trinidad.

effectively the needs of diverse students at contemporary secondary schools?

1.2 The Potential of 'Readings'

This personal narrative captures discrepancies between my understanding and analysis of Achebe's text at secondary school compared to university, which was a text that was selected for teaching at both types of institutions. Even though I had read his novel more than ten times at secondary school, I could extract more meanings and perspectives from a single reading of the book at university. I revisited Achebe's text in the first year of my undergraduate programme, which commenced immediately after school (within the same year). It seems unlikely that I had evolved into a more mature reader in the space of a few months. The only striking difference was the encouragement given at university to read and widely consider perspectives, interpretations and meanings within the text. However, some scholars, like Thompson, Hastie and Sharplin, argue that often, at secondary school, interpretations and values extracted from texts seem pre-determined by both the curriculum and teachers.[10] This led me to question the rationale for the design and aims of a secondary English curriculum. What are students expected to learn through a contemporary English curriculum? Are students actively encouraged to discuss and reflect on issues of cultural difference?
Until I started my teacher training, I was not aware of the fact that, in many countries, the literary texts used for secondary English studies are typically

[10] For a list of their publications including the works of other scholars with similar claims, refer to: Friese, E., D. Alvermann, A. Parkes and A. Rezak (2008). "Selecting Texts for English Language Arts Classrooms: When Assessment is Not Enough." English Teaching: Practice and Critique **7**(3): 74, Holloway, S. M. and C. J. Greig (2011). "Literacy Text Selections in Secondary School Classrooms: Exploring the Practices of English Teachers as Agents of Change." Brock Education **20**(2): 1, Hastie, M. and E. Sharplin (2012). "Why Did you Choose that Text?: Influences on English teachers' Choices of Reading Materials for Students." English in Australia **47**(2): 36-44, Thomas, P. L. (2012). "Adventures with Text and Beyond." English Journal **101**(4): 90, Smith, E. R., B. A. Bowen and F. A. Dohm (2014). "Contradictory and Missing Voices in English Education: An Invitation to English Faculty." English Education **46**(2): 117, Thompson, K. H. (2014). "Beyond the Stacks: Why High School English Teachers Should be Talking about Books." English Journal **103**(6): 38.

listed on the curriculum for decades.[11] As a reader, annually I encounter a spate of recently published, prize-winning literature that often recounts stimulating stories about contentious cultural issues in current society, such as Hosseini's novel *'The Kite Runner'*, [12] which discusses issues of class, friendship and Islamic identity in the backdrop of contemporary Afghanistan. I found this text effective for engaging young readers in discussions about cultural differences, particularly polemical views of modern Islamic identity in present society. However, as an English teacher, I was restricted by the curriculum and only able to work within the boundaries of the prescribed texts listed for study.

It is pertinent to note that publications by Greenbaum, Rudnick and Davies, to name a few, debate the selection and teaching of English texts, particularly stressing the repetition of well-known or canonical texts in English classrooms.[13] Overall their research questions the effectiveness of some canonical texts on school curricula, mainly questioning why certain texts are repeated on school lists and, investigating the challenges of teaching canonical texts to contemporary students.[14] Despite the relocation of people from different parts of the world, particularly to developed countries, the resources have remained the same on school reading lists for decades while the curriculum is revised once every four or five years. This led me to enquire, in a time of proliferating globalisation, what considerations are made when

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[11] In 2012, when I commenced this PhD the text *'Things Fall Apart'* was still listed for wider reading in the United Kingdom Cambridge International Examinations. (2015). "Cambridge Advanced." Retrieved August 6, 2015, from http://www.cie.org.uk/programmes-and-qualifications/cambridge-advanced., which I studied sixteen years ago at secondary school.

[12] Hosseini, K. (2003). The Kite Runner. New York, Riverhead Books.

[13] Greenbaum, V. (1994). "Expanding the Canon: Shaping Inclusive Reading Lists." The English Journal **83**(8): 36-39, Benton, M. (2000). "Canons Ancient and Modern: The Texts we Teach." Educational Review **52**(3): 269, Rudnick, L. (2000). "And (Most of) the Dead White Men Are Awful: Reflections on Canon Reformation." The Radical Teacher(59): 36-40, Holloway, S. M. and C. J. Greig (2011). "Literacy Text Selections in Secondary School Classrooms: Exploring the Practices of English Teachers as Agents of Change." Brock Education **20**(2): 1, Davies, L. M., B. Doecke and P. Mead (2013). "Reading the Local and Global: Teaching Literature in Secondary Schools in Australia." Changing English **20**(3): 224, Yiannakis, J. (2014). "A Possible Literary Canon in Upper School English Literature in various Australian States, 1945-2005." Issues in Educational Research **24**(1): 98-113.

[14] For detailed discussion of these and other publications please refer to Chapter 2 – Literature Review, on pg.,, 19.

selecting texts for current learners? How do curriculum bodies determine that the selection of prescribed texts is optimal for achieving the aims of the curriculum and engaging for both teachers and students? Moreover, what might be the rationale for repeating some texts—for decades—on school reading lists?

As indicated, research into English text selection practices in different countries shows that the repetition of well-known or Western canonical texts on school reading lists is endemic. Additionally, the diversity of students changes and expands per school term. Therefore, given that curriculum prescribes the same texts over an extended period, how do teachers vary their methods to target the learning needs of diverse students? What teaching methods are employed to engage contemporary learners to study more traditional or well-known texts? How are texts presented so that students can personally relate to, or identify with, cultural issues in texts? Are these texts considered useful to help students discuss present-day issues related to cultural differences in society?

1.3 Secondary English Education

While an English curriculum can be examined at different tiers of education (primary, secondary, tertiary), the final years of secondary education have been targeted for study in this research because it is the culmination of compulsory education for many secondary students. Given that the senior level is perhaps the last phase at which many students critically engage with English literary texts (in a formal setting), it is important to understand the current issues arising from teaching English at this stage. In secondary schools, in developed countries, curricula are used by educators to create and challenge teaching practices, which determine how learning objectives are achieved in classrooms.

In its broadest sense a system is defined as "a collection of elements or actors each of which has its own objectives and a collection of loops connecting elements/actors" (11).[15] This definition supports that of a basic education system, which acts as an "educational enterprise [that] presumably cultivates beliefs, skills and feelings in order to transmit and explicate its sponsoring culture's ways of interpreting the natural and social worlds" (15).[16] According to Pritchett the construction of a basic education system is comprised of several essential components, which can be representative of "relationships of *accountability* (politics, compact, management, and client power) each with four design elements (delegation, finance, information and motivation)" (17).[17] While Pritchett's model is quite generic, it is well accepted, having been inspired from Moore's "strategic triangle",[18] in organisational theory. Pritchett's model highlights four forces or sites of pressure (delegation, finance, information, motivation) that intersect across these relationships of accountability and serve to problematise the system.

A model is a convenient representation of reality that helps to narrow focus on key aspects of a system. Pritchett's model is broad in concept and seeks to formulate *interpretations* of the key actors in the system, as well as articulate at some level, the nature of the relationships (as actions) which are *allowed* by these actors. Other researchers focus on alternative models of education, depending on their choice of framework and epistemological allegiances. For example, Yates and Grumet, Pinar and Winter place more emphasis on identifiable education structure with curriculum at the core; whereby it is shaped against the larger themes of globalisation, national

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[15] Pritchett, L. (Working Paper, 2015). Creating Education Systems Coherant for Learning Outcomes. Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) Working Papers. England, The University of Oxford.

[16] Bruner, J. S. (1996). The Culture of Education. United States, Harvard University Press.

[17] Pritchett, L. (Working Paper, 2015). Creating Education Systems Coherant for Learning Outcomes. Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) Working Papers. England, The University of Oxford.

[18] Moore, M. H. (1995). Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.

interests and social knowledge for Yates, but adapted as the nucleus of a 'factory' model for Pinar.[19] Meanwhile, scholars like Doll, Ball, Cullen and Hill present more emphasis on the processes underlying the education system, rather than the structural positioning of the actors. Ball situates the dominant flow of discourse from national policy as effectual for the constant evolution of the education system; Cullen and Hill argue for epistemological framings which can navigate the evident feedback loops to and from curriculum to other actors; while Doll ventures into complexity theory to focus on the temporal dynamics of internal struggles and rebalancing of relationships.[20] For this research, Pritchett's model serves as an adequate starting point, as my focus is on presenting a 'slice' of certain aspects of the education system which are exhibited currently, and therefore do not need to invoke more dynamic or centralised models.

However, Pritchett's model perhaps subscribes to the 'myth of homogeneity', in that, to provide countenance to the sites of pressure, it implicitly casts all actors in a group as equals.[21] Pritchett does acknowledge that there is an underlying dilemma of "coalitions/inclusion" when it comes to representing the true voice of clients (students/parents/citizen), however, for the most part this is obscured within the model homogenises the actors of education. Applying such a generic analysis can become distracting when attempting to zoom into specific aspects of education research. However, Pritchett, Woolcock and Andrews do not seem to expect educators to labour

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[19] Pinar, W. and C. Ebooks (2004). What is Curriculum Theory? Mahwah, N.J, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Yates, L. and M. Grumet (2011). World Yearbook of Education 2011: Curriculum in today's world: Configuring knowledge, identities, work and politics, Routledge, Winter, C. (2012). "School curriculum, globalisation and the constitution of policy problems and solutions." Journal of Education Policy **27**(3): 295-220.

[20] Ball, S. J. (2009). "Beyond Networks? A Brief Response to 'Which Networks Matter in Education Governance?'." Political Studies **57**(3): 688-691, Ball, S. J. (2010). "New class inequalities in education." International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy **30**(3/4): 155-166, Doll, W. E., Jr. (2012). "Complexity and the Culture of Curriculum." Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity in Education **9**(1): 10, Cullen, R. and R. R. Hill (2013). "Curriculum Designed for an Equitable Pedagogy." Education Sciences **3**(1): 17-29.

[21] Mertens, D. (2010). Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Intergrating Diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods. London, Sage Publiations.

on models because an apparent objective of education systems is to operate through compliance with processes and policies that place the emphasis on form over function.[22] Often to highlight form over function, models need to be reconceptualised and this is done quite well by Biggs' work on education functions. Biggs' model of constructive alignment in curriculum design is perhaps the best example of how, for example the function of curriculum can be reconceptualised to set learning goals but also be used as a benchmark for assessing achievement.[23]

Though Biggs' work incorporates aspects of Pritchett's model, such as the feature of managing organisations (curriculum), clients (students) and frontlines (teachers), both models fall short of an actor inclusivity and voice. Despite its constructive form, Biggs 'discussion strongly focuses on curriculum as a central theme of power monopolising all other actors in an education system such as clients (students) or frontliners (teachers). However, if one wants to understand the structure and function of an education system without complex overlays of power, then a new model needs to be constructed. Incorporating elements of both Pritchett and Biggs' designs Figure 1.3.1 has been constructed to present the hierarchy and scope of a basic education system, which is subsequently relevant to the aims of this research.[24]

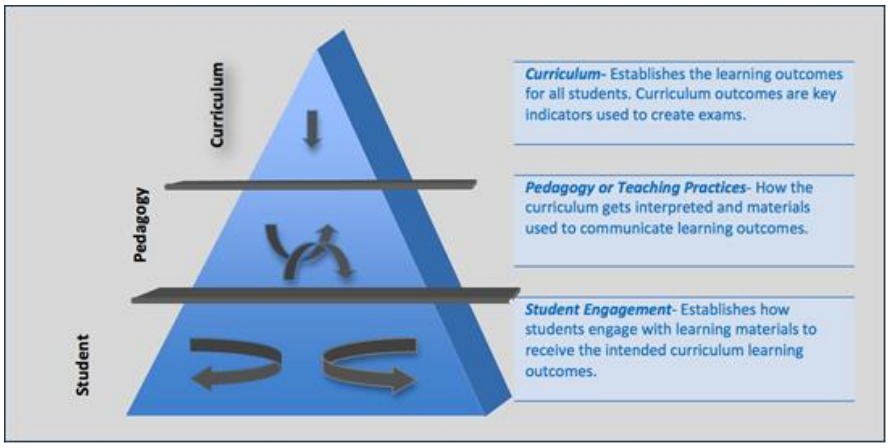

Figure 1.3.1: Hierarchy of Education System

[22] Pritchett, L., M. Woolcock, M. Andrews (Working Paper, 2010). Capability Traps: Mechanisms of Persistent Implementation Failure. Washington DC, Centre for Global Development.
[23] Biggs, J. B. (2003). Teaching for Quality Learning at University: What the Student Does. Buckingham; Philadelphia, PA;, Society for Research into Higher Education.
[24] This illustration has been designed, by the author, for use in this thesis.

By replacing "Assessment" in Biggs' model with "Student" I have developed a model,[25] to help explain the construction and formulation of my research aims (for ease of reference from this point onwards it will be called Jogie's model). This model serves a twofold purpose; firstly it disempowers curriculum structure 'apex' in order to empower other education objectives such as student engagement, and secondly, it reinvigorates the constructivist approach championed by Biggs, Porcaro, Hmelo-Silver *et al.*, Bereiter, Freire, through repositioning the intended benefits of learning onto the perspectives of the student 'base'. [26] So what are the research aims constructed from using this model?

1.4 Rationale for and Aims of the Research

Johnston and Mangat argue that, through literature, students can explore different cultures and imagine alternative realities because texts enable them to transform themselves and be transported to unfamiliar cultures from other times and distant places.[27] As a teacher, I believe that too often senior secondary education is structured to give priority to fulfilling the dictates of the curriculum with the primary aim of helping students through to final examinations.[28] If this is indeed so, then how do prescribed texts present different cultures that, in turn, are interpreted by teachers and subsequently received by students? The curriculum, schools and teachers are

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[25] Jogie, M. R. (2015). "Too Pale and Stale: Prescribed Texts used for Teaching Culturally Diverse Students in Australia and England." Oxford Review of Education **41**(3): 287-309.

[26] Freire, P. (2000). Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Bloomsbury Publishing, Biggs, J. B. (2003). Teaching for Quality Learning at University: What the Student Does. Buckingham; Philadelphia, PA;, Society for Research into Higher Education, Bereiter, C. (2005). Education and Mind in the Knowledge Age, Routledge, Hmelo-Silver, C. E., R. G. Duncan and C. A. Chinn (2007). "Scaffolding and Achievement in Problem-Based and Inquiry Learning: A Response to Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark (2006)." Educational psychologist **42**(2): 99-107, Porcaro, D. (2011). "Applying Constructivism in Instructivist Learning Cultures." Multicultural Education & Technology Journal **5**(1): 39-54.

[27] Johnston, I. and J. Mangat (2012). Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literature, and Cultural Mediation in the Classroom. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers.

[28] For a discussion of this, refer to Section 1.3—Secondary English Education for the Hierarchy of an Education System, on pg.,, 6.

the primary means of facilitating the learning needs of students. Therefore, to ascertain how senior secondary English education is aiding student learning, it is important to understand what students gain from the texts they study at schools? How do students respond to the texts they are required to study at schools? What do they learn from these texts, and how do they relate to perceptions or interpretations of their culture (their own or others') through discussions of texts?

It is timely to address some of these issues. Hence, this research seeks to investigate how English texts are selected and taught to engage students from diverse backgrounds in discussions of cultural differences in contemporary society. The specific aims are classified as follows:

- ***Curriculum***

To explore the extent to which the senior English curriculum is framed to challenge students to consider cultural differences in society.

- ***Prescribed texts***

To investigate the tenets and processes of senior English text selection with a specific emphasis on texts selected to engage students in considering cultural differences in contemporary society.

- ***Pedagogy***

To probe issues encountered by teachers in mediating prescribed texts in senior English classrooms.

- ***Student responses***

To sample students' perceptions of and responses to issues of cultural difference in prescribed texts within the English curriculum.

1.5 From Empire to Education: Deriving a Theoretical Framework

Scholarly research, particularly the works of Tikly and Johnston, are reviewed to investigate the relevance and applicability of postcolonial theory to education (text selection practices and pedagogy) in Australia and England.[29] The following discussion thus focuses on why a postcolonial theoretical approach might be appropriate in this research in the context of the choice of Australia and England as countries which share a common political bond originating from colonisation (of the former by the latter) and sustained through the British Monarch, who remains Head of State in both countries. [30]

1.5.1 Postcolonial theory

A postcolonial approach is defined by Rooney as the "attempts to engage with questions of national self-determination through attending to the cultural forms in which a nation expresses itself, reflects on itself and critiques itself" (373). [31] In relation to this thesis, it can be viewed as taking a less Eurocentric approach to the reading/viewing of English texts and subsequent

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[29] Tikly, L. (1999). "Postcolonial and Comparative Education." International Review of Education **45**(5), Johnston, I. (2003). Re-Mapping Literary Worlds Postcolonial Pegagogy in Practice. New York, Peter Lang, Crossley *, M. and L. Tikly (2004). "Postcolonial Perspectives and Comparative and International Research in Education: A Critical Introduction." Comparative Education **40**(2): 147-156, Johnston, I. (2006). Engaged Differences: School Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literatures, and Their Discontents. Curriculum as Cultural Practice, Postcolonial Imaginations. Y. Kanu. Toronto, Toronto University Press**:** 116-130, Johnston, I. and J. Mangat (2012). Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literature, and Cultural Mediation in the Classroom. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers, Johnston, I. and G. Richardson (2012). "Homi Bhabha and Canadian Curriculum Studies: Beyond the Comforts of the Dialectic." Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies **10**(1): 115, Tikly, L. and T. Bond (2013). "Towards a Postcolonial Research Ethics in Comparative and International Education." Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education **43**(4): 422-442.

[30] The colonial history between Britain and Australia established a bond between both countries, which dates back to 1770 when British Captain James Cook sailed to the eastern shore of Australia in Wesseling, H. L. and D. Webb (2004). The European Colonial Empires, 1815-1919. New York, Pearson/Longman.

[31] Rooney, C. (2011). "Egyptian Literary Culture and Egyptian Modernity: Introduction." Journal of Postcolonial Writing **47**(4): 369-376.

methods used to engage in cultural conversations. A less Eurocentric approach is a movement away from predominant European ideals to becoming more inclusive of other non-Western cultures.[32] In education, this is seen as necessary since there is a large range of Western canonical or well-known texts included on school reading lists. For example, Subedi argues that focusing on studying themes and values presented in well-known or canonical texts runs the risk of potentially transmitting colonial values to young readers.[33] To elaborate, he suggests that cultural issues raised in these texts were directed at a particular audience and, therefore, might not be the most effective conduit for the discussion of cultural matters that presently affect diverse and contemporary students. In addition to the range and types of texts used in contemporary classrooms, there are potential benefits implicit in using a postcolonial theoretical approach to teaching and discussions of contentious cultural issues in texts.[34]

In relation to this thesis, Tikly's article *'Postcolonial and Comparative Education'* summarises the dynamic changes in the education systems of both developed and developing countries after the end of colonialism. To elaborate, Tikly provides a perspective on how colonial education systems have adapted over time to include the cultural expansion and growth of multicultural voices in modern education. He argues that "postcolonial theory provides a necessary basis for developing a less Eurocentric and more comprehensive account of the effects of globalisation on education" (609).[35] One of the deliberations made in this thesis is whether Tikly's arguments for a postcolonial theoretical approach in education might provide a useful framework for text selection in terms of how panels might consider and choose texts applicable to multiple cultures in the backdrop of current societal

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[32] Tikly, L. (1999). "Postcolonial and Comparative Education." International Review of Education **45**(5).
[33] Subedi, B. (2013). "Decolonizing the Curriculum for Global Perspectives." Educational Theory **63**(6): 621-638.
[34] For a description of publications related to postcolonial theory and English education, refer to Chapter 2—Literature Review, on pg.,, 19.
[35] Tikly, L. (1999). "Postcolonial and Comparative Education." International Review of Education **45**(5).

changes, for example, the impacts of globalisation on contemporary education.

This research's focus is on a postcolonial as distinct from a multicultural approach to English education. The latter's orientation is more socio-cultural as, according to Gunew, "Multiculturalism deals with theories of difference unlike postcolonialism, which is to a great extent perceived to be defined by its specific historic legacies in a retroactive way" (22).[36] In education, this definition suggests that theories of multiculturalism are often utilised in classrooms as a means to introduce a range of texts which represent differences more in terms of exposure to cultures rather than expression and reflection. Other critics like Chanady and Goh suggest a crucial difference between multiculturalism and postcolonialism is their geographical and temporal focus. In that, postcolonial differentiates between what is European and '*Other*', whereas multicultural is representative of all the different voices comprising the '*Other*' category.[37] However, the interest here is in the potential of postcolonialism as a framework for carrying the discussion from the need to select a range of cultural texts (inclusive of both European and *Others*), to questioning what types of texts are being selected and what are the meanings being transmitted or encouraged through discussion of these texts. Moreover, it may be an approach offering greater potential to understand not only those perspectives that are written and interpreted (by European and non-European authors and critical scholars), but also how negotiations of power and identity can be accessed by contemporary students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

Recently, Johnston and Mangat wrote about the benefits of using postcolonial theory to inform and develop reading practices (pedagogy) of

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[36] Gunew, S. (1997). "Postcolonialism and Multiculturalism: Between Race and Ethnicity." The Yearbook of English Studies **27**: 22-39.

[37] Weaven, M. and T. Clark (2009). "Why Teach Poetry?: The Importance of Demanding Texts." English in Australia **44**(1): 53, Manuel, J. and D. Carter (2015). "Current and historical perspectives on Australian teenagers' reading practices and preferences." Australian Journal of Language and Literacy, The **38**(2): 115.

literary texts in secondary schools.[38] These data compiled from education research in North American schools examine a range of issues relevant to some of their aims, particularly the selection and teaching of prescribed texts, which are relevant to this research. Perhaps their most notable finding is the identification of an ongoing reluctance on the part of teachers to use multicultural literary texts in English classrooms in North American secondary schools. To explain, they found that teachers avoided teaching new multicultural texts because they feared addressing contentious issues related to race, social class, and gender. This may also be an explanation as to why curriculum boards are perhaps wary of adding newer more contemporary texts to prescribed lists. Given these findings, this thesis hypothesises that, as a framework, a postcolonial theoretical approach might be effective for selecting and teaching English texts in secondary classrooms.

1.5.2 Australia and England as postcolonial sites

During the time of European mass migration (1840-1940), millions of immigrants left Europe to venture into the New World, of whom over four million journeyed to Australia and New Zealand.[39] These colonial migrants brought many European ideals, including culture and language, which were used to establish a form of education in colonised countries. This makes the British education system, implemented in most post-colonial countries, the first formal education system established in Australia. Over the last decade there has been an increase in the population of Australia and England, where a large percentage of the population is comprised of people from diverse cultural and ethnic groups, most of whom were born overseas. Walder refers to a dual effect, resulting from colonialism, which is felt by both those

[38] Johnston, I. and J. Mangat (2012). Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literature, and Cultural Mediation in the Classroom. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers.
[39] Wesseling, H. L. and D. Webb (2004). The European Colonial Empires, 1815-1919. New York, Pearson/Longman.

colonised and their colonisers. He emphasises that, during the colonial era, many Europeans migrated to colonised countries, but during the post-colonial period there was the inverse, where many culturally and ethnically diverse people migrated to former colonial countries.[40]

According to Layton-Henry, this shift of people around the world, particularly immigrants from post-colonial homelands to colonial (Western) countries, was predominantly to improve their quality of life through employment opportunities and education.[41] In 2014, of the 641,000 people who migrated to the United Kingdom, approximately 87% of this population was comprised of non-EU citizens (45%) and EU-citizens (42%) which excluded those who were British.[42] Of these figures, the 2014 long-term migration trend shows there was a significant increase in net migration of South Asian citizens, where figures doubled from 24,000 to 48,000.[43] In 2014, Australia's estimated resident population (ERP) recorded that approximately 28.1% or 6.6 million people were born overseas. The largest group was born in England (5.2% of Australian population), followed by those born in New Zealand (617 000), China (447 400), India (397 200) and Phillippines (225 100).[44] The evidence above demonstrates that both Australia and England have a large culturally and ethnically diverse population comprising people born overseas. Based on these statements this thesis endeavours to investigate how developed (former colonial) education systems, in Australia and England cater for the learning needs of these diverse populations.

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[40] Walder, D. (1998). Post-colonial Literatures in English: History, Language, Theory. Malden, Mass, Blackwell Publishers.

[41] Layton-Henry, Z. (1985). "The New Commonwealth Migrants, 1945-62." History Today **35**(12): 27.

[42] Office for National Statistics. (2015). "Population, Migration, International Migration." Retrieved October 8, 2015, from http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/migration-statistics-quarterly-report/may-2015/sty-net-migration.html.

[43] Office for National Statistics (2015). Statistical Bulletin: Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, February 2015. United Kingdom, Office for National Statistics**:** 1-40.

[44] Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2014). "Estimated Resident Population, Australia Top 10 Countries of Birth as of 30 June 2014." Retrieved October 8, 2015, from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3412.0/.

1.6 Organisation of the Thesis

Chapter Two provides an overview and analysis of existing scholarly publications and ongoing debates pertinent to this thesis. As this study is interdisciplinary, the literature is sourced from three relevant areas: postcolonial theory, English education in regards to the research aims, and research in postcolonial theory in education. This chapter identifies existing gaps in scholarly material that this research endeavours to address or question further. Chapter Three focuses on the framework underpinning the thesis aims, connecting them through the philosophies of data collection, attribution and analysis, and providing a context for comparison of English education between Australia and England. The key findings are presented separately, with Chapter Four focusing on Australia and Chapter Five on England. Each chapter analyses how the senior English curriculum challenges students to consider cultural differences in society. This is followed by an examination of the current rationale used for selecting English texts to fit the senior English curriculum requirements. Following the presentation of this data, there is a synthesis of the main pedagogical issues associated with mediating prescribed texts in classrooms. Each chapter concludes with a summary of responses from students about their perceptions of prescribed texts and the extent to which these texts help them engage in discussions about cultural differences. Chapter Six presents a comparison and postcolonial analysis of both countries. It collates the research findings to provide deeper scrutiny by linking similarities and differences of education practices related to curricula, texts, pedagogy and students' responses to texts. These arguments are synthesised to include a postcolonial analysis of research findings for further contemplation. Finally, Chapter Seven summarises the extent to which the research questions have been addressed and includes a breakdown of the challenges encountered when conducting this research as well as suggestions for further research. Of most importance are the summary and postcolonial

analysis of the research findings. As well supplementary questions put forward for conducting further investigations, which complement existing scholarship and challenges further notions of English education research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Extant Literature

2.1.1 Mapping research contributions

This research focuses on those publications that discuss how to improve the selection of resources and pedagogical approaches for delivering English programmes for senior secondary students. In the last 30 years there has been heightened international awareness and, to some extent, competitiveness amongst member countries (including Australia and England), in terms of amending their policies to improve both curriculum and pedagogy in existing education programmes. The following maps the last 30 years of research, coincidently this timeframe also captures the establishment and growth of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).[45] PISA results, for participating countries, have identified critical areas for policy development to improve the education performance of secondary students. These results have also spurred on areas of comparative scholarly research, so one can argue that PISA results also play an instrumental role in the increase and range of scholarly publications focusing on improving education outcomes.

[45] The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) launched PISA in 1997. PISA was established as a response to member countries (of the OECD) demanding more regular and reliable data on the knowledge and skills of their students and the performance of their education systems. Presently, more than 70 countries and economies have participated in PISA surveys. These surveys are given every three years to 15 year-olds, to enable tracking and progress in meeting their key learning goals in reading, mathematics and science.

In the latest 2012 PISA survey, students from Australia significantly outperformed those in the United Kingdom in reading literacy.[46] Despite these results, 14% of Australian students were low performers in reading, with females averaging higher in reading literacy than males. The results showed that Australian-born students achieved significantly lower results in literacy than first-generation students. However, those who spoke English at home performed statistically higher than students who did not.[47] Although this is but an indicative sample of the results, the 2012 PISA results were taken into consideration in the design and construction of the National Curriculum for Secondary Secondary English, which focuses on improving reading literacy skills.[48]

In the United Kingdom the PISA 2012 report showed that the United Kingdom performs around the average in reading compared with the 34 OECD countries. Despite a higher gross domestic product (GDP) and a larger budget to spend on education than other OECD countries, these comparative advantages did not seem to result in better educational outcomes. As well, many socio-economically disadvantaged students in the United Kingdom are less likely to succeed at school than their more advantaged peers.[49] In England, the PISA 2012 is a crucial driving force behind the 2013 curriculum reform for the senior secondary education programmes General Certificate in Secondary

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[46] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2012). "Programme for International Student Assesesment (PISA) Key Findings 2012." Retrieved October 8, 2015, from http://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results.htm.

[47] Thomson, S., L. D. Bartoli and S. Buckley (2013). PISA 2012: How Australia Measures Up. The PISA 2012 Assessment of Students' Mathematical, Scientific and Reading Literacy. Victoria, Australia, Australian Council for Educational Research**:** 1-350.

[48] The PISA results for Australia focus on improving reading skills and this evident in responses by Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). (2015). "Essential English: Senior Secondary English Subjects." Retrieved October 8, 2015, from http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/seniorsecondary/english/essential-english/senior-secondary-english-subjects.

[49] Jenny Bradshaw (2012). Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) Results from PISA 2012. United Kingdom: Key Findings, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**:** 1-8. For further reform discussions please refer to; Department for Education (2010). The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010. United Kingdom**:** 3-91, House of Commons (2012-13). The Administration of Examinations for 15-19 year olds in England: First Report of Session 2012-13. Volume 1-Report, Together with Formal Minutes. London. **1:** 1-101.

Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education or Advanced-Level (GCE or A-Level).[50]

The PISA results for reading literacy tend to trigger international debates and comparisons amongst those countries with high scores and those who fall short in the evaluation. These results prompt scholars who conduct research and critique methods and approaches for improving literacy outcomes through education programmes in secondary schools. It should be clarified that PISA results are a sample of students' performance in literacy and numeracy, once every three years. Therefore, students are not deliberately trained or prepared for PISA examinations which means these reports are based on the actual knowledge, skills and abilities of students, rather than their responses to specific resources or texts being taught at schools. It must be noted that the extent to which the PISA results are taken into consideration in the text selection process by Exam Boards, schools and teachers is not examined in this research.

PISA is one international body that has inspired the reconsideration of curriculum policy in many countries, but it can be debated whether these international comparative results have disproportionate influence on education policy. Phillips and Schweisfurth suggest that governments' response to the results of international testing can be motivated by a range of other factors; they say that governments which,

> agree to take part in surveys such as those run by IEA [International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement] or the OECD face the task of explaining the results and acting upon them. As we have seen, they might wish to use the results to '*glorify*' policies, or to '*scandalize*' the

[50] Changes post-reform which include adding more texts to prescribed lists and making examinations tougher can be speculated as initiatives to improve literacy rates by providing more options for study. Similarly, reducing the number of opportunities students are provided to re-sit examinations can be seen as an initiative to reduce grade inflation and have a more accurate and consistent representation of the performance or literacy levels of students in the United Kingdom.

> efforts of a previous administration- or even their own if they wish to make a case for reform (149).[51]

This suggests there is a risk of using international assessments to implement policies which, on the face of it, would seem to demonstrate that changes are being made to facilitate performance relative to international peers. However, such a response can easily lead to the dismissal of other issues or concerns on a *national* level which are pertinent to the unique cultural composition of a country's student population. This highlights that in models of education systems where assessments feature prominently (e.g. Biggs' model), the strength of the feedback loop from results into curriculum policy is not localised to the school or even national level, but can also be influenced significantly by the desire for international posterity. Under the umbrella of international testing and comparative evaluation sits many other complexities, however, these sit outside the 'slice' of the education system in focus within the aims of my research. There will always be an impact to consider from such pressures, tensions and extraneous variables, international examination regimes and local testing models are exogenous to the current study and therefore to attend to the current aims in more depth, such externalities are acknowledged, but not engaged with, in the following discussions.

Figure 2.1.1 records the last three decades of scholarship in the research areas of postcolonial theory, English education and the association of postcolonial theory in English education studies. It is important to note that references listed in Figure 2.1.1 are a sample of works referred to in this research, and should not be viewed as a complete overview of all publications in the field of postcolonial and/or education studies.

[51] Phillips, D. and M. Schweisfurth (2014). Comparative and International Education: An Introduction to Theory, Method, and Practice. London, Bloomsbery.

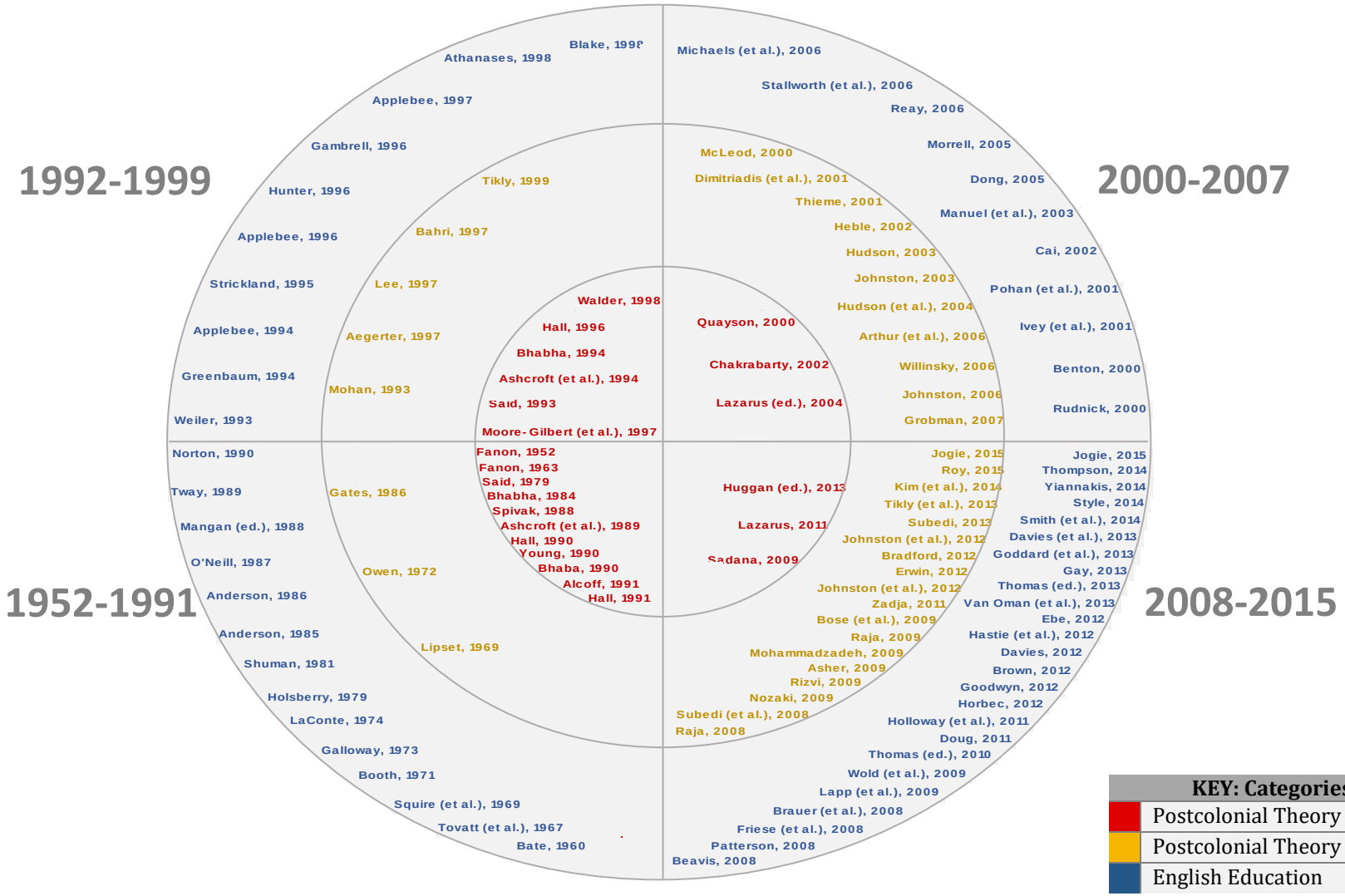

Figure 2.1.1: Overview of Scholarly Publications from 1983-2015

Figure 2.1.1 captures only those publications from 1983 to 2015 discussing education in terms of teaching Literature in schools, and the incorporation of postcolonial theory as an approach that can potentially improve English programmes. Over half of postcolonial theory consulted in this research was published from 1952 to 1991, probably because the foundational structure of postcolonial theory was established during this time. Overall, there is a general decline in postcolonial theoretical research consulted from 1992 to 2015. It should be noted that, during this period of some 20 odd years, authors position their debates by referencing or reading new meanings into references listed from 1951 to 1991. This suggests that, for this thesis, there were very few publications that added new perspectives on postcolonial theory in the most recent period.

Most of the articles referencing the application of postcolonial theory to education studies, were published from 2008 to 2015. Despite the emergence of more postcolonial theory in the period 1952 to 1991, it was not until more recent times or even within the last 15 years that more scholars have focused on discussing the merits of applying postcolonial theory to education studies. It can be speculated that perhaps the movement of people around the globe has increased the range of culturally diverse students in schools and created problems in need of solution which has perhaps also led to investigating the merits of including more multicultural literature in classrooms. These articles are mixed with studies investigating the use of postcolonial theory in primary, secondary and mostly tertiary education. Of the list only a few scholars, for example the works of Tikly, Johnston, Subedi, Hickling-Hudson *et al.*, and Kanu *et al.*, entirely focus on postcolonial theory and secondary English education.[52]

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[52] These articles are discussed in detail further in this chapter. For these publications see: Tikly, L. (1999). "Postcolonial and Comparative Education." International Review of Education **45**(5), Thieme, J. (2002). Postcolonial Con-Texts: Writing Back to the Canon, Bloomsbury Publishing, Johnston, I. (2003). Re-Mapping Literary Worlds Postcolonial Pegagogy in Practice. New York, Peter Lang, Hickling-Hudson, A., J. Matthews and A. Woods (2004). Education, Postcolonialism and Disruptions. Disrupting Preconceptions: Postcolonialism and Education. J. M. Anne Hickling-Hudson, Annette Woods.

Many of the articles referenced in this thesis discuss issues in terms of challenges and developments in the field of English education. This area seems to be popular because it identifies a cross section of issues implicit in the selection of English texts and teaching of these in contemporary English classrooms. The density patterns of postcolonial theory in education shows a similar trend to that of English education. This suggests there is increasing emphasis being placed on identifying and improving methods for teaching English by combining and applying postcolonial theory and education scholarship.

2.2 Postcolonial Approach to Education

2.2.1 Defining a 'postcolonial approach'

According to Lazarus before the 1970s there was no specific field of specialisation known as *'postcolonial studies'*, rather it "emerged as a theme with the reassertion of imperial dominance … expressed in the struggle for decolonization in the boom years after 1945" (9).[53] Said defines imperialism as "the practice, theory, and attitude of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory," leading to colonialism (8).[54] Fundamentally postcolonial studies comprise scholarship negotiating power (after imperialism), which gives voice to perspectives on the structure and function of entire societies. Some of the earliest postcolonial arguments, still extant in present scholarship, began with the advent of Fanon's publications, which discuss the rise of

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Australia, Post Pressed, Flaxton**:** 1-255, Johnston, I. (2006). Engaged Differences: School Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literatures, and Their Discontents. Curriculum as Cultural Practice, Postcolonial Imaginations. Y. Kanu. Toronto, Toronto University Press**:** 116-130, Kanu, Y., Ed. (2006). Curriculum as Cultural Practice. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, Johnston, I. and J. Mangat (2012). Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literature, and Cultural Mediation in the Classroom. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers.

[53] Lazarus, N. (2011). The Postcolonial Unconscious. New York, Cambridge University Press.

[54] Said, E. W. (1994). Culture and Imperialism. New York, Vintage Books.

colonisation and its impact on race related or black identities.[55] This was subsequently followed by Said's book '*Orientalism*' which reasoned through perspectives of historical, political and cultural narratives of power and difference between the West and the Orient.[56] Their scholarly contributions set the foundation for postcolonial theory which is rooted in discussions of power and identity.

Contemporary theorists like Bhabha, Spivak, Quayson, Chakrabarty, Lazarus and Walder are well known for their discursive postcolonial analyses of societal issues, deriving from historical, political, cultural interpretations and perspectives.[57] In the humanities Bohemer, Marx, Smith, Bahri, Young, for example, apply postcolonial theory to the critique of literary studies and discuss the representation of identities and negotiation of power in contemporary societies.[58] Other intellectuals like Tikly, Subedi, Kanu, Hickling-Hudson, Matthews, Woods, Johnston and Mangat comment more specifically on postcolonial theory in relation to education research. Their works discuss the potential benefits of incorporating postcolonial theory into curriculum development, in particular, the selection and teaching of English

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[55] Fanon, F. (1952). Black Skin, White Masks. New York, Grove Press, Fanon, F. (1963). The Wretched of the Earth. Harmondsworth, Penguin.

[56] Said, E. W. (1979). Orientalism. New York, Random House Inc.

[57] Their well-known publications include: Bhabha, H. (1984). "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." October **28**: 125-133, Bhabha, H. K. (1994). The Location of Culture. New York, Routledge, Spivak, G. C. (1995). Can the Subaltern Speak?, Routledge**:** 24, Walder, D. (1998). Post-colonial Literatures in English: History, Language, Theory. Malden, Mass, Blackwell Publishers, Chakrabarty, D. (2000). Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference. Princeton, N.J, Princeton University Press, Quayson, A. (2000). Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice, or Process? Malden, MA, Polity Press, Chakrabarty, D. (2002). Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, Walder, D. (2007). "Decolonizing the (Distance) Curriculum." Arts and Humanities in Higher Education **6**(2): 187-196, Lazarus, N. (2011). The Postcolonial Unconscious. New York, Cambridge University Press, Spivak, G. C. (2012). An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization. Massachusetts, Harvard University Press.

[58] Their publications and the work of others in this area include: Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin (1989). The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literature. New York; London, Routledge, Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin (1995). The Post-Colonial Studies Reader. New York; London, Routledge, Young, R. (1995). Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race. New York, Routledge, Bahri, D. (1997). "Marginally Off-Center: Postcolonialism in the Teaching Machine." College English **59**(3): 277-298, Young, R. (2003). Postcolonialism, Oxford University Press, Boehmer, E. (2005). Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors. Oxford, Oxford University Press, Marx, J. (2005). The Modernist Novel and the Decline of Empire. Cambridge, UK;New York;, Cambridge University Press, Smith, A. (2010). C.L.R. James and the Study of Culture. New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

texts to culturally diverse learners in secondary schools.[59] Tikly argues the view of postcolonialism has important implications "to underline the point that colonialism is not *'over'* in the sense of an epochal shift, but that its modalities and effects are being transformed as a consequence of globalisation" (606).[60] Subedi and Daza further develop this line of argument and suggest that

> Postcolonial studies raise troubling questions in regard to issues of curriculum, pedagogy, and research, especially concerning Euro-centric and US-centric knowledge biases. It does so by questioning how educational knowledge, particularly knowledge produced in Euro-American contexts and by the intellectual elite in both First and Third World contexts, is complicit in reinforcing colonial notions of culture, power and difference. Similarly, because the field of postcolonial studies calls for the unlearning of white privilege and deficit thinking, as well as the need to recognise that discussion of race and other differences in both national and global contexts, it is bound to raise uneasy questions on how race and cultural differences have been framed within the field of education (4).[61]

When applying postcolonial theory to education studies, it raises questions as a result of perspectives and interpretations on power related issues encountered with the migration and settlement of culturally different people

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[59] Including works by other scholars such as: Applebee, A. N. (1994). "Toward Thoughtful Curriculum: Fostering Discipline-Based Conversation." The English Journal **83**(3): 45-52, Athanases, S. (1998). "Diverse Learners, Diverse Texts: Exploring Identity and Difference through Literary Encounters." Journal of Literacy Research **30**(2): 273-296, Tikly, L. (1999). "Postcolonial and Comparative Education." International Review of Education **45**(5), Quayson, A. (2000). Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice, or Process? Malden, MA, Polity Press, Hickling-Hudson, A., J. Matthews and A. Woods (2004). Education, Postcolonialism and Disruptions. Disrupting Preconceptions: Postcolonialism and Education. J. M. Anne Hickling-Hudson, Annette Woods. Australia, Post Pressed, Flaxton**:** 1-255, Kanu, Y., Ed. (2006). Curriculum as Cultural Practice. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, Mohammadzadeh, B. (2009). "Incorporating Multicultural Literature in English Language Teaching Curriculum." Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences **1**(1): 23-27, Bradford, C. (2012). "Instilling Postcolonial Nostalgias: Ned Kelly Narratives for Children." Journal of Australian Studies **36**(2): 191-206, Johnston, I. and J. Mangat (2012). Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literature, and Cultural Mediation in the Classroom. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers, Subedi, B. (2013). "Decolonizing the Curriculum for Global Perspectives." Educational Theory **63**(6): 621-638.

[60] Tikly, L. (1999). "Postcolonial and Comparative Education." International Review of Education **45**(5).

[61] Subedi, B. and S. L. Daza (2008). "The Possibilities of Postcolonial Praxis in Education." Race Ethnicity and Education **11**(1): 1-10.

around the globe. These examples show how postcolonial theory (from the 1970s onwards) has grown in versatility as it has been applied to a range of scholarly productions. One might ask what exactly does it mean to have a postcolonial approach to education studies?

Literary critic Rooney defines a postcolonial approach as "attempts to engage with questions of national self-determination through attending to the cultural forms in which a nation expresses itself, reflects and critiques itself" (373).[62] Such an approach means the inclusion of all voices in society, which will shape their sense of national identity; shaped *by* them, not *for* them. Subedi and Daza identify three advantages when incorporating postcolonial theory into education studies;

> Postcolonial theory advocates a number of issues that are critically relevant within the field of education, firstly … decolonizing knowledge and the production of transformative knowledge … secondly, [it] challenges the discourse of nationalism and still remains a taboo subject within many academic circles, including the field of education ... thirdly, [it] is concerned with questions of agency and how marginalized subjects are capable of interrupting or resisting dominant discourses (2).[63]

Their comments suggest that a postcolonial approach to education studies, more specifically English Literature, would encompass accessibility of, and a willingness to include, narratives from and about all cultural groups in a particular society. Therefore, a postcolonial approach to education is important because it can be used to assess the selection methods and types of resources chosen for teaching, and the pedagogical practices in classrooms to facilitate learning. In another publication, I argue this approach "does not mean only selecting literary texts that represent postcolonial themes or issues.

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[62] Rooney, C. (2011). "Egyptian Literary Culture and Egyptian Modernity: Introduction." Journal of Postcolonial Writing **47**(4): 369-376.

[63] Subedi, B. and S. L. Daza (2008). "The Possibilities of Postcolonial Praxis in Education." Race Ethnicity and Education **11**(1): 1-10.

Many existing themes in texts can be read through a postcolonial lens, as the movement of people around the world makes culture a very complex issue to address, since it now encompasses a series of places, experiences and stories" (17).[64] Consequently, a postcolonial approach when selecting and teaching English texts means accommodating a range of diverse voices and narratives as represented in schools. [65]

An openness to including broader options on school curriculum prescribed reading lists would seem desirable in terms of creating a variety of cultural stories and narratives for young learners. This balance of variety is important in order to inform and engage the range of students from different cultural backgrounds in contemporary classrooms. At the same time, it is unrealistic to assume that every cultural group in a society can be represented and selected for study in schools. Before examining the details of applying a postcolonial approach to education, we can consider other similar theoretical approaches which are currently used in one aspect of education practices, which is teaching English in secondary schools.

In separate publications Dong, Morrell, Johnston and Mangat have reviewed the New Critical approach as one of the most popular theories used for teaching multicultural texts in secondary English classrooms.[66] Dong defines the New Critical approach as "a cultural response approach [which] challenges students' preconceived notions about another culture by increasing their cross-cultural understanding [through] exploring the cultural context of text [including] racial and cultural differences" (55).[67] Dong's justification of this approach is that there are specific interpretations and meanings that

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[64] Jogie, M. R. (2015). "Too Pale and Stale: Prescribed Texts used for Teaching Culturally Diverse Students in Australia and England." Oxford Review of Education **41**(3): 287-309.

[65] For information on the selection and teaching of texts, refer to Section 2.2.2—Postcolonial approaches to selecting and teaching English texts, on pg.,, 25.

[66] Dong, Y. R. (2005). "Taking a Cultural-Response Approach to Teaching Multicultural Literature." The English Journal **94**(3): 55-60, Morrell, E. (2005). "Critical English Education." English Education **37**(4): 312-321, Johnston, I. and J. Mangat (2012). Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literature, and Cultural Mediation in the Classroom. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers.

[67] Dong, Y. R. (2005). "Taking a Cultural-Response Approach to Teaching Multicultural Literature." The English Journal **94**(3): 55-60.

should be extrapolated by teachers. However, Morrell's studies suggest that, given an opportunity to independently select and critique texts, students naturally move away from the New Critical approach. Instead, he argues that students become confident to

> ... take a critical stance toward authors they had previously been told were too intelligent and inaccessible for them to understand. No longer did they need a teacher to make sense of the text for them and let them know how close to the *'truth'* of the text they had gotten; instead they became empowered within their own interpretations and learned that any text can be read in multiple ways (318).[68]

According to Morrell, not only are students discovering multiple meanings but they can also make these connections without their teachers; the question is though can they apply these skills outside the boundaries of its context.

Johnston and Mangat argue for the adoption of a postcolonial approach when engaging students in discussions of cultural differences in society because such an approach helps bridge this gap. They identified that not only do "postcolonial discourses address specific historical colonial legacies and the tensions that emerge from cultural difference" but, "… postcolonial literatures encompass a huge variety of international writing, [which] attempts to challenge the dominant literary and cultural discourse of the West and to critique the discursive and material legacies of colonisation" (xi).[69] Based on this analysis a postcolonial approach seems more likely to help students achieve a wider scope and depth of analysis by *questioning* and *reflecting* upon the voices of authority (authors and teachers) presented in the interpretations of texts. Simultaneously, a postcolonial approach promotes more of an awareness when reading about different cultures within texts (colonial or other) that these narratives are not a *given truth* but rather a

[68] Morrell, E. (2005). "Critical English Education." English Education **37**(4): 312-321.
[69] Johnston, I. and J. Mangat (2012). Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literature, and Cultural Mediation in the Classroom. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers.

representation of culture at a *given time*. Said argues "… in any instance of at least written language, there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a *re-presence*, or a representation" (21).[70] In other words, not only is the domain of meanings of text subject to interpretation across culture for a given era, it also evolves over time for any given culture. Therefore, a wider selection of texts (both culturally and temporally) might encourage students to analyse and discuss how cultural beliefs and practices have been (or not been) changed, received and accepted in contemporary societies.

Tikly claims that "postcolonial theory provides a necessary basis for developing a less Eurocentric and more comprehensive account of the effects of globalisation on education" (609).[71] It seeks to interpret Eurocentric biases, yet it is not a popular approach actively adopted by education programmes within Australia and England, despite having migrants from culturally diverse backgrounds representing increasingly larger portions of the population.[72] Willinsky, Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin also view schools as former colonial institutions contributing to *'empire building'*. That is, transmitting colonial ideals, particularly through texts, is seen as a method of reinforcing the history and culture of Western societies that uphold Eurocentric values in other societies.[73] In general, the structure of education and school programmes have been described as perhaps the "most insidious and in some ways the most cryptic of colonialist survivals" (425).[74] Subedi suggests that Western organisations facilitate the transmission of colonial

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[70] Said, E. W. (1979). Orientalism. New York, Random House Inc.

[71] Tikly, L. (1999). "Postcolonial and Comparative Education." International Review of Education **45**(5).

[72] Wadsworth, J. (2010). "The UK Labour Market and Immigration." National Institute Economic Review 2010 **213**(1): R35-R42, Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2014). "Estimated Resident Population, Australia Top 10 Countries of Birth as of 30 June 2014." Retrieved October 8, 2015, from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3412.0/, Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2014). "Population Clock." Retrieved June 6th, 2014, from http://abs.gov.au/ausstats.

[73] Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin (1989). The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literature. New York; London, Routledge, Willinsky, J. (2006). High School Postcolonial: As the Students Ran Ahead with the Theory. Curriculum as Cultural Practice Postcolonial Imaginations. Y. Kanu. Toronto, University of Toronto Press**:** 95-115, Subedi, B. (2013). "Decolonizing the Curriculum for Global Perspectives." Educational Theory **63**(6): 621-638.

[74] Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin (1995). The Post-Colonial Studies Reader. New York; London, Routledge.

values through school curricula programmes, especially via the resources selected and used for teaching.[75] For instance, colonial values, as well as cultural stereotypes, are narrated through literature and passed on to young readers. However, Bhabha explains that culture is becoming increasingly richer in narrative and forms of expression in terms of how culture signifies or what is signified by culture.[76] Therefore, new meanings are being derived from, and perspectives shaped by, the presence of many cultural voices in literary texts. Perhaps exposure to such a variety of culturally diverse options will assist students to understand and comment on how different cultures are changing and are reflected in society. At this point, one might question what are the differences between a postcolonial approach for selecting texts as opposed to teaching texts?

2.2.2 *Postcolonial approaches to selecting and teaching English texts*

Said questions whether people can be "genuinely divided into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races and survive the consequences humanely?" (45).[77] Perhaps embedded in humanity's history is the differentiation of Western power from that of the Other, where "the former dominate [and] the latter must be dominated" (36).[78] Bhabha elaborates further on the tensions that exist between culture and identity. He suggests that

> … culture becomes as much an uncomfortable, disturbing practice of survival and supplementarity, between art and politics, past and present … it is from such narrative positions that the postcolonial prerogative seeks to affirm and extend a new collaborative dimension, both within the margins of the

[75] Subedi, B. (2013). "Decolonizing the Curriculum for Global Perspectives." Educational Theory **63**(6): 621-638.
[76] Bhabha, H. K. (1994). The Location of Culture. New York, Routledge.
[77] Said, E. W. (1979). Orientalism. New York, Random House Inc.
[78] Ibid.

> nation-space and across boundaries between nations and peoples (251-2).[79]

The division of cultures (those dominated and those that dominate) has led to the birth of a new dimension or identities that do not seek to rewrite the past or reinstate former colonial histories. Rather discussions of these cultural differences can result in the birth of new transnational identities. Since culture is constantly changing, students might benefit from exposure to a variety of texts presenting a range of perspectives on how culture is represented *to*, and *by*, different groups in societies. To assist with the inclusion of more textual variety and in an attempt to increase classroom discussions, a postcolonial approach is being considered from two perspectives, firstly the selection and, secondly the teaching of texts.

In this research, a postcolonial approach for selecting texts is not confined to a selection of literature written by postcolonial authors who were born in or come from formerly colonised countries. Rather a postcolonial approach for selecting texts places emphasis on the themes or narratives of power struggles after colonisation, particularly focusing on historical, cultural and social issues. The advantages of incorporating such cultural texts into a curriculum, according to Cai, are to "challenge the dominant ideologies, affirm the values and experiences of historically underrepresented cultures, foster acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity, develop sensitivity to social inequalities, and encourage transformation of the self and society" (134).[80]

Many well-known texts on the curriculum, including those by non-white authors, for example, Walker's *'The Color Purple'*[81] and Lahiri's *'The Namesake'*[82] have been written for Western audiences and discuss themes of

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[79] Bhabha, H. K. (1994). The Location of Culture. New York, Routledge.
[80] Cai, M. (2002). Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults: Reflections on Critical Issues. Westport, CT, Greenwood Press.
[81] Walker, A. (1982). The Color Purple. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Harcourt.
[82] Lahiri, J. (2003). The Namesake. Great Britain, Harper Collins.

identity that are overshadowed by the effects of colonialism. These are authors who according to Said, "wrote with an exclusively Western audience in mind even when they wrote of characters, places or situations that referred to, [or] made use of, overseas territories held by Europeans" (78).[83] Many of these well-known texts remain conduits for passing on colonial themes written for Western audiences to a generation of contemporary readers. A postcolonial approach to the selection of texts will readily encourage discussions between older, colonial themes alongside newer or contemporary cultural issues.

Scholars like Davies, Doecke, Mead, Patterson and Goodwyn, argue that selecting a range of diverse texts for teaching is a successful method for supporting reading development with secondary school learners.[84] They believe the inclusion of more variety assists in building reading proficiency since a range of texts is considered more efficacious for engaging students in reading, interpreting and classroom discussions. However, there are many issues to consider when designing a process for selecting a range of culturally diverse texts, and it must be noted this is not a simple task and will vary across different countries, schools and classrooms. Therefore, certain questions must be contemplated when discussing English text selections such as; what defines culturally relevant texts? How do these texts appeal to diverse students? What

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[83] Said, E. W. (1994). Culture and Imperialism. New York, Vintage Books.

[84] Their publications and the works by other scholars who support similar claims, such as; Athanases, S. (1998). "Diverse Learners, Diverse Texts: Exploring Identity and Difference through Literary Encounters." Journal of Literacy Research **30**(2): 273-296, Brauer, L. and C. T. Clark (2008). "The Trouble Is English: Reframing English Studies in Secondary Schools." English Education **40**(4): 293-313, Friese, E., D. Alvermann, A. Parkes and A. Rezak (2008). "Selecting Texts for English Language Arts Classrooms: When Assessment is Not Enough." English Teaching: Practice and Critique **7**(3): 74, Patterson, A. (2008). "Teaching Literature in Australia: Examining and Reviewing Senior English." Changing English **15**(3): 311-322, Lapp, D. and D. Fisher (2009). "It's All about the Book: Motivating Teens to Read." Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy **52**(7): 556-561, Holloway, S. M. and C. J. Greig (2011). "Literacy Text Selections in Secondary School Classrooms: Exploring the Practices of English Teachers as Agents of Change." Brock Education **20**(2): 1, Ebe, A. E. (2012). "Supporting the Reading Development of Middle School English Language Learners Through Culturally Relevant Texts." Reading & Writing Quarterly **28**(2): 179, Goodwyn, A. (2012). "The Status of Literature: English Teaching and the Condition of Literature Teaching in Schools." English in Education **46**(3): 212-227, Hastie, M. and E. Sharplin (2012). "Why Did you Choose that Text?: Influences on English teachers' Choices of Reading Materials for Students." English in Australia **47**(2): 36-44, Patterson, A. J. (2012). "Australian Literature: Culture, Identity and English Teaching." Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature **12**(1): 1-17, Davies, L. M., B. Doecke and P. Mead (2013). "Reading the Local and Global: Teaching Literature in Secondary Schools in Australia." Changing English **20**(3): 224.

considerations do educators make when choosing texts for their students?

In this thesis, a postcolonial approach also encompasses pedagogy since it refers to some general awareness teachers might have when mediating texts in English classrooms. Such an approach might involve investigating how non-Western voices become incorporated into the analysis and discussions of texts. Alcoff, Kyung-Won, Heble and Thieme have applied postcolonial theory to question voice and authority in texts.[85] Alcoff identifies that "the work of privileged authors who speak on behalf of the oppressed is coming more and more under criticism from members of those oppressed groups themselves" (7).[86] Well-known authors like Naipaul's works of fiction about Trinidadians, or Achebe's comments on Nigerian culture, raise questions about the authority of an individual to speak on behalf of others from a common cultural group.[87] Furthermore, although people from different cultural groups can share and identify with beliefs and values in texts embodying or discussing their culture, there also exist nuances within their interpretations that might lead to finding new or different meanings within texts. This naturally leads to the question of how implicit imbalances of power from the construction of the relationships between teachers, students and texts, determine which interpretive voices resonate more strongly, and which are silenced, in classroom discussions. This is partly answered by Kyung-Won, who suggests that "most postcolonial projects have a common denominator: the critical rereading of texts in the Western canon that have

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[85] Alcoff, L. (1991). "The Problem of Speaking for Others." Cultural Critique **20**(20): 5-32, Kyung-Won, L. (1997). "Is the Glass Half-Empty or Half-Full? Rethinking the Problems of Postcolonial Revisionism." Ibid.(36): 89-117, Heble, A. (2002). "Re-Ethicizing the Classroom: Pedagogy, the Public Sphere, and the Postcolonial Condition." College Literature **29**(1): 143-160, Thieme, J. (2002). Postcolonial Con-Texts: Writing Back to the Canon, Bloomsbury Publishing.

[86] Alcoff, L. (1991). "The Problem of Speaking for Others." Cultural Critique **20**(20): 5-32.

[87] V.S. Naipaul is a West Indian writer known for his fictional works on Trinidadian culture, such as; Naipaul, V. S. (1969). The Mimic Men. United Kingdom, Penguin, Naipaul, V. S. (1977). A House for Mr Biswas. Great Britain, Penguin, Naipaul, V. S. (2001). Half A Life. New York, Knopf. Chinua Achebe is a Nigerian writer well known for his novel Achebe, C. (1959). Things Fall Apart. New York, Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.

been thought of as embodying universal and transhistorical values" (89).[88] His statement indicates that a postcolonial reading of texts might help further contextualise the values presented in these and create space for the sharing of new perspectives.

The absence of other cultural voices from reading lists can result in sustaining cultural stereotypes. For example, Bradford notes that, before the 1970s, Aboriginal identity in Australia was being represented by "non-Indigenous authors and illustrators [who] increasingly turned to the colonial past in order to address ideologies of race in contemporary Australia" (193).[89] Writings by non-Indigenous authors can be seen as limited or misrepresented perspectives of Indigenous culture. So the presence of a range of cultural voices, in this case, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, might enrich the perspectives or impressions students have about different cultures in society. In this example, a wider selection of options or cultural perspectives could include many other texts that portray colonial encounters, views and experience with Indigenous Australians. Similarly, Patterson stresses that English literature enables students to explore

> … weighty moral and ethical issues through the study of a broad range of texts and [learn] to form judgements and develop tolerance as a result of their explorations [which] is an important plank in the development of civil society. There are signs, however, that, especially at the senior levels of secondary schooling in Australia, this is not enough (313).[90]

This statement suggests an absence of cultural discussions in texts or a lack of variety of texts listed in Australian English curricula, perhaps even a combination of both. However, Bradford's and Patterson's arguments are that

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[88] Kyung-Won, L. (1997). "Is the Glass Half-Empty or Half-Full? Rethinking the Problems of Postcolonial Revisionism." Cultural Critique(36): 89-117.
[89] Bradford, C. (2012). "Instilling Postcolonial Nostalgias: Ned Kelly Narratives for Children." Journal of Australian Studies **36**(2): 191-206.
[90] Patterson, A. (2008). "Teaching Literature in Australia: Examining and Reviewing Senior English." Changing English **15**(3): 311-322.

literature seems to be a conduit to present information about other cultures to the Western world, and a variety of texts enables students to explore multiple perspectives.

In England, Sadana argues that despite the wave of prize-winning literature from South Asian writers, English texts seem to lose cultural meaning when prepared for Western audiences. She argues that

> Postcolonial criticism has emphasized the relationship of colonizer and colonized, [yet] transnational literary markets seem to be focused on how Western readerships might understand the political and social conditions of the so-called Third World. What these two models of reading and framing Indian English Literature have in common is their promotion of a literary axis that posits knowledge of and from [for example] India flowing to western metropoles (4).[91]

Her argument suggests that texts present cultural or transcultural issues for Western audiences. Perhaps a postcolonial approach to teaching texts might help raise an awareness of other cultural voices and opinions in texts. For instance, a postcolonial reading of *'The Kite Runner'*, [92] which depicts issues related to contemporary Islamic culture, might raise informative questions such as the extent to which the author is presenting a realistic impression of contemporary Islamic issues? Such conversations suggest that the presence of many cultural voices, especially on school reading lists, are important to help students appreciate different interpretations of and perspectives on culture.

One of the challenges of using a postcolonial approach is deciding which sets of *'cultural voices'* are to be included on school reading lists. Selecting texts to represent different cultural groups becomes challenging since no single text can claim to be an absolute or complete representation of one cultural group. Rather each text is representative of different perspectives, so how does one select those which are most important to discuss? Nozaki

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[91] Sadana, R. (2009). "Two Tales of a City." Interventions **11**(1): 1-15.
[92] Hosseini, K. (2003). The Kite Runner. New York, Riverhead Books.

argues there are a series of complications to consider when considering how to include non-western voices in the curriculum. He questions whether

> … inviting non-Western people into the classrooms to speak directly to students- thereby bringing *'voices'* of the Other - solve the problem of the West/non-West binary? Critical educators in the USA, wary of imposing only Western or American views upon students, sometimes opt for having non-Westerners speak to their classes (147).[93]

It seems difficult to establish balance between Western and non-Western voices in classrooms; one can even question where and how such a boundary can be accounted for. However, aiming for such a balance will certainly provide more choice to help faciliate conversations about the extent to which cultural issues presented in texts are true representations of their background, religion, values and beliefs. These discussions might entice them to contribute to more discussions about cultural differences in society. Discussions of postcolonial theoretical approaches in this thesis are conceptual and are not intended to provide information about how to specifically devise or utilise a postcolonial approach for either selecting or teaching texts.

2.3 Applying Postcolonial Theory to Discussions of Cultural Issues in Texts

In a time of prolific globalisation, postcolonial theory can be used as a means for engaging young students from diverse cultural backgrounds in discussions of power and identity. Though there is little evidence to suggest that postcolonial theory has been previously promoted or developed into a practical or pedagogical approach in education, this research investigates whether such an approach can be employed to focus on culture in texts in

[93] Nozaki, Y. (2009). "Critical Teaching about Asia: Orientalism, Postcolonial Perspectives and Cross-cultural Education." Journal of Intercultural Studies **30**(2): 141-155.

terms of tensions that are presented, interpreted and discussed by contemporary students. According to Mohammadzadeh, cultural texts will help deconstruct Orientalist stereotypes that exist in literature, as it is only then that, "students can come to see how literary representations of the *Other* have offered Western writers with opportunities to misrepresent the majority of the world's population as deceitful, dangerous and inhuman" (25).[94] It must be acknowledged that not *all* cultural texts will offer narratives of Western writers misrepresenting Orients. It is important to highlight that there is no single or accurate 'truth' in terms of how culture/s are represented in texts. This means that in order to decipher how meaning is shaped and represented there must be a variety of options which shape perspectives and tell different stories.[95]

Researchers in culture and education like Morrell, Dong, Brauer and Clark argue that exposure to different cultural texts in schools enables students to consider their family ancestry or cultural past alongside perceptions of existing or new globalised or hybrid identities.[96] These scholars agree that a larger variety of cultural texts ought to be included on English reading lists in order that students are enabled to examine and discuss challenges and/or issues related to cultural changes in contemporary societies. This proposition is perhaps even anticipated in education programmes in developed countries, yet Hickling-Hudson states that, in countries like Australia and England,

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[94] Mohammadzadeh, B. (2009). "Incorporating Multicultural Literature in English Language Teaching Curriculum." Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences **1**(1): 23-27.

[95] Tikly, L. (1999). "Postcolonial and Comparative Education." International Review of Education **45**(5), Tatum, A., L. S. Wold and L. Elish-Piper (2009). "Adolescents and Texts: Scaffolding the English Canon with Linked Text Sets." The English Journal **98**(6): 88-91.

[96] For their work and others, please see: Blake, B. E. (1998). ""Critical" Reader Response in an Urban Classroom: Creating Cultural Texts to Engage Diverse Readers." Theory into Practice **37**(3): 238-243, Dong, Y. R. (2005). "Taking a Cultural-Response Approach to Teaching Multicultural Literature." The English Journal **94**(3): 55-60, Morrell, E. (2005). "Critical English Education." English Education **37**(4): 312-321, Brauer, L. and C. T. Clark (2008). "The Trouble Is English: Reframing English Studies in Secondary Schools." Ibid. **40**: 293-313, Friese, E. E. G., D. E. Alvermann, A. Parkes and A. T. Rezak (2008). "Selecting texts for English Language Arts classrooms: When assessment is not enough." English Teaching-Practice and Critique **7**(3): 74-99.

> We continue putting our children for the whole of their childhood and adolescence into schools organised along 19th-century lines of age-grading, subject fragmentation and psychological manipulation. We continue to require students to specialise in Western modes of knowledge and give them little or no opportunity to explore alternative epistemologies (312).[97]

Though the education system in both countries seems to be slowly germinating from a 19th century seed, one can anticipate that change would be difficult to inculcate. A postcolonial theorist might argue that though education systems are growing out of former colonial shells it is important as teachers to be mindful of discussing societal issues with a contemporary population that does not prioritise the values and morals of some cultures over others.

Conversations about cultural issues are potentially infinite; that is any text can be read and cultural connections can be made between those examples listed in texts and contemporary views in society. Raja states "literary texts do not constitute an end in themselves but are rather instrumental in teaching the world" (33).[98] Overall, there seem to be two schools of thought when it comes to considering the function of texts in regards to learning. Firstly, there is a traditional belief that any text can be substituted for another and learning will still be achieved because the end goal lies in the curriculum. Michaels and Gold support this philosophy by suggesting "texts are not an end in themselves … texts are not what students learn about, but they are vehicles through which students learn about how meaning is made" (91).[99] On the other hand, the second school of thought suggests that texts are more important than just fulfilling a function of curricula because through texts learning is not just achieved but is reinforced when students can relate to texts.

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[97] Hickling-Hudson, A. (2010). Curriculum in Postcolonial Contexts. International Encyclopedia of Education (Third Edition). P. P. B. McGaw. Oxford, Elsevier: 299-306.

[98] Raja, M. A. (2008). "The Postcolonial Student: Learning the Ethics of Global Solidarity in an English Classroom." The Radical Teacher(82): 32-37.

[99] Michaels, W. and E. Gold (2006). "'As Time Goes By' or Read it Again, Sam." Metaphor(1): 90-99.

Scholars like Applebee argue for this view and claim that if "we build curricula in which texts are related in meaningful ways, learning becomes cumulative and reinforcing" (50).[100] From a postcolonial viewpoint, there is a power struggle between the positioning of curriculum and texts, and questions are raised about which comes first, and which is more important. Gay, Lindblom, Hickling-Hudson, and Thomas comment on the benefits of including a range of culturally diverse and contemporary texts on the curriculum.[101] Thomas adds that diverse texts "serve ultimately as a means for contributing to a greater end that is more personally significant for students and more beneficial for society" (102).[102] Based on these statements there is considerable scholarship which implies that the learning aims of the curriculum are perhaps easier to achieve if students are motivated to read and can engage with texts. Though these two entities ought to be augumenting each other to share a united goal of improving education outcomes, instead such a struggle seems to represent differing opinions about the purpose and goal of secondary education. Given these arguments how might a postcolonial approach to the selection and teaching of English texts contribute new knowledge, and perspectives in regards to the inclusion of more cultural texts in English programmes?

Some of the earliest investigations into the patterns of English text selection for young learners were conducted in the United States,[103] led by the publication of Applebee's research on how English texts were selected to fulfil the learning goals of the curriculum. He found that "… with only a few

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[100] Applebee, A. N. (1994). "Toward Thoughtful Curriculum: Fostering Discipline-Based Conversation." The English Journal **83**(3): 45-52.

[101] Lindblom, K. (2005). "Teaching English in the World: The Post-9/11 English Teacher." Ibid. **94**(4): 106-109, Hickling-Hudson, A. (2010). Curriculum in Postcolonial Contexts. International Encyclopedia of Education (Third Edition). P. P. B. McGaw. Oxford, Elsevier**:** 299-306, Thomas, P. L. (2012). "Adventures with Text and Beyond." English Journal **101**(4): 90, Gay, G. (2013). "Teaching To and Through Cultural Diversity." Curriculum Inquiry **43**(1): 48-70.

[102] Thomas, P. L. (2012). "Adventures with Text and Beyond." English Journal **101**(4): 90.

[103] The United States has the only dedicated research journal in English Education *'Research in the Teaching of English'*, National Council of Teachers of English. (2015). "Research in the Teaching of English." Retrieved August 7, 2015, from http://www.ncte.org/journals/rte.

exceptions, the [text] selections remain white, male and Eurocentric, and the materials expect *'right answers'* from students, rather than thoughtful interpretations that might legitimately vary" (45).[104] Similarly, Holloway and Greig argue that critical thinkers in the 21st century need to be able to relate to different cultural and social issues in texts and not avoid those that seem threatening or contentious.[105]Close to two decades later, Johnston and Mangat's studies revealed that, as with Applebee's, the majority of texts in English classrooms were Eurocentric and canonical. Johnston and Mangat found that

> Most of the well-loved texts that have remained on [North American] school reading lists for decades continue to be taught, with little attempt to deconstruct or address issues of race, class, gender that appear in the literature, or to uncover ideologies of the texts. Often, the introduction of some new multicultural texts is presented as an 'add-on' to existing literature and taught as a culture tour of exotic and unknown places (ix).[106]

They point out that well-loved or more traditional texts tend to be non-threatening because they do not address contentious social and/or cultural issues with diverse learners.

Similarly, Gay identifies that "teachers may concentrate on only *'safe'* topics about cultural diversity such as ethnic customs, cuisines, costumes [which leads to] neglecting more troubling issues like inequalities, injustices, oppressions" (57).[107] These *'safe'* topics were perhaps those that provided examples of cultural beliefs and practices that are far removed from the lives and identities of their students. A postcolonial theorist might speculate that culturally 'safe' texts are equally bad or perhaps worse than white, male,

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[104] Applebee, A. N. (1994). "Toward Thoughtful Curriculum: Fostering Discipline-Based Conversation." The English Journal **83**(3): 45-52.
[105] Holloway, S. M. and C. J. Greig (2011). "Literacy Text Selections in Secondary School Classrooms: Exploring the Practices of English Teachers as Agents of Change." Brock Education **20**(2): 1.
[106] Johnston, I. and J. Mangat (2012). Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literature, and Cultural Mediation in the Classroom. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers.
[107] Gay, G. (2013). "Teaching To and Through Cultural Diversity." Curriculum Inquiry **43**(1): 48-70.

canonical texts which are representative of Western values, since a culturally 'safe' text implies that the issues in these resources have been so *'whitewashed'* in terms of their analysis and contributions to cultural discussions that they are no longer truly representative of struggles faced by cultural others but are accepted as part of their identity.

Pohan and Aguilar found that culturally diverse texts are used mostly to discuss issues related to race, which they find quite limiting because it "excludes the sociocultural educational discrepancies associated with social class, gender, religion, languages (other than English), and sexual orientation" (161).[108] Therefore, texts containing cultural narratives are rich resources that can be referenced when discussing a range of cultural issues, not just those related to race. The fact that race seems to be one issue that is most debated over others shows that the power construct of race is still omnipresent in society. Even if one presents a contextual argument that race is discussed to inform students of struggles of the past, then why does it still hold such a powerful position over other equally relevant contentious issues?

Stickland, Hunter, Arnot and Weiler identify some crucial issues teachers face when attempting to engage with culturally diverse texts. These include the lack of experience of teachers to engage with newer materials,[109] inadequate training of teachers[110] and the struggles in which teachers engage in order to differentiate their voice and bias of cultural knowledge in texts and not impart these to young learners.[111] Leigh, Hall and Piazza's research identifies that many teachers "want their students to move beyond regurgitating facts and ideas, and begin to use texts to understand their world

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[108] Pohan, C. A., Aguilar, Teresita E. (2001). "Measuring Educators' Beliefs About Diversity in Personal and Professional Contexts." American Educational Research Journal **38**(1): 159-182.

[109] Strickland, D. S. (1994). "Reinventing Our Literacy Programs: Books, Basics, Balance." The Reading Teacher **48**(4): 294-302.

[110] Hunter, I. (1996). Is English an Emancipatory Discipline? Australian Humanities Review. http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org, Association for the Study of Australian Literature (ASAL). **1**.

[111] Arnot, M. and K. Weiler (1993). Feminism and social justice in education: international perspectives. London, Falmer Press.

in transformative ways" (91).[112] If researchers demonstrate the advantages to teaching a wider range of culturally diverse texts to contemporary students, there remains hesitation from some educators about the potentially contentious issues these texts might raise. What are some of the current debates for improving the teaching of English Literature in secondary classrooms? How do these debates have an impact on the future of English education?

2.4 Identifying the Gaps in Current Research

The research aims of this thesis focus on investigating the processes involved with the selection and teaching of English texts to engage students in discussions of cultural differences.[113] The following sections map a critical overview of scholarly debates which raise pertinent questions with regards to existing scholarship on curriculum, prescribed texts, pedagogy and student responses to English studies and texts.

2.4.1 Curriculum

Research on 'curriculum' encompasses a range of studies on broad and diverse areas pivoting across curriculum development, critical design, educators' perspectives and purpose of learning.[114] This body of research is both intricate and extensive and can be traced to the establishment of education itself, to put it simply, teaching could not be facilitated without a plan and, to borrow from Doll,[115] this is what curriculum has since developed

[112] Hall, L. A. and S. V. Piazza (2010). "Challenging Texts: Engaging with Critical Literacy: Reflections on Teaching and Learning." The English Journal **99**(5): 91-94.
[113] Refer to Chapter 1, Section 1.3—Rationale for and Aims of the Research, on pg.,, 6.
[114] These are broad terms/fields frequently referenced in the literature, which are discussed in the following paragraphs.
[115] Doll states the origin of the word '*curriculum*' goes back to the late 16th century and then used to describe a "regular course of study or training" (10), see Doll, W. E., Jr. (2012). "Complexity and the Culture of Curriculum." Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity in Education **9**(1): 10.

from a plan for learning. While reviewing existing publications on 'curriculum' studies, I noted a pattern of key words - struggle, balance, voice, needs, purpose – consistently recurring in the publications most relevant to my aim. These words helped redefine my focus on curriculum scholarship on the 'building' and 'balancing' of English curricula, since these functions are most relevant to the aim of this research; to explore the extent to which English curricula is framed to challenge students to consider cultural differences. The following is a review of publications, which discuss how this (curriculum) aim is situated in, and related to, existing scholarship.

If one were to examine the evolution of curriculum design, it would become apparent that its primary purpose, as I described earlier to be a 'plan for learning', has not evolved much over time, compared to the quantity of structure and content that has been included for study. Particularly in English studies, both structure and content have been adapted to be relevant and useful for different generations of diverse learners, whose skills and knowledge continue to be shaped by society and time. One might ask how does structure and content evolve to meet the demands and changes of society? Pinar's work on curriculum theory focuses on considering how to build or construct curriculum for an uncertain future.[116] He examines core areas like teaching, study and the general process of education and his findings suggest that changes to the curriculum over time have led to creating documents or policies that become increasingly removed from the control of educators. He suggests that curriculum has become a *'nightmare'*[117] because educators seem to have lost control over it. Yet investigating more into the history of curriculum development, based on the works of Hargreaves, Baird, O'Neill, Doll, Goodson, Anderson, Yates and Collins to name a few, it seems

[116] Pinar, W. and C. Ebooks (2004). What is Curriculum Theory? Mahwah, N.J, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Pinar, W. (2006). Race, Religion, and a Curriculum of Reparation: Teacher Education for a Multicultural Society, Springer, Pinar, W. (2011). The Character of Curriculum Studies: Bildung, Currere, and the Recurring Question of the Subject, Springer.

[117] Pinar, W. and C. Ebooks (2004). What is Curriculum Theory? Mahwah, N.J, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

this 'nightmare' or the evolution of curriculum into a large, complex, webbed force was anticipated as a natural course of change.[118] For instance, research in the early 90s by Doll, Goodson and Medway show that curriculum evolution as a process had to move from 'the simple' to a 'dynamic and complex structure', because it was expected to encompass societal changes and needs. Their research shows that the growth in content and structure seemed to swell beyond the simplicity of its initial purpose, and curricula evolved from being a roadmap of learning to a survival handbook of education. Though this is a basic account of curriculum development, it emphasises the point that, particularly for the subject English, there has been significant changes and challenges attributed to the questions of 'who', 'how' and 'why' we educate. The answer to this question is related to my aim of exploring '*how*' English curricula changes to challenge students '*who*' need to consider cultural differences so that (*why*) they can become more functional members of society.

One of the first challenges of 'who', 'how' and 'why' we educate is based on interpretation of English curricula. Over time there have been several approaches of unpicking the complexities of curricula by trying to interpret meanings through theoretical readings, for example using schools of thought like post-structuralism, post-modernism and even postcolonial theory (as reviewed earlier in this chapter).[119] However, when it comes to English curricula, researchers like Keeling, Kokkinos, Madsen, Peim, McKernan, gravitate towards 'critical theory' as a framework for thinking about English

[118] Other scholarship that referenced the importance of, and associated difficulties with changes to curriculum over time, include; Shuman, R. B. (1981). "Education in the 80's: English.", StJohn-Brooks, C., M. Hammersley and A. Hargreaves (1983). "2 English: A Curriculum for Personal Development?" Curriculum Practice: Some Sociological Case Studies: 37-59, Anderson, P. M. (1986). "The Past Is Now: Approaches to the Secondary School Literature Curriculum." The English Journal **75**(8): 19-22, O'Neill, M. (1987). "English Curriculum: A Kind of Anarchy." English Education **19**(1): 6-30, Mangan, J. A. (1988). Benefits Bestowed: Education and British Imperialism. Manchester [Greater Manchester]; New York, Manchester University Press, Doll Jr, W. E. (1989). "Foundations for a Post-Modern Curriculum." Journal of Curriculum Studies **21**(3): 243-253, Goodson, I. and P. Medway (1990). Bringing English to Order: The History and Politics of a School Subject. New York;London;, Falmer Press, Yates, L. Y. N. and C. Collins (2010). "The Absence of Knowledge in Australian Curriculum Reforms." European Journal of Education **45**(1): 89-102.

[119] For a more detailed description of these theoretical constructs, see Chapter 3 – Methodology, pg.,, 79.

curriculum.[120] In 1968, Madsen (who claims not to be a specialist in theory) argues there is no such thing as a "critical theory" but rather "theories", yet he endorses the necessity for these in English education because "…theories have influenced our teaching of literature in secondary schools ever since English has been a bona fide subject in the curriculum and will continue to do so in the future"(26).[121] While there is truth about theories sustaining a role in English curricula, there has also been the finessing of 'critical theory' as aside from other theoretical schools of thought. In 2011, Miller argues that critical theory is a distinctive approach that is necessary in contemporary education because, "rather than deny the presence of power relationships, the critical theorists believe in talking about the elephant in the room" (35).[122] This is relevant to my research aim because to understand how curricula are framed to challenge contemporary students I must first seek answers for what are some of the problems and limitations associated with the building and balancing of English curricula?

Research shows when building or constructing English curricula, it is first important to set clear learning objectives that help frame and challenge student learning.[123] Chamberlain identified that in its earliest development the

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[120] Madsen, A. L. (1968). "Literary Critical Theory and the English Education Specialist." Selected Addresses Delivered at the Conference on English Education(6): 25-32, Horkheimer, M. (1972). Critical Theory; Selected Essays. New York, Herder and Herder, Watson, G. (1978). The Discipline of English: A Guide to Critical Theory and Practice. London, Macmillan, Held, D. (1980). Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas. Berkeley, University of California Press, Wexler, P. (1991). Critical Theory Now. New York;London;, Falmer Press, Tallack, D. (1995). Critical Theory: A Reader. New York, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Green, K. and J. LeBihan (1996). Critical Theory and Practice: A Coursebook. New York;London;, Routledge, Zima, P. V. (2002). Deconstruction and Critical Theory. New York;London;, Continuum, How, A. (2003). Critical Theory. New York, Palgrave Macmillan, Peim, N. (2004). "A History of Ideas: English Teaching in England as Deconstruction of Curriculum Politics." English in Australia(141): 62, Kokkinos, C. (2007). "Critical Theory and Education." The International Journal of Technology, Knowledge, and Society: Annual Review **1**(1): 79-82, Tyson, L. and L. Ebook (2011). Using Critical Theory: How to Read and Write about Literature. New York, Routledge, McKernan, J. A. (2013). "The Origins of Critical Theory in Education: Fabian Socialism as Social Reconstructionism in Nineteenth-Century Britain." British Journal of Educational Studies **61**(4): 417, Keeling, K. (2014). "Critical Theory and Popular Education." Cultural Studies **28**(4): 676-689.

[121] Madsen, A. L. (1968). "Literary Critical Theory and the English Education Specialist." Selected Addresses Delivered at the Conference on English Education(6): 25-32, ibid.

[122] Miller, D. L. (2011). "Curriculum Theory and Practice: What's Your Style?" The Phi Delta Kappan **92**(7): 32-39.

[123] Goodson, I. F. and I. Goodson (2002). The Making Of The Curriculum : Collected Essays. Hoboken, Routledge.

main ambition, in 1925, was to construct English curricula where teachers had more control of learning goals set to be taught so that theorists "may no longer dictate the materials for study", she defensively questions "*Who is the English specialist?*" (5).[124] Back then, English teachers were considered the specialists, or the most qualified group to set curriculum objectives. Brauer and Clark explain "after more than a century of debate, it would seem that secondary English still suffers from an identity crisis and remains disconnected from a stable curricula domain" (294).[125] This seems to suggest that English curricula grew beyond the informed expertise of only teachers and seem to be reflective of more than just learning goals, it became a complicated system of measure.

Hargreaves' analysis shows that education has become more "obsessed with imposing and micromanaging curriculum uniformity, squeezing schools and teachers into the tunnel of vision of test scores, achievement targets and league table accountability," (5)[126] and this begins to shed light on the complex expectations generated over the years from education curricula. These and other contemporary works by Beavis, Kress, Ball, and O'Neill and Green dissect the complexities with English curriculum and imply that placing priority on standardising English curricula might have led to more risk of neglecting the content and resources.[127] This information helps me critically to consider my research aim in terms of questioning the extent to which framing

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[124] Chamberlain, E. (1925). "Curriculum Building in English." The English Journal **14**(1): 1-12.

[125] Brauer, L. and C. T. Clark (2008). "The Trouble Is English: Reframing English Studies in Secondary Schools." English Education **40**(4): 293-313.

[126] Hargreaves, A. (2003). Teaching in the knowledge society: Education in the age of insecurity, Teachers College Press.

[127] O'Neill, M. (1987). "English Curriculum: A Kind of Anarchy." English Education **19**(1): 6-30, Ball, S. J., R. Bowe and S. Gewirtz (1996). "School choice, social class and distinction: the realization of social advantage in education." Journal of Education Policy **11**(1): 89-112, Green, B., C. Beavis, P. Deakin University. Faculty of Education.Open Campus, S. Deakin University. School of and P. Cultural Studies in Education.Open Campus (1996). Teaching the English subjects: Essays on English curriculum History and Australian schooling. Geelong, Vic, Deakin University Press, Beavis, C. (2001). "It Makes You Realize, Really, Just How Deep Your Subtext Is": "Literature, Subjectivity, and Curriculum Change." Research in the Teaching of English **36**(1): 38-63, Beavis, C. (2003). "English Teaching and the uses of History." English in Australia(n 2003): 9, Green, B. and P. Cormack (2008). "Curriculum History, 'English' and the New Education; or, Installing the empire of English?" Pedagogy, Culture & Society **16**(3): 253-267, Green, B. (2010). "Knowledge, the future, and education (al) research: A new-millennial challenge." The Australian Educational Researcher **37**(4): 43-62.

of current learning goals focuses on challenging student development?

The curriculum is built to be complemented by resources that help guide students to achieve outcomes, and this associated pairing seems to be heavily debated in academic research. There are academics like, Manuel, Strickland, Benton, Patterson, Pohan, and others, who generally agree that resources should not only be complementary but also relevant, so as not to *disengage* young learners from English.[128] For example, Manuel and Brock question whether the Board of Studies, New South Wales design English curricula that, "really encourage students to enjoy and appreciate literature? We think that, after protracted discussions, debates, questions, reminiscences and the odd argument or two, their answer would probably be 'yes' but ...!" (25).[129] While exam boards might be able to defend that English curricula are inspiring students to engage with literature, many scholars still question these claims. Rudnick, Goodson, Hunter and Applebee are a few who identify that English curricula can be challenging and based on this they defend the importance of building curricula that is enjoyable for students.[130] Herein lies

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[128] Strickland, D. S. (1994). "Reinventing Our Literacy Programs: Books, Basics, Balance." The Reading Teacher **48**(4): 294-302, Athanases, S. (1998). "Diverse Learners, Diverse Texts: Exploring Identity and Difference through Literary Encounters." Journal of Literacy Research **30**(2): 273-296, Benton, M. (2000). "Canons Ancient and Modern: The Texts we Teach." Educational Review **52**(3): 269, Pohan, C. A., Aguilar, Teresita E. (2001). "Measuring Educators' Beliefs About Diversity in Personal and Professional Contexts." American Educational Research Journal **38**(1): 159-182, Cai, M. (2002). Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults: Reflections on Critical Issues. Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, Manuel, J. and D. Robinson (2002). "What Are Teenagers Reading? The Findings of a Survey of Teenagers' Reading Choices and the Implications of these for English Teachers' Classroom Practice." English in Australia(135): 69-78, Lapp, D. and D. Fisher (2009). "It's All about the Book: Motivating Teens to Read." Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy **52**(7): 556-561, Holloway, S. M. and C. J. Greig (2011). "Literacy Text Selections in Secondary School Classrooms: Exploring the Practices of English Teachers as Agents of Change." Brock Education **20**(2): 1, Hastie, M. and E. Sharplin (2012). "Why Did you Choose that Text?: Influences on English teachers' Choices of Reading Materials for Students." English in Australia **47**(2): 36-44, Patterson, A. J. (2012). "Australian Literature: Culture, Identity and English Teaching." Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature **12**(1): 1-17, Davies, L. M., B. Doecke and P. Mead (2013). "Reading the Local and Global: Teaching Literature in Secondary Schools in Australia." Changing English **20**(3): 224.

[129] Manuel, J. and P. Brock (2003). "'W (h) ither the Place of Literature?': Two Momentous Reforms in the NSW Senior Secondary English Curriculum." English in Australia(136): 15.

[130] Goodson, I. and P. Medway (1990). Bringing English to Order: The History and Politics of a School Subject. New York;London;, Falmer Press, Applebee, A. N. (1993). Literature in the Secondary School: Studies of Curriculum and Instruction in the United States, National Council of Teachers of English, Applebee, A. N. (1994). "Toward Thoughtful Curriculum: Fostering Discipline-Based Conversation." The English Journal **83**(3): 45-52, Applebee, A. N. (1996). Curriculum as conversation: Transforming traditions of teaching and learning, University of Chicago Press, Hunter, I. (1996). Is English an

the difficulty, these scholars argue for curriculum that is engaging and enjoyable but none of their existing research specifically focuses on how these terms can be interpreted or measured as being achieved.[131] For example, 'enjoyment' is an ambiguous term; does it mean students can relate to curricula because it poses similar constructs to what is known? Or is it 'enjoyment' because the curriculum is informative and teaches them about perspectives they do not know? Or thirdly, is 'enjoyment' a balance of both (?), and if so who or what constitutes the 'known' and 'unknown'. In addition to these questions, how do we know the content and resources from different timeframes - past, present, future – are enjoyable for contemporary learners. Then again, building curricula that can be 'enjoyed' might not be classified as a priority of learning or achieving English outcomes. Just as Green explains that educators need to think more centrally of English curriculum when mediating these links between past, present and future,[132] so too, one can argue that a balance should be considered when building curricula for learning and enjoyment – but how is this balance to be achieved?

Scholarly research about balancing English curricula keeps the reader at the forefront focusing on constructing learning aims and selecting resources. The recent works of Doll, Osberg, Goddard and others suggests that obtaining a balance might need to start with asking, '*what does English aim to teach?*'.[133] Doll's earlier work addresses curriculum as a sum of parts that needs

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Emancipatory Discipline? Australian Humanities Review. http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org, Association for the Study of Australian Literature (ASAL). **1**, Gordon, J. (2012). "More than Canons: Teacher Knowledge and the Literary Domain of the Secondary English Curriculum." Educational Research **54**(4): 375-390, Green, B., P. Cormack and A. Patterson (2013). "Re-reading the reading lesson: episodes in the history of reading pedagogy." Oxford Review of Education **39**(3): 329-344.

[131] Performance in examination is not accepted as a form of measurement of how much students enjoyed texts, since examinations test understanding and responses to resources rather than engagement or enjoyment of them.

[132] Green, B. (2004). "Curriculum,'English'and Cultural Studies; or, Changing the Scene of English Teaching?" Changing English **11**(2): 291-305.

[133] Shuman, R. B. (1981). "Education in the 80's: English.", Green, B. (2003). "Curriculum inquiry in Australia: Toward a local genealogy of the curriculum field." International handbook of curriculum research: 123-141, Doll, W. E. (2008). "Complexity and the culture of curriculum." Educational Philosophy and Theory **40**(1): 190-212, Osberg, D. and G. Biesta (2010). "The End/s of Education: Complexity and the Conundrum of the Inclusive Educational Curriculum." International Journal of Inclusive Education **14**(6): 593-607, Goddard, A., A. Henry, M. Mondor and M. van der Laaken (2013).

to be cumulative rather than transformative,[134] which can be interpreted as meaning coming together when one assimilates all the parts. Doll's work is interesting because he seems to suggest that balance will be obtained eventually *anyway* through the process of learning and extracting meaning, but he does not dissect '*how*' balance could be achieved in a dynamic education system, if meanings change depending on the intended audience or the '*who*' we educate. Osberg and Biesta disagree about cumulative meaning expressing that

> Educational curriculum is the primary culprit [of exclusion] because its main function is to be a guide in the educational process. This is however not to say that the curriculum is a problem because of its guiding role per se. It is a problem rather, because of the linear way in which we understand this role (594).135

They accept that the curriculum has always meant to be a guide in the educational process but now it holds the power to control '*what*' is learnt and strictly define '*how*' students learn. Although their view of the '*who*' is inclusive, which means accepting all students regardless of race, class, gender, disability/ies this blanket approach does not necessarily mean that (cultural) balance is being achieved. This raises questions about what are some of the issues associated with making English curricula an all-inclusive package so that it can challenge students to consider cultural differences?

Some scholars argue that the core difficulty with achieiving balance in curriuclum, which is inclusive of all cultures, stems from the power struggles within the curriculum to maintain Western ideals and resources. Nozaki explains that "curriculum is a site of power struggles and is often a means of hegemonic power, especially in the way it represents peoples, histories,

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"'Have you ever been to England? You know, they speak really weird English there'. Some implications of the growth of English as a global language for the teaching of English in the UK." English in Education **47**(1): 79-95.

[134] Doll Jr, W. E. (1989). "Foundations for a Post-Modern Curriculum." Journal of Curriculum Studies **21**(3): 243-253.

[135] Osberg, D. and G. Biesta (2010). "The End/s of Education: Complexity and the Conundrum of the Inclusive Educational Curriculum." International Journal of Inclusive Education **14**(6): 593-607.

cultures and so forth" (142).[136] The decisions of what learning goals are to be achieved or, which texts should be studied and which cultural groups discussed, constitutes a power struggle. Asher argues that most often Western cultural values and texts tend to dominate school programmes resulting in a pervasive Eurocentrism overriding English education, which leads to

> The marginalization and loss of indigenous knowledge and epistemologies, the reproduction and internalization of colonialist structures and practices, and the resultant contradictions and contestations in curriculum and pedagogy ... we see how race, class, language, and culture, intertwined with the internalization of the colonizer and the legacy of Eurocentrism in curriculum and teaching, work to rectify, recreate, and transmit the effects of colonization within and across specific locales (72).[137]

Therefore, curriculum can be viewed as a functional tool for transmitting colonial values through the structuring of learning goals, pedagogy and resources. So what are some of the broader issues with the construction of contemporary English curricula?

Brown, Doug, Reay, Yates and Collins believe that contemporary curricula is unbalanced because it does not service the needs of all types of learners.[138] For instance Brown's work shows the selection of literature for secondary learners in the United Kingdom is framed around discussions of British identity and culture, yet there are many students who originate from 'other' cultures and inclusion of their voices within curricula proves to be a

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[136] Nozaki, Y. (2009). "Critical Teaching about Asia: Orientalism, Postcolonial Perspectives and Cross-cultural Education." Journal of Intercultural Studies **30**(2): 141-155.

[137] Asher, N. (2009). Decolonization and Education: Locating Pedagogy and Self at the Interstices in Global Times. Postcolonial Challenges in Education. R. S. Coloma. New York, Peter Lang Publishing**:** 67-77.

[138] Mangan, J. A. (1988). Benefits Bestowed: Education and British Imperialism. Manchester [Greater Manchester]; New York, Manchester University Press, Reay, D. (2006). "The Zombie Stalking English Schools: Social Class and Educational Inequality." British Journal of Educational Studies **54**(3): 288-307, Yates, L. (2009). "From Curriculum to Pedagogy and Back Again: Knowledge, the Person and the Changing World." Pedagogy, Culture & Society **17**(1): 17-28, Doug, R. (2011). "The British Schools' National Curriculum: English and the Politics of Teaching Poetry from 'Different Cultures and Traditions'." Journal of Curriculum Studies **43**(4): 439-456, Brown, J. (2012). "Managing Difference: Secondary English in the National Curriculum." English in Education **46**(3): 247-260.

significant challenge.[139] As well, Doug goes beyond the discussions of culture to broader societal issues, such as English curricula not being ready to include the work of gay poets, he argues

> … in the spirit of fostering cultural inclusiveness - that Black and Asian poets living in the UK should be seen as English, especially in the context of today's multi-cultural Britain in which cultural 'familiarity' should be an over-riding feature and not cultural 'differenced'. Nowhere should this be emphasized more so than in the sphere of education for our pupils. (452)[140]

Their research calls for a reconsideration of how and whose voices and cultures are being held out to be British and whether this is at the risk of excluding much of current society. These researchers have commonly addressed how the curriculum has deficiencies when attempting to bridge the gap to current learners. So, how instead, could an English curriculum structure and resource the teaching of culturally diverse texts to establish balance of voice and identity?

The construction of an English curriculum in the twenty-first century, according to Beavis, needs to *'look both ways'* in terms of being able to "acknowledge where we have been, and [include] the ways in which curriculum—and texts and engagement in particular—help shape individual and cultural identity, and at the same time reflect on, and prepare students for the contemporary world" (25).[141] This process seems to incite that creating curricula with a two-way method of acquiring knowledge might better equip students for life. Currently, it seems like curricula is resourced with material which reflects on issues of the past rather than projecting to, or preparing students for, the future. Style emphasises that reflecting on past curricula in order to create new pathways of "academic knowledge needs to be seen in

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[139] Brown, J. (2012). "Managing Difference: Secondary English in the National Curriculum." English in Education **46**(3): 247-260.
[140] Doug, R. (2011). "The British Schools' National Curriculum: English and the Politics of Teaching Poetry from 'Different Cultures and Traditions'." Journal of Curriculum Studies **43**(4): 439-456.
[141] Beavis, C. (2008). "Paying Attention to Texts: Literacy, Culture and Curriculum." English in Australia **43**(1): 23-32.

relation to the human experience already present in the classroom rather than as something apart from it" (67).[142] Though this approach of balance might seem quite idealistic, it seems a necessary stance to consider if we are to engage and inform student learning so that they can provide insightful commentary on different interpretations of culture.

2.4.2 *Prescribed texts*

Texts comprise the spine of English literary education, and have been described by Shannon as "fixtures in schools, nearly as ubiquitous as teachers and tests. Traditionally textbooks have been considered enduring repositories of knowledge that enable students to move past their daily experiences" (397).[143] Other scholarship has shown the purpose of texts is to help further students' knowledge and develop critical analytical skills.[144] In English education texts are the currency or, as Apple puts it, the

> … economic goods (they are sold to students, parents, and schools), political objects (they are subject to state control and regulation and hence are the result of political and ideological tensions and compromises), and cultural representations (which is included and not included, and how such knowledge is organized), is a form of cultural politics. (123)[145]

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[142] Style, E. J. (2014). "Curriculum as Encounter: Selves and Shelves." English Journal **103**(5): 67.

[143] Shannon, P. (2009). TextBook Development and Selection. International Encyclopedia of Education. P. Peterson, E. Baker and B. McGaw. United Kingdom, Elsevier Science. **1:** 8400.

[144] Ross, S. (1992). Allan Luke, "Literacy, Textbooks and Ideology" (Book Review). London ; Newbury Park [Calif.], Sage Publications. **3:** 235, Tani, M., M. Hasuko, D. Lankiewicz, S. Christodlous and S. J. Natoli (1993). Textbook Development and Selection in Japan and the United States. Crawfordsville, Ind., etc, National Council for the Social Studies. **57:** 70, Apple, M. W. (1999). Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age. New York;Ipswich;, Routledge. **2nd**, Chen, J.-J. (2002). "Reforming textbooks, reshaping school knowledge: Taiwan's textbook deregulation in the 1990s." Pedagogy, Culture & Society **10**(1): 39, Barlow, D. (2005). The Mad, Mad World of Textbook Adoption. Ann Arbor, Prakken Publications, Inc. **70:** 77, Nicholls, J. (2005). "The Philosophical Underpinnings of School Textbook Research." Paradigm(3): 24-35, Opoku-Amankwa, K., A. Brew-Hammond and F. E. Kofigah (2011). "What is in a Textbook? Investigating the Language and Literacy Learning Principles of the 'Gateway to English' Textbook Series." Pedagogy, Culture & Society **19**(2): 291-310.

[145] Apple, M. W. (1999). Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age. New York;Ipswich;, Routledge. **2nd**.

Being described as a 'currency' is a good analogy because it also carries the weight of the powers of assertion and control which are part of the wider text selection processes (content, production, selection, distribution and use).[146] This research predominantly focuses on selection and use of texts in secondary English curricula and, particularly, pays attention to the 'cultural representations' of these in English classes to understand the extent to which texts are engaging students in learning. Opuku-Amankwa, Aba and Francis argue that texts are an important part of curricula because these resources go beyond the curricula and are carried throughout a student's life, which might be the view of educators but curriculum developers see texts as holding a different function, that is being a conduit for maintaining ideologies, particularly those perceived as 'learning' and 'testing for learning'.[147] In this section, I will be presenting research which critiques the types of texts that are currently listed on English curricula in developed countries and the effects these choices on student engagement in discussions of cultural differences in contemporary society.

Most research into text selection calls for more diverse options to be added to reading lists, though this appeal has been met with concerns about what constitutes options that are both engaging and appropriate for learning.[148] Literature on text selection endorses that more diverse choice is a better option, for instance Johnston and Richardson argue that, as students

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[146] For more information on UNESCO's comprehensive strategy see; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (2005). Comprehensive Strategy for Textbooks and Learning Materials. Paris, United Nations Educational.

[147] Opoku-Amankwa, K., A. Brew-Hammond and F. E. Kofigah (2011). "What is in a Textbook? Investigating the Language and Literacy Learning Principles of the 'Gateway to English' Textbook Series." Pedagogy, Culture & Society **19**(2): 291-310.

[148] For the publications discussed in this paragraph and others, see: Farrell, E. J. (1981). "Traditional and Contemporary Literature in Secondary Schools." NASSP Bulletin **65**(444): 25-30, Tway, E. (1989). Dimensions of Multicultural Literature for Children. Children's Literature: Resource for the Classroom. M. K. Rudman. Urbana, National Council of Teachers of English Conference on College Composition and Communication. **66:** 109-138, Greenbaum, V. (1994). "Expanding the Canon: Shaping Inclusive Reading Lists." The English Journal **83**(8): 36-39, Michaels, W. and E. Gold (2006). "'As Time Goes By' or Read it Again, Sam." Metaphor(1): 90-99, Stallworth, B. J., L. Gibbons and L. Fauber (2006). "It's Not on the List: An Exploration of Teachers' Perspectives on Using Multicultural Literature." Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy **49**(6): 478-489.

become more global and form *'hybridized identities,'* we must include a selection of texts by "prize winning immigrant writers whose works are celebrated" (124)[149] so they can redefine old identities and accommodate new perspectives of culture. They suggest writers like Neil Bissoondath, Anita Rau Badami and Michael Ondaatje are excellent examples of people living in the culture of *'in between'* and whose translated lives carry with them traces of their past lives and the cultures, languages and experiences they have left behind.[150] This presumes there is benefit for including these more contemporary cultural narratives on reading lists since young learners are more a product of such *hybiridity* than traditional convention. Alternatively Stallworth, Gibbons, Fauber argue that a way of expanding options is to "include literature that appeals to students' interests and relates to their lives, the kind of books that will foster lifelong reading habits and nurture students' interest in reading" (483).[151] Yet there is contention regarding the definitions of what is appealing for young students, for instance a text that is entertaining does not necessarily carry the richness of meaning and language that is necessary to hone in those stylistic literary skills. Furthermore, the work of Michaels and Golds expresses scepticism about the inclusion of new types of texts (modes) and argue that, in secondary schools, the selection of texts to cater for these *'new identities'* meant that "not only were the old certainties of the Western canon swept unceremoniously aside, text now included film, television and t-shirts. Curiouser and curiouser, all texts appeared to be of equivalent worth" (91).[152] These researchers (mentioned above) raise valid questions about how to negotiate a balance of traditional and newer texts that are accessible to schools and can also relate to students' interests? Though

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[149] Johnston, I. and G. Richardson (2012). "Homi Bhabha and Canadian Curriculum Studies: Beyond the Comforts of the Dialectic." Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies **10**(1): 115.
[150]Discussed earlier in this chapter Section 2.2.2 (on pg.,, 29) there are concerns about voice in texts and the authority or ability to speak for other cultures., see; ibid.
[151] Stallworth, B. J., L. Gibbons and L. Fauber (2006). "It's Not on the List: An Exploration of Teachers' Perspectives on Using Multicultural Literature." Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy **49**(6): 478-489.
[152] Michaels, W. and E. Gold (2006). "'As Time Goes By' or Read it Again, Sam." Metaphor(1): 90-99.

there are debates for more types of texts (form and content), there are gaps in current research, which this thesis investigates; is there a reasonable criteria for obtaining texts that are both engaging for students and appropriate for learning?

Current research by Thompson, Goodwyn and McCurry suggest there is an ongoing struggle between teachers and educators to select texts that are most appropriate for engagement and learning. Goodwyn's research in the United Kingdom, shows that over time the power to select texts has shifted from teachers to curriculum boards and this has resulted in teachers losing autonomy to voice opinions on text selections.[153] This loss of power to curriculum/examination boards has become challenging for educators to make choices and include more options of diversity in form or content of texts. Instead, texts tend to be repeated over time despite curricula revisions every four to five years.[154] McCurry supports this argument, and suggests that power has been given to exam boards because the focus of English studies goes into preparing students for "specific features of particular kinds of examination questions" (65).[155] It seems therefore, the primary reason for repeating texts on the curriculum is to avoid the additional preparation of new content that would need to be taught to students and framed for examination preparation. Thompson's research positions the same argument, a bit differently, by suggesting that English texts might repeated on school lists because of the text selection process, rather than the texts themselves. She explains that

> the literature that was taught 40 years ago is still being taught today…inevitably, the problem with such debates over what literature is best for high school classrooms is that high school

[153] Goodwyn's research into text selection lists the practices of the United Kingdom as an example to be avoided when countries like Australia, Canada and the USA revise polices about text selection, see: Goodwyn, A. (2012). "The Status of Literature: English Teaching and the Condition of Literature Teaching in Schools." English in Education **46**(3): 212-227.

[154] Jogie, M. R. (2015). "Desperate shadows of 'Belonging': Revealing pedagogical issues with teaching prescribed English texts in the NSW Higher School Certificate (HSC)." The Australian Educational Researcher **42**(3): 335-352.

[155] McCurry, D. (2010). "English Examination Questions in Australia." English in Australia **45**(2): 55.

> teachers, despite being the ones actually engaged with students and the texts in question, have little credibility in the larger, public discourse and end up being interrupted, critiqued, or shouldered out of the conversation (38).[156]

This suggests the process of selecting texts may have increasingly excluded teachers' preferences for texts that are informative and engaging for young readers, to serve the purpose of attempting to secure successful examination passes. Though there is research to show that teachers are affected and somewhat dissatisfied by text selections, there is little evidence to determine whether they would opt for a balance between canonical and newly published texts, had they retained power of choice.

Research conducted by Eaglestone, Benton, Davies, Gordon, Johnston and Richardson, to name a few, raise concerns about the quantity of canonical texts being repeated on secondary English programmes.[157] Overall, their research looks more at the impact of using canonical texts as an education

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[156] Thompson, K. H. (2014). "Beyond the Stacks: Why High School English Teachers Should be Talking about Books." English Journal **103**(6): 38.

[157] These findings are based on studies into English text selection for secondary school students conducted in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia and published by these scholars: Benton, M. (2000). "Canons Ancient and Modern: The Texts we Teach." Educational Review **52**(3): 269, Gilbert, P. (2000). "'The Deepening Divide?': Choices for Australian Education." The Australian Educational Researcher **27**(1): 31-45, Luke, A. (2004). "At Last: The Trouble with English." Research in the Teaching of English **39**(1): 85-95, Kanu, Y., Ed. (2006). Curriculum as Cultural Practice. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, Sawyer, W. (2006). "Masters in Pieces: The English Canon for the Twenty-first Century [Book Review]." English in Australia **41**(2): 75, Tremmel, R. (2006). "Changing the Way We Think in English Education: A Conversation in the Universal Barbershop." English Education **39**(1): 10-45, Friese, E., D. Alvermann, A. Parkes and A. Rezak (2008). "Selecting Texts for English Language Arts Classrooms: When Assessment is Not Enough." English Teaching: Practice and Critique **7**(3): 74, Sadana, R. (2009). "Two Tales of a City." Interventions **11**(1): 1-15, Hall, L. A. and S. V. Piazza (2010). "Challenging Texts: Engaging with Critical Literacy: Reflections on Teaching and Learning." The English Journal **99**(5): 91-94, Holloway, S. M. and C. J. Greig (2011). "Literacy Text Selections in Secondary School Classrooms: Exploring the Practices of English Teachers as Agents of Change." Brock Education **20**(2): 1, Goodwyn, A. (2012). "The Status of Literature: English Teaching and the Condition of Literature Teaching in Schools." English in Education **46**(3): 212-227, Gordon, J. (2012). "More than Canons: Teacher Knowledge and the Literary Domain of the Secondary English Curriculum." Educational Research **54**(4): 375-390, Hastie, M. and E. Sharplin (2012). "Why Did you Choose that Text?: Influences on English teachers' Choices of Reading Materials for Students." English in Australia **47**(2): 36-44, Johnston, I. and G. Richardson (2012). "Homi Bhabha and Canadian Curriculum Studies: Beyond the Comforts of the Dialectic." Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies **10**(1): 115, Patterson, A. J. (2012). "Australian Literature: Culture, Identity and English Teaching." Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature **12**(1): 1-17, Eaglestone, R. and E. English (2013). "Journals and Student Engagement with Literary Theory." English in Education **47**(1): 18-32.

resource as it creates a narrative bias, that is more representative of traditional literature, rather than worldly literature. To unpack some of these examples, Johnston suggests one of the reasons many canonical texts are repeated on Canadian reading lists is because the

> … literary text selections and school reading practices are mediated by entrenched and self-perpetuating notions of the canon and by state understandings of a collective national identity…These [canonical] texts have become familiar to several generations of teachers and students, multiple copies of the texts are available in school book rooms, and there is a ready abundance of resources written by curriculum designers and teaching colleagues to support the teaching of these particular texts (116-17).[158]

Her argument is that canonical texts are both familiar and accessible and are therefore easier to facilitate in English programmes. Davies argues that easy accessibility is not a sufficient reason for continuing to use these resources; she advises that the selection of canonical texts on school lists "can be read as a collection that largely serves to validate white male writers, and primarily represent Australia and Australians through Anglo-Saxon eyes" (13).[159] Benton's research takes a neutral stance and suggests the presence of canonical texts serves two purposes; "the need to encourage the reading habit by including texts that will hook children on books; and the desire to develop children's reading abilities by including texts by more subtle and demanding authors" (273).[160] Most of the research (mentioned above) on the presence of canonical texts on the curriculum sheds light on challenges like, enabling students to understand both history and language referred to in these types of texts and how meaning can be inferred or passed on to young learners.

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[158] Johnston, I. (2006). Engaged Differences: School Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literatures, and Their Discontents. Curriculum as Cultural Practice, Postcolonial Imaginations. Y. Kanu. Toronto, Toronto University Press**:** 116-130.

[159] In 2012 texts were reviewed for the National Year of Reading in Australia, see: Davies, L. M. (2012). "Auditing Subject English: A Review of Text Selection Practices Inspired by the National Year of Reading." English in Australia **47**(2): 11-17.

[160] Based on recommendations for prescribed texts on the United Kingdom National Curriculum, see: Benton, M. (2000). "Canons Ancient and Modern: The Texts we Teach." Educational Review **52**(3): 269.

However, their research does not seem to address how one might measure or examine the extent to which canonical texts can challenge, or even encourage students to read widely? These examples demonstrate that, while canonical texts are accessible to teach and are recurrent on English lists, they are mostly perceived as having a negative impact on learning, since these texts exclude other cultures and are more representative of traditional Western values.[161] If the curriculum outlines that students will be able to discuss a range of cultural issues by using these texts, then this research seeks to investigate how canonical texts are helping students bridge cultural gaps in contemporary society?

The research that presents how teachers are affected by text choices, seem to also suggest that despite having only a finite list of options, they are in control of delivering lessons that are engaging and relevant to students.[162] For instance, Mehrunissa's work argues there is value now more than ever for teaching canonical texts to contemporary British students, because these are children from multicultural backgrounds who need to learn about the importance of the English literary heritage.[163] This raises an interesting question, to what extent do canonical texts help culturally diverse students consider cultural connections of the past? However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the values and meanings that are potentially transmitted through canonical texts have always been reserved for a Western audience, so this brings us back to the question of how a lack of variety can enable teachers to

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[161] For a discussion on applying postcolonial theory to discuss culture in texts, refer to Section 2.3—Applying Postcolonial Theory to Discuss Cultural Issues in Texts, on pg.,, 38.

[162] Pohan, C. A., Aguilar, Teresita E. (2001). "Measuring Educators' Beliefs About Diversity in Personal and Professional Contexts." American Educational Research Journal **38**(1): 159-182, Stallworth, B. J., L. Gibbons and L. Fauber (2006). "It's Not on the List: An Exploration of Teachers' Perspectives on Using Multicultural Literature." Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy **49**(6): 478-489, Friese, E., D. Alvermann, A. Parkes and A. Rezak (2008). "Selecting Texts for English Language Arts Classrooms: When Assessment is Not Enough." English Teaching: Practice and Critique **7**(3): 74, Ebe, A. E. (2012). "Supporting the Reading Development of Middle School English Language Learners Through Culturally Relevant Texts." Reading & Writing Quarterly **28**(2): 179, Thomas, P. L. (2012). "Adventures with Text and Beyond." English Journal **101**(4): 90, Shah, M. (2013). "Reading Canonical Texts in Multicultural Classrooms." Changing English **20**(2): 194-204.

[163] Shah, M. (2013). "Reading Canonical Texts in Multicultural Classrooms." Changing English **20**(2): 194-204.

engage students. Infact Thomas and Ebe are pro-variety of text choices because they view them as being beneficial to both teachers and students.[164] Although, education and examination boards retain the responsibility for text selection, Friese, Alvermann, Parkes and Rezak, put argue that perhaps teachers need to shoulder some of the blame for the lack of variety on school lists.[165] Their work suggests that teachers are somewhat restricted by their own learning experiences (English education and teacher training) and this may have considerable impacts on their choice of texts. In other words, some teachers might be more comfortable working with resources that are established and supported in the curriculum, as opposed to accepting challenges to select, read and interpret new resources. However, regardless of the ability or desire to choose new texts for contemporary students their research raises a valuable point for consideration; any text can be taught in ways to transform and engage student learning, though not much research offers advice on how. Taking their point on board, this thesis aims to examine how texts (regardless of being canonical or contemporary) are prescribed for reading lists and subsequently chosen and delivered by teachers to engage diverse students.

2.4.3 Pedagogy

Pedagogy, the teaching methods used in English, have been debated in education circles for decades. Generally, pedagogy can encompass a broad range of issues for example, teacher qualifications and training, curriculum support for educators, interpretation and analysis of resources, strategies for teaching students with diverse learning abilities, to name a few.[166] Upon closer

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[164] Ebe, A. E. (2012). "Supporting the Reading Development of Middle School English Language Learners Through Culturally Relevant Texts." Reading & Writing Quarterly **28**(2): 179, Thomas, P. L. (2012). "Adventures with Text and Beyond." English Journal **101**(4): 90.

[165] Friese, E., D. Alvermann, A. Parkes and A. Rezak (2008). "Selecting Texts for English Language Arts Classrooms: When Assessment is Not Enough." English Teaching: Practice and Critique **7**(3): 74.

[166] These are a sample of readings which focus on some of these issues and will be discussed later in this section: Freebody, P., A. Luke and P. Gilbert (1991). "Reading Positions and Practices in the Classroom."

inspection of this list, it seems the most emphasis is placed on teachers, particularly their qualifications, training and classroom practices. Ben-Peretz and Eilam explain that research in the 1980s, articulated the approaches teachers adopted as part of their pedagogical practice.[167] They suggest that one approach is where teachers use the curriculum "explicitly as it was prescribed" (348), [168] where there are minute details of the intended use of '*what*' and '*how*' to teach. Fullan advises that a better style is where teachers adapt the curriculum materials to suit the needs of their students, but this leads to difficulties where the curriculum can perhaps be reinterpreted in several different ways that may not all align to the original guidelines.[169] There is also an approach which completely empowers teachers to be creators of curricula, where it is more of a guideline and teachers fill in the specific content and details. Marsh and others describe this style as the most progressive, since it can easily be adapted to contemporary issues that might be more interesting and beneficial for young learners. However, Miller and Seller argue that this as perhaps being too flexible and centred on resources rather than the attainment of specific knowledgeable skills, which puts more emphasis on '*how*' students learn, rather than '*what*' they learn.[170]

For this research, Comber's summary is one of the best descriptions of the expectation of pedagogy of English. She explains "critical language and literacy development should involve three key pedagogical moves: recognise and mobilize learners' analytical resources, examine existing critical texts, and offer children new discursive resources" (356).[171] For this thesis, Comber's

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Curriculum Inquiry **21**(4): 435-457, Hardcastle, J. (2007). "Explaining the Actions of Men and Gods: Elements of English Pedagogy." Pedagogy **7**(3): 453-480, Brass, J. (2011). "Historicising English pedagogy: the extension and transformation of 'the cure of souls'." Pedagogy, Culture & Society **19**(1): 153-172, Kumar, M. (2015). "Critical Pedagogy in English Classrooms." Educational Quest- An International Journal of Education and Applied Social Sciences **6**(2): 91-95.

[167] Ben-Peretz, M. and B. Eilam (2010). Curriculum Use in the Classroom. International Encyclopedia of Education. P. Peterson, E. Baker and B. McGaw. United Kingdom, Elsevier Science. **1:** 8400.

[168] Ibid.

[169] Fullan, M. (1982). The Meaning of Educational Change. New York, Teachers College Press.

[170] Miller, J. P. and W. Seller (1985). Curriculum: Perspectives and Practice. New York, Longman.

[171] Comber, B. (2003). Critical Literacy: What does it look like in the early years? London, Sage.

explanation is most applicable to the understanding of pedagogy, in terms of assessing current resources and being adaptive to new ways to challenge contemporary students. To probe issues being encountered in English classrooms, we first need to situate my aim in context of scholarship about current challenges with mediating texts.

Of more relevance to this study are the general approaches, taken to engage student learning. For instance, from a socialist constructivist viewpoint, Vygotsky believed "the manner of interaction between adult and child was a core factor in cognitive development" (115).[172] This suggests that connections made between teachers and students had a significant impact on their learning. Freebody, Luke and Gilbert research on teacher training and resources which influence what students get out of reading, and highlight that classroom interactions and discussions of text is often overlooked as less important, though needs to be included as a fundamental part of the learning process.[173] Cullen and Hill use a post-modern view, setting aside linear, learner-centred approaches, to suggest that individual differences in the way people learn is the inevitable outcome of education. They suggest all students do not learn the same way and "learning is about change, and while students will usually say that they are going to college to learn something or to get a degree in a specific discipline, they rarely say they are going to college to change themselves, which is the goal of an accessible and equitable education" (24).[174] While this is an aspirational view, Nozaki argues that the acquisition of knowledge in secondary schools is less profound since it is mostly about rote learning and examination preparation, so much so that reflection and

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[172] Aubrey, K. and A. Riley (2016). Understanding & Using Educational Theories. London, Sage Publications Ltd.

[173] Freebody, P., A. Luke and P. Gilbert (1991). "Reading Positions and Practices in the Classroom." Curriculum Inquiry **21**(4): 435-457. For a more recent publication on reading pedagogy see: Green, B., P. Cormack and A. Patterson (2013). "Re-reading the reading lesson: episodes in the history of reading pedagogy." Oxford Review of Education **39**(3): 329-344.

[174] Cullen, R. and R. R. Hill (2013). "Curriculum Designed for an Equitable Pedagogy." Education Sciences **3**(1): 17-29.

meaning can be easily lost in the process and even disengage learners.[175] It seems the approaches adopted are dependent on other aspects of education such as funding and resourcing, for instance schools with more money might have better facilities and resources to develop programmes dependent on student abilities, whereas others who are under financial strain might have limited access to resources. These discussions frame the philosophy of approaches that can be taken to engage student learning, which seem to vary depending on the ethos of the different schools and their English departments.

Research interests from this point onwards seems to be divided where teachers are seen as either more on the side of fulfilling a traditional sense of learning, or are more focused on situating English education into the present day, where priority is given to equip students with skills needed for their immediate future. Some of the more contemporary methods used in teaching are closely aligned with the '*what'* teachers choose as resources to help enforce learning. Mohan explains that pedagogy begins with an answer to questions such as what do we want to teach in classrooms and why? She identifies that in many classrooms, "the ghettoization of non-traditional texts within their own canons and sometimes within their own separate departments has severely circumscribed their disruptive effects" (38).[176] This suggests that some educators use strategies that help students establish connections between canonical texts and present day issues. For instance, additional resources are employed to assist with bridging gaps, like Shakespeare's '*Romeo and Juliet*' is often compared to Baz Luhrmann's 1997 film '*Romeo + Juliet*'.[177] Luhrmann's adaption does not stray from the original scripting or plot but introduces familiar artefacts such as guns and cars, which cushions the Shakespearean

[175] Nozaki, Y., R. Openshaw and A. Luke (2005). Struggles over difference: curriculum, texts, and pedagogy in the Asia-Pacific. Albany, State University of New York Press.
[176] Mohan, R. (1992). "Dodging the Crossfire: Questions for Postcolonial Pedagogy." College Literature **19/20**(3/1): 28-44.
[177] Luhrmann, B. (1996). Romeo + Juliet. United States of America**:** 120 mins.

language, *thus making t easi'r f'r contemp'rary students to relateth to*.[178] This approach seems to be adopted by teachers who are interested in helping students make connections between their learning outcomes to their lives outside of the classroom. Researchers like Johnson, Hastie and Sharplin perceive such an approach as having a functional role to help students shape and tone their expressions of controversial issues in society. They argue on behalf of English teachers who want to embrace this effort to address contentious issues in the classroom as part of their role, but there are others who also shy away from such responsibilities.[179] Given that some contentious issues like race and class are popular themes in English texts, where is the line of discomfort drawn?

One of the issues in English classrooms around the world, as identified by Hooks, Bender-Slack, Subedi and Style, is an on-going fear in many classrooms in relation to the teaching of culturally diverse texts.[180] In a 1994 publication Hooks explains there is a general unwillingness to teach texts that raises awareness of "race, sex and class [because it is] often rooted in fear that classrooms will be uncontrollable, that emotions and passions will not be contained" (39).[181] One might assume with accessibility to technology, including a general openness with the sourcing and promotion of contentious issues, that 20 years later, these might be easier to discuss. Yet in 2014, Style suggests

> one choice many white teachers in America schools still make is to 'simply' not talk about race much, if at all, finding the subject too hot to handle, though race continues to exist inside

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[178] Translation of modern English *"thus making it easier for contemporary students to relate to"* into Shakespearean, via lingojam.com/English into Shakespeare.

[179] Hastie, M. and E. Sharplin (2012). "Why Did you Choose that Text?: Influences on English teachers' Choices of Reading Materials for Students." English in Australia **47**(2): 36-44, Johnson, E. (2015). "Sex in the English classroom: text, counter text, and social text." English Journal **104**(3): 61.

[180] Hooks, B. (1994). Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom. New York, Routledge, Bender-Slack, D. (2010). "Texts, Talk ... Fear? English Language Arts Teachers Negotiate Social Justice Teaching." English Education **42**(2): 181-203, Subedi, B. (2013). "Decolonizing the Curriculum for Global Perspectives." Educational Theory **63**(6): 621-638, Style, E. J. (2014). "Curriculum as Encounter: Selves and Shelves." English Journal **103**(5): 67.

[181] Hooks, B. (1994). Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom. New York, Routledge.

> the scholarship of any and all selves in any and all classrooms in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave (71).[182]

Though this statement is not representative of all teachers, let alone solely white teachers in the United States, it must be asked though what is the potential fallout of race being discussed in classrooms? These researchers have identified the 'fears' but have not interrogated what makes these issues so 'fearful.' Subedi puts forward that "teachers may fear the unnecessary attention to their classroom practices that a potentially controversial curriculum may invite" (622).[183] This seems to suggest a strong insecurity teachers might feel about being judged for poor classroom management, or administrative components of their role such as complaints that might come in school from parents, or statements that might be said by students that get out of control and become aggressive and offensive. Or perhaps the issues arising out of resources are far too uncomfortable for teachers themselves, as Aegerter explains that "multicultural literatures are not always benign celebrations of racial and cultural diversity; frequently they are harsh and quite scathing indictments of the kinds of pernicious inequities that characterize the institutions and processes of slavery, apartheid, and colonization" (142).[184] One can argue though, much like history, these texts are representations of human experiences and should not be ignored or dismissed because they are confrontational. Is the avoidance of contentious issues, though difficult at times, an appropriate approach to take with the teaching English texts especially when, according to Doug, some of these aspects of society like homosexuality, same-sex families, religious beliefs, have a direct impact and affect contemporary students in different ways?[185] So if teachers had the ability to choose which texts and which issues they would mediate in

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[182] Style, E. J. (2014). "Curriculum as Encounter: Selves and Shelves." English Journal **103**(5): 67.
[183] Subedi, B. (2013). "Decolonizing the Curriculum for Global Perspectives." Educational Theory **63**(6): 621-638.
[184] Aegerter, L. P. (1997). "A Pedagogy of Postcolonial Literature." College Literature **24**(2): 142-150.
[185] Doug, R. (2011). "The British Schools' National Curriculum: English and the Politics of Teaching Poetry from 'Different Cultures and Traditions'." Journal of Curriculum Studies **43**(4): 439-456.

classrooms, what and how would these choices shape English education?

This brings us to the discussion of teacher training, and the body of research that raises concerns about existing qualifications or the foundational skills candidates have prior to their education degree and then subsequently the pre-service training programmes that are taken to become qualified teachers.[186] Strickland claims that "many teachers lack experience with extensive use of literature in the curriculum. They are limited both in their knowledge of available trade books and in the ways to use them" (295).[187] Her claims suggest that teachers are either not exposed to how some texts might be useful for unpacking sensitive issues or perhaps not familiar with the methods that can be used for teaching these texts. This is also supported by the works of Duesterberg and George, who similiarly comment about pre-service training stressing the importance of multicultural policies and modeling 'good practices' but, their work seems to question how well does pre-service training plug the existing holes in their knowledge, and whether training is heavily dependent on everyone starting at the same point?[188] If this is the case, then how is the teaching of English ever to evolve and cater to the learning needs of growing and changing societies? To address this issue, Heble calls for a "reinvigorated understanding of our sense of purpose as teachers and scholars in the humanities" (144).[189] However, Smith and others

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[186] Publications discussing issues concerning teacher training, some of these contributions are discussed in this paragraph, for a list of others, see: Duesterberg, L. M. (1998). "Rethinking Culture in the Pedagogy and Practices of Preservice Teachers." Teaching and Teacher Education **14**(5): 497-512, Hopper, R. (2006). "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Teachers' Perception of Quality in Fiction for Adolescent Readers." English in Education **40**(2): 55-70, George, M. A. (2011). "Preparing Teachers to Teach Adolescent Literature in the 21st Century." Theory into Practice **50**(3): 182-189, Gordon, J. (2012). "More than Canons: Teacher Knowledge and the Literary Domain of the Secondary English Curriculum." Educational Research **54**(4): 375-390, Faulkner, J. and G. Latham (2013). "Disturbing stories: Literature as Pedagogical Disruption." English in Education **47**(2): 102-117, Smith, E. R., B. A. Bowen and F. A. Dohm (2014). "Contradictory and Missing Voices in English Education: An Invitation to English Faculty." English Education **46**(2): 117.

[187] Strickland, D. S. (1994). "Reinventing Our Literacy Programs: Books, Basics, Balance." The Reading Teacher **48**(4): 294-302.

[188] Duesterberg, L. M. (1998). "Rethinking Culture in the Pedagogy and Practices of Preservice Teachers." Teaching and Teacher Education **14**(5): 497-512, George, M. A. (2011). "Preparing Teachers to Teach Adolescent Literature in the 21st Century." Theory into Practice **50**(3): 182-189.

[189] Heble, A. (2002). "Re-Ethicizing the Classroom: Pedagogy, the Public Sphere, and the Postcolonial Condition." College Literature **29**(1): 143-160.

identify that "everyone, it seems has something to say about what English teachers need to know and be able to do … except the English faculty" (117).[190] For there to be an improvement in how we teach, there needs to be more attention to the confidence pre-service training gives teachers, and the input that teachers get to have in their training. Though this thesis does not examine teacher training per se, it has been raised as an issue here to investigate if teachers feel equipped with the skill sets to deal with any issues emerging from mediating prescribed texts in classrooms? Has their training adequately provided them with support for teaching multicultural literature to students from diverse backgrounds?

2.4.4 Student responses to English texts and discussions of culture

In the education framework students are the beneficiaries of the processes which facilitate the acquisition of skills and knowledge young adolescents need for the future. Since students are the largest cohort or body in an education system (as seen in Jogie's model), the holistic attainment of skills and knowledge is measured through examinations. According to Hornby, assessment has four main roles; to be summative, formative, certificating and evaluative.[191] Gronlund, Nitko, Brown, Hirschfeld, Segers and others, suggest that assessment plays a vital role in education because the main goal of assessment is primarily to improve learning; they study several different types or forms of assessment (formal and informal) that can be considered in education.[192] Though this research does not delve into a

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[190] Smith, E. R., B. A. Bowen and F. A. Dohm (2014). "Contradictory and Missing Voices in English Education: An Invitation to English Faculty." English Education **46**(2): 117.

[191] *Summative*, to provide information about attainment at the end of the course; *Formative*, to provide ongoing support for future learning; *Certificating*, to enable selection based on qualification and finally; *Evaluative*, to provide information for stakeholders (parents, teachers) to judge success of the system, see Hornby, W. (2003). "Assessing using grade-related criteria: a single currency for universities?" Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education **28**(4): 435-454.

[192] Gronlund, N. E. (1998). Assessment of student achievement, ERIC, Nitko, A. J. (2001). Educational assessment of students, ERIC, Brown, G. T., S. E. Irving, E. R. Peterson and G. H. Hirschfeld (2009). "Use

comprehensive view of the construction and design of assessment models for secondary education, this process cannot be ignored when we consider the impact examinations have on student learning. Manuel, known for her work investigating students and English education, takes a much closer look at the added pressure examinations put on students, identifying that exams are just one component of a tough system, she argues that

> Exams, assessments … lack of resources, particularly for study of film or multimedia, lack of work samples, reading load, being guinea pigs, amount of related material required for study texts that are too hard, timetabling and assessments, lack of time to work together … how can students say anything substantial [in an exam]? (74).[193]

Manuel's statement, subtly suggests that assessments are part of a system that is already seemingly defunct. To elaborate, exams seem to be an additional layer of complication which overhauls and categorises students by their abilities, potentially allowing for the system to ignore these other formidable components. For instance, if students attended a school which had a lack of resources, a shortage of staff, or were trialling changes to the curriculum, students tend to shoulder the responsibility of these outcomes as these shortcomings or disadvantages are not taken into consideration when marking assessments.

It would be ill-advised to assume that assessments are a means to an end in the education system because they carry more personal weight than these other components (mentioned above). Peterson and Irving argue that exams play the '*unintentional role*' of affecting students' outcomes and

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of interactive–informal assessment practices: New Zealand secondary students' conceptions of assessment." Learning and Instruction **19**(2): 97-111, Segers, M. and H. Tillema (2011). "How do Dutch secondary teachers and students conceive the purpose of assessment?" Studies in Educational Evaluation **37**(1): 49-54, Havnes, A., K. Smith, O. Dysthe and K. Ludvigsen (2012). "Formative assessment and feedback: Making learning visible." Ibid. **38**: 21.

[193] Manuel, J. V. (2002). "Making its debut: what teachers think of the new Higher School Certificate English syllabus in New South Wales: report of a survey of teachers of English in NSW Government secondary schools." English in Australia(134): 67.

attitudes to their learning.[194] This ideal is nestled in other research which shows how exams affect '*what* and *how* students learn' (Dochy and McDowell), particularly when it comes to their 'personal motivation' (Brookhart and Bronowicz), and their 'overall sense of wellbeing' (Black and William, and Black *et al.*).[195] In this sense, one can view examination as a means of student empowerment, which proves that performance results can significantly impact student engagement. One can ask to what extent does the curriculum and pedagogy in English classrooms seek to empower students? Or does the content of *what* is to be learnt, accompanied by the process of, *how* it is learnt, serve as ambassadors of disengagement?

Engagement seems to be a term which distinguishes learning; signalling not only if learning is being accomplished, but also the value-laden perception of how *well* learning is progressing. Scholarship has defined engagement as "the cognitive, emotional or behavioural relationships student have with education and school" (194).[196] This definition is quite broad and psychological and through it we can practically associate many attributes to engagement, so it is perhaps best to start from the position of what it is not. Back in 1995, Podl identified that "so few teenagers read for pleasure; in fact, this phrase is oxymoronic to them" (56), and more effort is needed to engage readers, such as printing maps for novels with geographic references, or etching out compulsory reading time in school programmes.[197] Similarly, Baker found that students who were quite healthy readers in the earlier stages

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[194] Peterson, E. R. and S. E. Irving (2008). "Secondary school students' conceptions of assessment and feedback." Learning and Instruction **18**(3): 238-250.

[195] Dochy, F. J. R. C. and L. McDowell (1997). "Assessment as a tool for learning." Studies in Educational Evaluation **23**(4): 279-298, Black, P. and D. Wiliam (1998). "Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards through Classroom Assessment." The Phi Delta Kappan **80**(2): 139-148, Black, P., P. Broadfoot, R. Daugherty, J. Gardner, W. Harlen, M. James, G. Stobart and D. Wiliam (2002). "Testing, motivation and learning." Cambridge: Assessment Reform Group, Brookhart, S. M. and D. L. Bronowicz (2003). "'I Don't Like Writing. It Makes My Fingers Hurt': Students talk about their classroom assessments." Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice **10**(2): 221-242.

[196] Munns, G. and H. Woodward (2006). "Student engagement and student self-assessment: the REAL framework." Ibid. **13**: 193-213.

[197] Podl, J. B. (1995). Introducing teens to the pleasures of reading. Washington, D.C, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. **53:** 56.

of their schooling became more disengaged or turned off from reading as they advanced into the senior years. In her study, students suggested it might be easier to engage with English if they had more reading choices so they can determine what was '*good*'; as well they wanted more time to read and think in class, so lessons were not rushed.[198] It seems there are issues with engaging senior learners particularly with regards to the resources being used. Cope's research found that many students who felt disengaged had *moby-phobia*, which is a fear of assigned reading in school lists.[199] As well, resources that were too difficult to understand (e.g. Shakespeare), and teachers' methods of staying too long on a book just "sucked the juice out of literature through over-analysis" (20).[200] Years later, Mayes identified that disengagement stemmed from three factors the, "lack of interest in texts, deficit messages about student ability and lack of opportunity for student choice" (48).[201] Blintz's research echoed similar results when he investigated why students' interest in reading decreased through their school years. He found that students who engaged with reading did so because reading was a means of obtaining new knowledge, whereas students who described themselves as less avid readers found difficulty in understanding the content and were limited by their ability to comprehend and relate to "stories and personal experiences" (609).[202] Based on the above scholarship, it seems *disengagement* is that old, unwanted guest who predictably complains about the same issues again and again. Disengagement occurs as students advance in their senior years and comes from disempowerment; not having a choice of text, not enough time to digest materials, not enough say with their teachers. So, after years of scholarship

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[198] Baker, M. I. (2002). "Reading Resistance in Middle School: What Can Be Done?" Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy **45**(5): 364-366.
[199] Cope, J. (1997). "Beyond Voices of Readers: Students on school's effects on reading." English Journal **86**(3): 18.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Mayes, E. (2010). "Cultural capital and popular culture in year 11 Standard English: Fostering student choice and synthesis." English in Australia **45**(2): 47.
[202] Bintz, W. P. (1993). "Resistant Readers in Secondary Education: Some Insights and Implications." Journal of Reading **36**(8): 604-615.

being produced on this issue, what has been done in curriculum design and pedagogy to be more inclusive of students' voice in English education?

An underappreciated area of study is how secondary English curricula make considerations for students' voice or input into the overall design. Nixon and Williams agree that though "curriculum design is crucial to maximising the students learning experience and is often overlooked and underutilised" (26).[203] Rather it seems that much of the research into curriculum development and students' input is reflective of engagement initiatives at tertiary levels of education and across a wide range of subject areas. As Bovill, Bulley and Morss explain, the incorporation of student voice is a part of higher education, because "student engagement [is seen] as empowerment, as a means of enhancing first-year experiences, viewing this as a goal in itself" (197-8).[204] The benefits of this inclusion is seen, for example, in the development of science curricula, Lesser, Dunne, Lu, Nguyen and others, suggest it becomes enhanced when students have an input because there is an indication of what they already know, and a sense of responsibility of learning that is shared between teachers and students.[205] If other fields of study recognise the importance of student input into design, then what about English? As Manuel explains, "English remains one of the few curricula contexts wherein the '*main game*' is the focus on language, texts, human experience and meaning making" (45);[206] given the content and nature of English studies it seems essential to actively accommodate the input of others. Butler and others focus on the benefits of including student input in curricula design, because it helps with

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[203] Nixon, S. and L. Williams (2014). "Increasing student engagement through curriculum redesign: deconstructing the 'Apprentice' style of delivery." Innovations in Education and Teaching International **51**(1): 26-33.

[204] Bovill, C., C. J. Bulley and K. Morss (2011). "Engaging and empowering first-year students through curriculum design: perspectives from the literature." Teaching in Higher Education **16**(2): 197-209.

[205] Lesser, L. C., M. Dunne and E. E. Faszewski (2014). "Invading the Curriculum: Incorporating Service Learning in the Local Community to Enhance Student Engagement." Science Scope **37**(7): 36-42, Lu, C. Y., Q. Nguyen and O. H. Ersin (2015). "Active Student Engagement in Curriculum Development." American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education **79**(2): 1.

[206] Manuel, J. (2012). "Teenagers and reading: Factors that shape the quality of teenagers' reading lives." English in Australia **47**(2): 45.

the "building from prior experiences, students bring to bear knowledge, beliefs, perceptions and emotional reactions that mediate engagement in learning" (76).[207] Though unintentionally, their reading and learning study raises an interesting question; how can we establish where the learning process starts for different students if we do not know what they already know? Much of secondary curricula design starts from the point of assumption of *what* students already know. There is little scholarship identifying how the curriculum, in an age of digital and technological advancement, makes allowances for the growth of prior knowledge students may or may not bring with them to lessons, as well as their abilities to interpret meanings. This might provide challenges for curricula which do not recognise the berth of the platform from which it makes its foundation.

Since 'student voices' are predominantly absent when building secondary English curricula, the next natural question is what considerations do teachers make to incorporate student opinion in their pedagogical practices? Harris' research puts forward a good summary claiming, "while there has been a significant body of research on student engagement, few researchers have examined how teachers understand this concept and what outcomes they expect from student engagement … even fewer studies have looked at students' engagement from a teacher perspectives" (377-8).[208] Harris' research suggests that teachers believe engagement is achieved if students are; "behaving, enjoying, being motivated, thinking, seeing a purpose, owning learning" (381).[209] However, one can question what do these terms actually mean; how are they evidenced in classrooms and what are the variations of having achieved these – do they vary in each English class and school, let alone country? Fielding identifies that the variations which demonstrate

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[207] Butler, D. L., S. C. Cartier, L. Schnellert, F. Gagnon and M. Giammarino (2011). "Secondary students' self-regulated engagement in reading: researching self-regulation as situated in context." Psychological Test and Assessment Modeling **53**(1): 73-105.

[208] Harris, L. (2011). "Secondary teachers' conceptions of student engagement: Engagement in learning or in schooling?" Teaching and Teacher Education **27**(2): 376-386.

[209] Ibid.

engagement are quite diverse, since teachers must continuously challenge their pedagogy and this is not an easy task because,

> if we are to avoid the dangers of developing increasingly sophisticated ways of involving students that, often unwittingly, end up betraying their interests, accommodating them to the status quo, and in a whole variety of ways reinforcing assumptions and approaches that are destructive of anything that could be considered remotely empowering, then we have to explore approaches that have different starting points and quite different dispositions and intentions." (124)[210]

In other words, constructing pedagogy that incorporates students' voice cannot be fixed because *'students'*, depending on their abilities, needs, background, will not unanimously learn and engage the same way, despite having the same outcome; to do well in examinations. McFadden and Munns argue that regardless of the complexities involved in this process, "it is students themselves who will be able to tell us that they are engaged and who will say whether education is working for them in a culturally sensitive and relevant way" (364).[211] There is an overtone in the studies presented above, which strongly differentiates students from lower socio-economic levels and minority groups, who generally, according to Harris, demonstrate lower levels of school engagement.[212]

Schultz, Jones-Walker, Chikkatur did a study on pre-service teachers training in urban regions, where they documented that "part of the task of teacher preparation involves helping new teachers learn from the students they teach so that their teaching can incorporate and respond to the students' cultural knowledge and their academic and social strengths and needs"

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[210] Fielding, M. (2001). "Students as Radical Agents of Change." Journal of Educational Change **2**(2): 123-141.

[211] McFadden, M. and G. Munns (2002). "Student engagement and the social relations of pedagogy." British Journal of Sociology of Education **23**(3): 357-366.

[212] Harris, L. (2011). "Secondary teachers' conceptions of student engagement: Engagement in learning or in schooling?" Teaching and Teacher Education **27**(2): 376-386.

(156).[213] Therefore, a teacher's ability to make cultural connections to students might set an example for how students, in turn, can make efforts to engage in understanding cultural differences in society. Yet Daisey raises an interesting concern, that it is difficult for many teachers to inspire engagement, particularly in English classrooms; she explains "intervention is needed in teacher education to help future secondary teachers engage in their own reading in order to help them change the confines of school reading" (679).[214] This argument is true of some in the profession, and it must be asked if teachers sometimes struggle to motivate themselves then how can they build pedagogy that includes and engages their students? One can ponder how does demotivation or lack of engagement of teachers change, shift or influence the perceptions of power in classrooms, for instance teachers can choose options that engage them, but students are rendered voiceless. Mayes echoes the works of Cook-Sather and Moss stating, "there was some discussion of student roles in the relationships in student voice, however despite articles raising issues of power relations, very rarely have students been included in discussions of how they perceive power relationships" (62).[215] It seems students are truly rendered powerless in the grand scheme of education systems; students are furthest removed from the considerations of curriculum development, and it can be a struggle to understand how they are being factored into consideration in classroom pedagogy. So, what have researchers found, in terms of English resources, that really engage students?

When hovering over research into students and engagement in English, one encounters firstly an immediate concern about engaging those who are 'struggling readers' and secondly issues with resources or what students are

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[213] Schultz, K., C. E. Jones-Walker and A. P. Chikkatur (2008). "Listening to Students, Negotiating Beliefs: Preparing Teachers for Urban Classrooms." Curriculum Inquiry **38**(2): 155-187.

[214] Daisey, P. (2010). "Secondary preservice teachers remember their favorite reading experiences: insights and implications for content area instruction: this researcher's goal is to improve reading instruction by examining secondary preservice teacher's favorite reading experiences." Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy **53**(8): 678.

[215] Mayes, E. (2014). "Negotiating the hidden curriculum: Power and affect in negotiated classrooms." English in Australia **48**(3): 62.

asked to read. The former leads to an interesting assumption (in research) that engagement is only a concern with those students who are disengaged; we do not seem to be interested in challenging or improving outcomes for those students who are engaged. So, what exactly is a 'struggling reader'? Alverman says "attempting to define the term '*struggling reader*' is like trying to nail gelatine to a wall … it is adolescents who for whatever reason are unable to keep up with the reading demands of the school curriculum" (679).[216] This instigates a power imbalance between different types of learners; suggesting those who cannot keep up are disengaged or struggling, yet the curriculum does not seem to further challenge those who are meeting or exceeding expectations. More so, based on the literature in this section, how can the curriculum be confident to benchmark learning goals when there seems to be an exclusion of students' voice in curricula design? This seems to be a concern because English education in schools, is as Manuel identifies, "one of the few spaces remaining in the contemporary world where our students can, and should be 'turned on' to the value of reading in a supportive, guided, safe, stimulating and ever-challenging learning environment" (46).[217]

When it comes to what students naturally gravitate towards or enjoy engaging with, Manuel and Robinson found that teenage boys in particular do not enjoy reading books; both genders enjoy action/adventure, mystery and fantasy as their favourite genres and overall students do not seem to enjoy poetry, non-fiction and newspapers.[218] Hopper believes the advancement of digital technology such as computer games, mobile phones and on-demand television is the primary culprit for the decline in reading, particularly with males. She found that students are keen on popular fiction, though are less encouraged to read options advised by their teachers or parents, but are more

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[216] Alvermann, D. E. (2001). "Reading Adolescents' Reading Identities: Looking Back to See Ahead." Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy **44**(8): 676-690.
[217] Manuel, J. (2012). "Teenagers and reading: Factors that shape the quality of teenagers' reading lives." English in Australia **47**(2): 45.
[218] Manuel, J. and D. Robinson (2003). "Teenage boys, teenage girls and books: Re-viewing some assumptions about gender and adolescents' reading practices." English Teaching **2**(2): 66.

inclined to try books recommended by their friends.[219] In 2012, Manuel and Brindley's book *'Teenagers and Reading'*, calls for teachers and students to *re-visit* texts, *re-imagine* them and *re-contextualise* new meanings into English resources; they put forward the argument that this 'rereading' can empower teenagers to view meanings differently.[220] However, Athanases warns that not revisiting texts carefully can lead to reinforcing negative meaning, because "some of the literary experiences not only informed students about other ethnic and cultural experiences but promoted rethinking of stereotypes and myths the students had held about cultural others" (288).[221] The general question remains, if students are drawn to more contemporary forms of texts, are these options helping shape issues of cultural differences in society? On the other hand, how are more contemporary options being transformed to transmit meaningful messages that inspire new attitudes to learning and cultures. Based on the scholarly productions discussed in this chapter, there are gaps and areas for further exploration in both areas of postcolonial theory and English education. The following methodology describes the processes undertaken to conduct this research.

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[219] Hopper, R. (2006). "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Teachers' Perception of Quality in Fiction for Adolescent Readers." English in Education **40**(2): 55-70.

[220] Manuel, J., J. Manuel and S. Brindley (2012). Teenagers and reading: Literary heritages, cultural contexts and contemporary reading practices, Wakefield Press.

[221] Athanases, S. (1998). "Diverse Learners, Diverse Texts: Exploring Identity and Difference through Literary Encounters." Journal of Literacy Research **30**(2): 273-296.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.1 Directions on Research Framework

After scoping the scholarly field one might ask how can a postcolonial approach be established, given the proposed model (curriculum, pedagogy, students) within the context of diverse and contemporary learners? To maintain consistency with arguments going forward, particularly those related to the findings of this research, I must first explain the approach taken for framing the aims, throughout the entire research framework (and its components), which support the data and analysis of this work. Figure 3.1.1 below presents an outline of the '*research framework*' components in a taxonomy which is adapted from Pickard, a methodological information scholar.[222] Pickard's design is relevant to my research aims as it attempts to incorporate layers of methodological thought associated with '*comparative research*'. The essentials of the typology will be to position a '*conceptual framework*' for the '*research strategy*', together with a '*theoretical framework*' for '*analysis*', as an overlay to Pickard's '*hierarchy*' for comparative research; itself comprising a '*general methodology*' and '*comparative research design*'.

[222] Pickard, A. (2012). Research methods in information, Facet publishing.

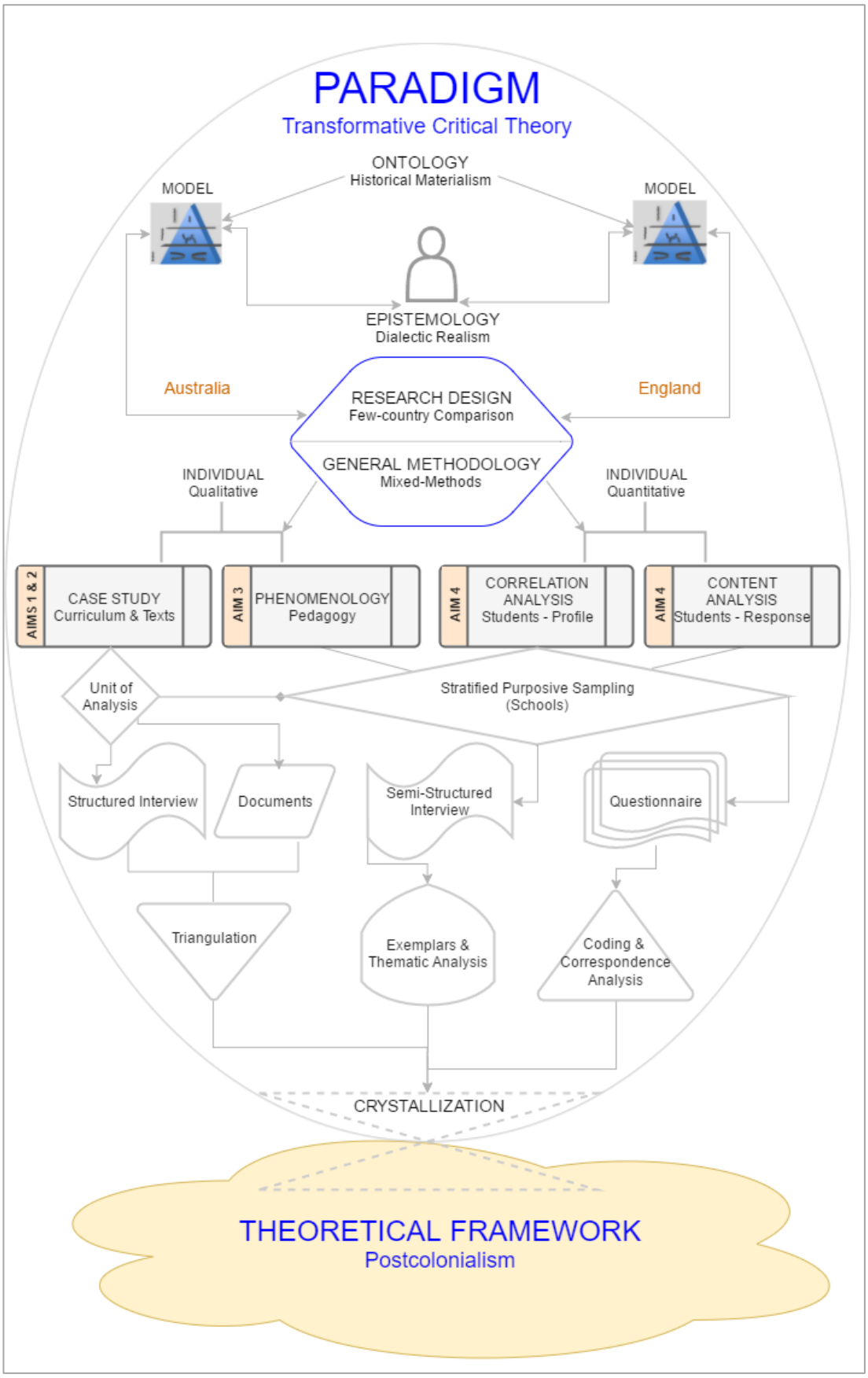

Figure 3.1.1: Methodological Framework

There is considerable scholarship devoted to the philosophical and methodological pathways constructed for any given research endeavour, from the quintessential "paradigm wars"[223] through to Ermarth's typologies of Hermeneutics.[224] However, to focus on my aims, I must first explain the boundaries of my chosen *research framework*. In the same vein as Grant and Osanloo, and Troudi, I distinguish between my *theoretical framework*, and my *conceptual framework*.[225] For this research, the former sits firmly in the school of postcolonial theory. It is through this lens that I interpret the relationship amongst curriculum, pedagogy and students, in respect to their roles in English text selection. When these are viewed as a sociological network, a postcolonial approach seeks to interpret the implicit '*sites of struggle*' within their interrelationships, not just because of their placement and functionality, but more so their epistemological manifold. Indeed, Foucault, in his poststructuralist agenda, commits to a preterition of power via the domination of truth, and claims:

> Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which ease is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (131).[226]

Given that 'truth' seems to be consequential of choice and design, how does this overshadow, influence or represent 'power'? In recent postmodern discourse, Usher and Edwards relay the transmission of power through social

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[223] Gage, N. L. (1989). "The Paradigm Wars and Their Aftermath: A "Historical" Sketch of Research on Teaching since 1989." Educational Researcher **18**(7): 4-10.

[224] Ermarth, M. (1978). Wilhelm Dilthey: the critique of historical reason. Chicago, University Of Chicago Press.

[225] Grant, C. and A. Osanloo (2014). "Understanding, Selecting, and Integrating a Theoretical Framework in Dissertation Research: Creating the Blueprint for Your" House"." Administrative Issues Journal: Education, Practice, and Research **4**(2): 12-26, Troudi, S. (2014). "Paradigmatic nature and theoretical framework in educational research." Inspiring Academic Practice **1**(2).

[226] Foucault, M. and L. J. H. collection (1977). Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison. London, Allen Lane.

transactions and claim that "power through knowledge, brings forth active '*subjects*' who better '*understand*' their own subjectivity" (89).[227] The above arguments, taken together, suggest that power can make obvious one's limitations in sociological agency, so that opportunistic and value-laden characteristics that are embedded in actors' motivations are manifested as limitations of their agency. This research seeks to present evidence for implicit value-laden power struggles amongst curriculum, pedagogy and students. To do this objectively, I channel a *transformative critical theoretical approach* for my *conceptual framework* to tease out the tensions and nature of power relationships amongst these actors. These terms are discussed further in the following section.

3.1.1 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework is also more commonly known through the distinguished words of Kuhn as a 'paradigm'[228], or as Muijs and Saldana prefer a 'worldview'[229], or as Dervin and others describes a 'metatheory';[230] and according to Miles and Huberman, when applied to an inquiry it "lays out the key factors, constructs, or variables, and presumes relationships among them" (440).[231] Criticisms by Creswell, Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, of the categorisations of the paradigms and their associated theories (more limited in scope) seem to remain stylistically inconsistent among many researchers, though most recognise the quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches, which all seem to be embroiled in a battle for

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[227] Edwards, R. and R. Usher (2002). Postmodernism and education: Different voices, different worlds, Routledge.
[228] Kuhn, T. S. (1962). The structure of scientific revolutions. Chicago, University Of Chicago Press.
[229] Muijs, D. (2004). Doing Quantitative Research in Education with SPSS. London, Sage Publications, Saldaña, J. and Ebrary (2011). Fundamentals of qualitative research. New York, Oxford University Press.
[230] Dervin, B., L. Foreman-Wernet and E. Lauterbach (2003). Sense-making methodology reader: Selected writings of Brenda Dervin, Hampton Pr.
[231] Miles, M. B. and A. M. Huberman (1994). Qualitative data analysis: an expanded sourcebook. Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.

supremacy.[232] Instead, I align my research (and all terminology going forward) with Mertens' schema of philosophical typologies, which she has distilled and rationalised from substantive and diverse scholarly arguments.[233] Rather than adopting her hierarchies of Lather, Guba and Lincoln, I position my analysis of curriculum, pedagogy and students, and their roles in Jogie's model within the domain of critical theory.[234] The reason for developing and using my own model is to finesse how it can be best indulge the conversations of power amongst these players and put forward a new design to consider when examining a postcolonial approach to English education.

Returning to critical theory, Mertens emphasises that the transformative nature of this, and other emancipatory theories stems from the virtue whereby "agency for change rests in the persons in the community working side by side with the researcher toward the goal of social transformation" (8).[235] This quote suggests that the researchers work towards achieving change, but there are many current theories that try to produce change; for instance, *Derridian* theories of poststructuralism and postmodernism, which Mertens envelopes in her 'deconstructive' paradigm.[236] Authors like Stockman and Diesing, take the view that critical theory, alongside the two main 'deconstructive' philosophies makes a substantive contribution rejecting positivism;[237] and together they admit the

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[232] Onwuegbuzie, A. J. and R. B. Johnson (2006). "The Validity Issue in Mixed Research." Research in the Schools **13**(1): 48, Creswell, J. W. (2009). Research design: Qualitative and mixed methods approaches. London, Sage Publications.

[233] Mertens, D. M. (2010). Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology, + the Literature Review, Sage Publications.

[234] Guba, E. G. and Y. S. Lincoln (1989). Fourth generation evaluation. Newbury Park, Calif, Sage Publications, Lather, P. (1992). "Critical Frames in Educational Research: Feminist and Post-Structural Perspectives." Theory into Practice **31**(2): 87-99.

[235] Mertens, D. M. (2004). Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods. San Francisco, Sage Publications, Mertens, D. M. (2010). Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology, + the Literature Review, Sage Publications.

[236] Mertens, D. M. (2004). Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods. San Francisco, Sage Publications, Mertens, D. M. (2010). Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology, + the Literature Review, Sage Publications.

[237] 'Positivism' is a philosophy which rejects the notion of anything which cannot be scientifically substantiated.

potential for an empirically operational social science.[238] Indeed, Yilmaz alludes to the "Wittgensteinian *'family resemblance'"* shared by these three theories (critical theory, poststructuralism, postmodernism), as a device to impose structure onto postmodernism, which is otherwise itself "anathema to the notion of definition" (780).[239] Ball's discourse, in the Sociology of Education, suggests that "*human science* knowledge functions politically and is intimately implicated in the practical management of social and political problems" (653).[240] This suggests that one should not apply theory without definition. Meanwhile, Agger argues that the theme of *'undecidability'* pervading both poststructuralism and postmodernism makes them untenable theories for producing a *'concrete version'* of an empirical human science; a deficiency which is not represented in critical theory.[241] In other words, critical theory seems to be a sturdy foundation in terms of the claims that can be borne of its methodological construct, as opposed to the other theories (mentioned above). Gannon and Davies support this critique of postmodern and poststructural thought as applied to the social sciences, by marking them as too "apolitical" and lacking the "foundation for agency" (99, 92).[242] To summarise, these latter theories do not readily support the principles of action and emancipation discussed in the aims of this research. Nevertheless, critical theory directly seeks to politically emancipate, empower and democratically transform its subject, which has consolidated my reasoning for selecting it as the conceptual framework of this research.[243]

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[238] Stockman, N. (1983). Antipositivist theories of the sciences: critical rationalism, critical theory, and scientific realism. Dordrecht;Boston;Hingham, MA;, D. Reidel, Diesing, P. (1991). How does social science work?: reflections on practice. Pittsburgh, Pa, University of Pittsburgh Press.

[239] Yilmaz, K. (2010). "Postmodernism and its Challenge to the Discipline of History: Implications for History Education." Educational Philosophy and Theory **42**(7): 779-795.

[240] Ball, S. J. (2008). "Some sociologies of education: a history of problems and places, and segments and gazes: Some sociologies of education." The Sociological Review **56**(4): 650-669.

[241] Agger, B. (1991). "Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism: Their Sociological Relevance." Annual Review of Sociology **17**(1): 105-131.

[242] Gannon, S. and B. Davies (2007). Postmodern, Poststructural and Critical Theories. Handbook of feminist research: theory and praxis. S. N. Hesse-Biber. Thousand Oaks, Calif, SAGE Publications.

[243] Carr, W. and S. Kemmis (1986). Becoming critical. Education knowledge and action research, London: Falmer Press, Cohen, L., L. Manion and K. Morrison (2007). Research Methods in Education. London, Routledge.

3.1.2 Theoretical framework

So where exactly is postcolonial situated in the current spectrum of theories, which share an alliance through common rejection of positivist and postpositivist notions? Mertens offers a convenient apposition for the postcolonial alongside critical theory as a transformative paradigm,[244] yet this does not seem to account for the relative nature of power and transmissions, which are more central to my aims. While scholars like Bauman, Bhabha and Nichols[245] recognise the overlap between postcolonial and postmodern ideologies as addressing matters of diversity, inclusion, antihegemony and liberation, others are more poignantly critical of the relativistic (Gannon and Davies), ahistorical (Roberts), and anti-cultural (Mohanty) rejection of truths in the postmodern realm.[246] According to Quayson, this stands in stark contrast to postcolonialism, which is supported by Ahmad and Thomas as an interdisciplinary treatment, "allowing [for] unreflexive notions of nationhood, race and identity" (96).[247] Furthermore, Fairclough posits that postcolonial theory strengthens discourse analysis by placing due attention to past events, their history and continuity.[248] In this respect, a postcolonial theoretical framework complements my philosophical paradigm to seek deeper meanings within my findings on selection and teaching of texts.

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[244] Mertens, D. M. (2010). Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology, + the Literature Review, Sage Publications.

[245] Bhabha, H. (1992). "Postcolonial criticism." Redrawing the boundaries: The transformation of English and American literary studies: 437-465, Bauman, Z. (2007). Liquid times: living in an age of uncertainty. Cambridge, Polity Press, Nichols, R. (2010). "Postcolonial studies and the discourse of Foucault: Survey of a field of problematization." Foucault Studies(9): 111-144.

[246] Mohanty, C. T. (2003). Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity, Duke University Press, Roberts, M. (2004). "Postmodernism and the linguistic turn." Making History: An Introduction to the History and Practices of a Discipline, London and New York: Routledge: 227-240, Gannon, S. and B. Davies (2007). Postmodern, Poststructural and Critical Theories. Handbook of feminist research: theory and praxis. S. N. Hesse-Biber. Thousand Oaks, Calif, SAGE Publications.

[247] Ahmad, A. (1992). In theory: classes, nations, literatures. New York;London;, Verso, Thomas, N. (1994). Colonialism's culture: anthropology, travel and government. Oxford, Polity Press, Quayson, A. (2000). "Postcolonialism and postmodernism." A companion to postcolonial studies: 87-111.

[248] Fairclough, N. (1995). Critical discourse analysis. The critical study of language. Language in social life series, London: Longman.

3.1.3 Ontology and epistemology

This presentation of the postcolonial framework aligns with the ontological position of transformative critical theory – historical materialism.[249] Here I incorporate the view of critical theory, advocated by Horkheimer and Adorno, rather than the transcendental prepositions of Habermas.[250] This demarcation is important to generate the view of the actors within the educational system as having to contend with an external, ideologically repressive, political layer. Fuchs takes a Marxist view, where class is centre stage and notions of antagonisms between structures and class, create the internal phenomena of ownership, resource distribution, control, struggle and domination.[251] As well, Frowe adds that such antagonisms are actively shaped through language; power relations are carried within discourse and this is primarily what creates the flux in the vantage point of reality for actors in a system.[252] Therefore, a critical theoretical approach supports the aims of my research by compelling a heterogenous viewpoint of the composition of curriculum, pedagogy, and students, by taking holistic account of the discourse mediated by each pair of actor relationships to understand the sites of struggle.

Fuchs and Sandoval consider the epistemological topography of a critical theoretic paradigm to be modelled from a dialectic realism of agency, structure and potential versus actuality.[253] When knowledge is propagated, it is done so in dynamic ways not quite in a linear manner and therefore

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[249] Refer to Figure 3.1.1: Methodological Framework.

[250] Horkheimer, M. and T. W. Adorno Dialectic of enlightenment, Habermas, J. and S. Ben-Habib (1981). "Modernity versus postmodernity." New German Critique(22): 3-14.

[251] Fuchs, C. (2008). Internet and society: social theory in the Internet age. New York, Routledge.

[252] Frowe, I. (2001). "Language and Educational Research." Journal of Philosophy of Education **35**(2): 175-186.

[253] Fuchs, C. and M. Sandoval (2008). "Positivism, postmodernism, or critical theory? A case study of communications students' understandings of criticism." Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies **6**(2): 112-141.

knowledge cannot simply be measured in the same way. Cohen and others expand on this representation to consider and reflect on such knowledge, finding "what counts as worthwhile knowledge is determined by social and positional power of the advocates of that knowledge" (27).[254] Given this information, we can put forward that it is power rather than propositional semantics which dictate the status of knowledge. This contextual and multifaceted nature of the epistemological substructure strongly supports the use of a mixed methodology to investigate the competing pressures implicit in the relationships between curriculum, pedagogy and students, particularly to filter the examination of power through a postcolonial lens.[255]

3.1.4 Comparative design

To complete my taxonomy, I add a third level outlining the individual methodologies corresponding to each aim of my research and the representative actors and processes. This takes direction from the 'research-as-project' view presented by Markauskaite and others, which advocates coherence of the epistemological inquiry through careful contextualisation.[256] Epstein defines comparative education in terms of the study of variations in education systems and processes, and how education related to wider social factors and forces.[257] However, he also positions this as a 'field of study', a view shared by Manzon, Paulston and Sartori, which still stirs much debate amongst scholars.[258] On the other hand, I take the standpoint of Lijphart,

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[254] Cohen, L., L. Manion and K. Morrison (2007). Research Methods in Education. London, Routledge.
[255] Refer to Figure 3.1.1: Methodological Framework.
[256] Markauskaite, L., P. Freebody and J. Irwin (2010). Methodological choice and design: scholarship, policy and practice in social and educational research, Springer Science & Business Media.
[257] Epstein, E. H. (1994). "Comparative and international education: Overview and historical development." The international encyclopedia of education **2**: 918-923.
[258] Sartori, G. (1991). "Comparing and Miscomparing." Journal of Theoretical Politics **3**(3): 243-257, Paulston, R. G. (1996). Social Cartography: Mapping Ways of Seeing Social and Educational Change. Garland Reference Library of Social Science, Volume 1024; Reference Books in International Education, Volume 36, ERIC, Manzon, M. (2011). Comparative education: The construction of a field, Springer Science & Business Media.

Broadfoot, Novoa and Ragin, who demonstrate the shared commonalities of comparative study and other classical methods, indeed affirming that the relative orientations of 'comparativists' versus 'noncomparativists' has methodological implications.[259] In this research, therefore, I attempt to characterise and compare specific subunits of curricula, teachers, students and literary texts used in secondary schools, from the perspectives of Australia and England. I position this in my taxonomy as a '*few-country comparison*' research design, which is in line with Pickard's terminology.

This construct is philosophically supported by Fäegerlind and Saha, who assert that both critical theory and postcolonial theory tend to be jointly espoused implicitly in much comparative literature.[260] As a counterpoint, Welch indicates that theorists of a 'deconstructive' inclination tend to reject the underpinnings of comparative education as "categorical error".[261] Maintaining Pickard's terminology, 'comparators' of Australia and England have been chosen as examples of two developed countries with a common colonial history, which are also characterised by relatively high rates of migration of peoples from different cultures. Under the classification system of Theisen and Adams,[262] I adopt an 'analytical' style of comparison; the targets of analysis are unique to each aim and will be discussed in the respective sections later in this chapter. The choice of representative members of the actors to research under the model falls in the purview of sampling technique and is discussed within the relevant sections for each individual methodology. Chapters Four and Five are dedicated to the descriptive forms

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[259] Lijphart, A. (1975). "The Comparable-Cases Strategy in Comparative Research." Comparative Political Studies **8**(2): 158, Broadfoot, T. (1977). "The Comparative Contribution - A Research Perspective." Comparative Education **13**(2): 133-137, Ragin, C. C. (1987). The comparative method: moving beyond qualitative and quantitative strategies. Berkeley, University of California Press, Nóvoa, A. (1998). Histoire & comparaison:(essais sur l'éducation), Educa.

[260] Fägerlind, I. and L. J. Saha (1983). Education and national development: a comparative perspective. New York;Oxford [Oxfordshire];, Pergamon.

[261] Mohanty, C. T. (2003). Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity, Duke University Press.

[262] Theisen, G. and D. Adams (1990). "Comparative education research." Thomas, R. Murray: International Comparative Education. Practices, issues & prospects. Exeter: 277-303.

of the methodology, while Chapter Six attempts to compare the findings across both countries, and in the spirit of reasoning applied by Saldana and Bryman, 'crystallise'[263] the possible implications abductively under the postcolonial framework.[264]

3.1.5 Mapping methodology to aims

What exactly constitutes methodology and method differs by author, however, they generally agree that a methodology constitutes a unified approach to inquiry which links the methods of collecting, composing and analysing data to the findings of the research (Creswell, Crotty, Trainor *et al.*, Lodico and others).[265] This research delineates the boundaries further to provide a substantive basis for the comparative design. In the current taxonomy, I reserve the term 'general methodology' for the nature and structure of the data, while 'individual methodology' more closely aligns with the strategy for analysis, and 'method' is more narrowly introduced as the set of instructions for data collection.[266] The data collected about curricula, texts and pedagogical practices is qualitative by nature, however, because students represent the broad base of the model, the data needs to incorporate their cultural and social profiles, in addition to their responsiveness to English Literature and texts. Taking guidance from Howitt and Cramer, such data is therefore converted to numerical counts against nominal categories (based on

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[263] Mertens, D. M. (2010). Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology, + the Literature Review, Sage Publications.

[264] Saldaña, J. and Ebrary (2011). Fundamentals of qualitative research. New York, Oxford University Press, Bryman, A. (2012). Social research methods. Oxford;New York;, Oxford University Press.

[265] Crotty, M. (1998). The foundations of social research: meaning and perspective in the research process. Thousand Oaks, Calif;London;, Sage Publications, Lodico, M. G. and K. H. Voegtle (2006). Methods in Educational Research: From Theory to Practice. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, An Imprint of Wiley, Creswell, J. W. (2009). Research design: Qualitative and mixed methods approaches. London, Sage Publications, Trainor, A. A. and E. Graue (2013). Reviewing qualitative research in the social sciences, Routledge.

[266] Refer to Figure 3.1.1: Methodological Framework.

Stevens' scales of measurement).[267]

In this light, I adopt a 'mixed-methods' general methodology, wherein each actor in the model generates either a quantitative or qualitative data set through this inquiry. This is consistent with Bryman's 'technical' interpretation of a mixed-methods approach, which is not directly linked to nor incompatible with any single paradigm.[268] Indeed, as discussed separately by Mertens and Creswell,[269] although mixed-methods is more typically associated in scholarship with the pragmatic paradigm, the pluralistic nature of the transformative paradigm lends itself strongly to mixed-methods applications. Scholars like Newby, Tashakkori and Teddlie further distinguish the mixed-methods approach based on the relative dominance of techniques, as well as the stages of inquiry at which the data are 'mixed'.[270] For this research, because of the distinctive focus of my aims, quantitative and qualitative data are effectively collected in parallel; no true mixing occurs except through 'crystallization'; in discussion of my aims under the common postcolonial theoretical framework. Overall, qualitative data is the dominant feature, however the ordinal nature of some questionnaire data means that 'quasi-quantification'[271] is necessary for further analysis. Indeed, this approach to converting the qualitative data appeals to the materialistic ontology of the transformative paradigm, where measurement matters, as suggested by Kelvin and Hoffman, it is through measurement and quantification that one can observe patterns, and advocating change.[272]

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[267] Howitt, D. and D. Cramer (2005). Introduction to Research Methods in Psychology, Pearson Education.

[268] Bryman, A. (2012). Social research methods. Oxford;New York;, Oxford University Press.

[269] Creswell, J. W. (2009). Research design: Qualitative and mixed methods approaches. London, Sage Publications, Mertens, D. M. (2010). Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology, + the Literature Review, Sage Publications.

[270] Teddlie, C. and A. Tashakkori (2006). "A General Typology of Research Designs Featuring Mixed Methods1." Research in the Schools **13**(1): 12, Newby, P. (2014). Research Methods for Education, Routledge.

[271] Bryman, A. (2012). Social research methods. Oxford;New York;, Oxford University Press.

[272] Kelvin, W. (1883). "The six gateways of knowledge. Presidential address to the Birmingham and Midland institute, Birmingham (3 October 1883)." Popular Lectures and Addresses **1**: 280, Hoffman, G. M. and P. F. Drucker (1975). Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices, JSTOR.

3.1.6 Case studies

As mentioned above, the national comparators of Australia and England are chosen for their distinctive, but temporally adjacent colonial roots, as well as their population diversity.[273] Therefore, it is important to compare and discuss how contemporary education systems in these former colonial empires cater for the learning needs of culturally diverse students.[274] Within this, the English Literature curriculum is the first logical choice for consideration as the apex of my model, and I have chosen to perform a case study which also includes a review of prescribed texts, since these are set by the curriculum boards.[275] When I first began this research, my understanding of the full landscape of the English curriculum was not very clear, in terms of the potential for consideration of student diversity. The strength of the case study is that it allowed me to focus on the definite objects (sections of curriculum) which were most representative of my aims, as well as allow for sufficient context and framing of the relevant issues. In the typology of Yin and Newby, each national case study typifies as a 'single embedded' design.[276] There is much contention amongst scholars as to whether a case study is indeed a *methodology* (Yin, Groat and Wang),[277] *method* (Merriam),[278] *research strategy* (Orum and Sjoberg, Gerring)[279] or none of these types (Stake, van Wynsberghe).[280] For taxonomy, epistemological commitments (dialectic

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[273] For this discussion refer to Chapter 1, Section 1.5.2—Australia and England as postcolonial sites, on pg., 15.
[274] Ibid.
[275] Refer to Figure 3.1.1: Methodological Framework.
[276] Yin, R. K. (2003). "Case study research design and methods third edition." Applied social research methods series **5**, Newby, P. (2014). Research Methods for Education, Routledge.
[277] Groat, L. N. and D. Wang (2002). Architectural Research Methods, John Wiley & Sons, Yin, R. K. (2003). "Case study research design and methods third edition." Applied social research methods series **5**.
[278] Merriam, S. B. (1998). Qualitative research and case study applications in education. Revised and expanded from, ERIC.
[279] Orum, A. M., J. R. Feagin and G. Sjoberg (1991). "Introduction: The nature of the case study." A case for the case study: 1-26, Gerring, J. (2004). "What is a case study and what is it good for?" American political science review **98**(02): 341-354.
[280] Stake, R. E. (1995). The art of case study research, Sage, VanWynsberghe, R. and S. Khan (2007). "Redefining case study." International Journal of Qualitative Methods **6**(2): 80-94.

realist) and procedural design, I position my discussion in the camp of Merriam and Stake; this allowed me to refine the scope of the curriculum sections under study, as the research progressed. However, paradigmatic framing and boundedness pays homage to the Yinian camp. This recognises there are deterministic realities to be compared between the individual national cases. As such, the respective reinterpretations of the aims I consider propositionally are:

- '*How*' is senior English curriculum framed to challenge students to consider cultural differences in society?
- '*How*' are texts selected to engage students in considering cultural differences in contemporary society, and supported by the tenets and processes of senior English text selection?

The 'unit of analysis' selected for the Australian case study is the 'Area of Study' section of the Board of Studies New South Wales (referred to as NSW) senior English curriculum. NSW has been selected because it regards English as "the core of the humanities [and] the only compulsory subject for the HSC". The 'Area of Study' has been selected within this because it is a common section undertaken by most students across NSW; and themes of culture and identity hold significant importance.[281] Within England, the comparative body selected is the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) A-Level English curriculum; as this is one of the largest exam bodies, more schools and educators are familiar with its application. The relevant comparative section is the *'Struggle for Identity'* option under *'Spec-A'*. [282]The case study adopted two methods for data collection: (i) a structured interview with the Curriculum Officers, and (ii) analysis of publicly available documents on education policies and curriculum statements[283]. Table 3.1.1 below provides a

[281] See Chapter 4, pg., 112.
[282] See Chapter 5, pg., 179.
[283] A sample of the main public access documents consulted is given in Appendix F, pg.,, 349.

brief overview of each method in the context of application to my aims under a case study methodology.

Table 3.1.1: Case Study Methods

Case Study	INTERVIEW	DOCUMENTS
DESCRIPTION	• Structured interview – face to face with Curriculum Officers	• Published documents (access level 2)[284]
AIMS	**Curriculum:** To explore the extent to which the senior English curriculum is framed to challenge students to consider cultural differences in society	**Prescribed Texts:** To investigate the tenets and processes of senior English text selection with specific emphasis on texts selected to engage students in considering cultural differences in contemporary society
ADVANTAGES	• Questions applied consistently across interviews regardless of time/location, etc • Common data analysis framework • Interviews with curriculum boards will uncover recent changes or developments in text selection processes • Can follow up with responses in subsequent correspondence	• A chronology of texts selected in the past will show patterns of repetition in the text selection process over a period of years • Comparing texts listed on previous curricula will be an effective means of presenting information on text selection practices as well as scoping patterns for selecting texts for study
DISADVANTAGES	• Inability to frame questions 'off the cuff' in response to openings/opportunities • Might be challenging to gain access to expert/stakeholders as well this might become time consuming process to visit each office and become expensive to fund travel costs	• There might be gaps in the chronology of text selection • A chronology of texts selected can only be understood alongside a rationale for their selection. This might deviate from the aims of understanding more contemporary methods
DATA ANALYSIS	Triangulation of transcript interview responses with information from documents which can corroborate and provide context for the analysis	

[284] Wellington gives a typology of documents which assists in the ethics and archival of documentary analysis. Wellington, J. (2015). Educational research: Contemporary issues and practical approaches, Bloomsbury Publishing.

The interview questions for Curriculum Boards were grouped into twelve main questions that focused broadly on the administrative processes and policies surrounding text selection (see Appendices A and B).[285] A recorded structured interview was conducted with one Education Board: Board of Studies NSW (Appendix A); and the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (Appendix B) in Australia and England, respectively. The objective of these interviews is to ascertain how the prescribed texts are selected for study in current modules. These interviews investigate the administrative rationales and processes for changing, repeating or listing new texts for study in senior English curricula. The questions focused on key areas such as; (i) what are the current practices of selecting texts for the English curriculum, (ii) what is the current rationale for selecting texts, (iii) who are the stakeholder groups involved in the text selection process, how are decisions made regarding persons selected to be in these groups, and (iv) how important is balance between more traditional and contemporary texts.

The Board of Studies NSW (Australia) and the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) English departments were contacted via telephone and email, to discuss this research project and obtain the name of the senior officier in the English Department involved with curriculum and text selections. After receiving the names or necessary contact information an an invitiation package was sent via email to the Senior English Curriculum Officers. There were additional questions added to ask the British Curriculum Officer regarding the general administration of senior secondary education in England regarding the design and function of the British education system as well as discussions about senior education practices before and after the education reform. This was necessary to clarify and obtain more information about the British system and current changes to the teaching and examination

[285] For Appendix A— Curriculum Interviews Australia, and Appendix B—Curriculum Interviews England, refer to pgs. 326 and 328, respectively.

processes involved in senior education. These questions were important, in order to understand from an administrative point of view, the intricate methods involved in the text selection procedures and the relevant decision-making process involved when listing texts to complement the English curriculum modules in each study. Descriptions of the data and context for the case study are presented in Chapters Four and Five, while analysis of the data, via triangualation of the findings from the interview and documents, is presented in Chapter Six, under a comparative framework.

3.1.7 Sampling techniques

The qualitative technique for selecting the 'units of analysis' for the curriculum is designated by Newby as 'case study sampling'.[286] To collect data from teachers and students I instead apply 'stratified purposive sampling'[287] to schools, in which I group them by indicators of 'performance', as either 'high performing' (HPS) or 'low performing' (LPS). From the viewpoint of the transformative paradigm, this categorisation is somewhat artificial, and in the view of Trainor *et al*., presents me with a position of power as the researcher.[288] However, this is balanced against the need to perform some degree of grouping which could otherwise be lost with a random sampling of schools, and implicitly marginalise certain groups of participants in the study. Collating data on schools based on perceptions of performance provides a route via which this research can give due consideration to the residual theme of assessment of students, which is treated exogenously in the model under consideration, but which also cannot be completely divorced from a discussion on student learning. This research recognises that the notion of

[286] Newby, P. (2014). Research Methods for Education, Routledge.
[287] Miles, M. B. and A. M. Huberman (1994). Qualitative data analysis: an expanded sourcebook. Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, Mertens, D. M. (2010). Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology, + the Literature Review, Sage Publications.
[288] Trainor, A. A. and E. Graue (2013). Reviewing qualitative research in the social sciences, Routledge.

performance is a complex issue and there are drivers based not only on innate student abilities, but also on governance, structure, and resources available to schools.[289]

The administrative tasks for selecting a list of schools to approach, for this research, was comprised of seeking publicly accessible government documents that ranked their academic performance. In Australia, publicly accessible information on the My School website provides overall demographics, for example, is the school co-educational (males and females), public or private institutions, etc.[290] The National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) assesses Years 3, 4, 7 and 9 to gauge student skills in reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation and numeracy at different levels.[291] Similarly, in England information and statistics on school performances were accessed through the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).[292] In addition to this information, The Department for Education 2012 Performance Tables in the United Kingdom was used to differentiate schools by academic ranking and performance.[293] It was somewhat easier to find information on schools that were HPS than LPS, but a secondary means of ascertaining school ranking by performance was to seek corroborative feedback from colleagues and educators who were not involved in this research.

This process involved firstly contacting acquaintances from other universities who also conduct research for different projects in secondary schools in Australia and England. Their experiences were used to inform perceptions of school rankings by academic performance in both countries.

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[289] Refer to Chapter 2 – Literature Review, on pg., 19.

[290] My School. (2015). "My School." Retrieved March 9, 2015, from http://www.myschool.edu.au/.

[291] National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy. (2015). "NAPLAN." Retrieved March 9, 2015, from http://www.nap.edu.au/naplan/naplan.html.

[292] Office for Standards in Education Children's Services and Skills. (2014). Retrieved 22 August, 2014, from www.ofsted.gov.uk, Office for Standards in Education Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) (2014). The Framework for School Inspection: The Framework for Inspecting Schools in England under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended). Manchester, United Kingdom, Ofsted: 1-21.

[293] Department for Education. (2014). "School Performance Tables." Retrieved April 18, 2014, from http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/geo/england_all.html.

The process for approaching schools to participate in this research was to initiate contact with the Head of the English Department informing them of the research (via telephone) this was then followed up with an email detailing the research and their involvement should they choose to participate. Upon agreeing, consent was sought from the Principal and all participating teachers. The selection of teachers for participation was left to the discretion of the Head of the Department. Participating schools were not made aware about the comparisons planned between HPS and LPS institutions to ensure their responses were not influenced by their perceptions of their school performance against that of others.

Geographical focus was placed on the urban areas Sydney (Australia) and Greater London (England) since these city areas had higher concentrations of schools populated by students from a broad range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.[294] Aside from the geographical location of schools, there was also a consideration of the types of schools to select for this research. The plethora of demononialtional, sectarian and special schools in both countries militate against attempting a representative sample of schools, given the time and financial constraints of doctoral level research. To maintain uniformity in the data collection process, only schools that were publicly funded or owned by the government were to be considered and had to cater for both male and female students. The rationale for choosing government funded schools over private institutions was to get an average of how most students in the country were being educated. As there are larger numbers of publicly funded schools across all urban areas, this also reduced the risk of not securing schools to participate in the research.[295] The reason for targeting

[294] Discussions about London and Sydney being populated with higher numbers of culturally diverse multicultural populations are presented in Heath, A. and N. Demireva (2014). "Has Multiculturalism Failed in Britain?" Ethnic and Racial Studies **37**(1): 161-180, Krockenberger, M. (2015). Population growth in Australia, Australia Institute., respectively.

[295] In Australia, 'public schools' are subdivided into different categories for instance; public schools, public selective schools, special schools and schools for the disabled, see; New South Wales Education and Communities. (1968). "New South Wales Public Schools." Retrieved March 14, 2014, from http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/types/selectiveschools.php. In England, 'public schools' are

schools with both male and female students is that it is difficult to consider other aspects of culture in meaningful ways if gender is not accounted for. These prerequisites were to be considered when targeting HPS and LPS in urban areas with high populations of people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

3.1.8 Phenomenological inquiry

Given the selection of schools in the sample, my third aim of 'probing issues encountered by teachers in mediating prescribed texts in senior English classroom' is best facilitated through phenomenological inquiry[296] of the experiences of the English teachers in these schools.[297] Specifically, I take the hermeneutic approach advocated by van Manen and Cohen *et al*., where the meaning of the experience of the teachers in classrooms of diverse students becomes the focal point of the inquiry.[298] Patton explains that phenomenological research is based on

> the assumption that there is an essence or essences to shared experience. These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced. The experiences of different people are bracketed, analyzed, and compared to the identity of the essences of the phenomenon, for example, the essences of loneliness, the essence of being a mother, the essence of being a participant in a particular program. The assumption of essence, like the ethnographer's assumption that culture exists and is important,

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those completely or partially funded by the government and are comprised of; Faith schools, Free schools, Academies, City technology colleges, State boarding schools, Private schools and Special schools, see; Great Britain. (2014). "Types of School." Retrieved April 11, 2014, from https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/overview.

[296] Lopez *et al*., explain the genealogy of phenomenology from its roots in philosophy to standing as a methodological approach to research. Lopez, K. A. and D. G. Willis (2004). "Descriptive versus interpretive phenomenology: Their contributions to nursing knowledge." Qualitative health research **14**(5): 726-735.

[297] Refer to Figure 3.1.1: Methodological Framework.

[298] Van Manen, M. (1990). Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy, SUNY Press, Cohen, M. Z., D. L. Kahn and R. H. Steeves (2000). Hermeneutic phenomenological research: A practical guide for nurse researchers, Sage Publications.

> becomes the defining characteristic of a purely phenomenological study (70).[299]

The phenomenon in question is the "mediation of prescribed texts". Here, the act of 'mediating' implicitly involves two peripheral activities; interpretation and dissemination. Largely, there will be levels of recursion between the two, which will be idiosyncratic to the teacher and classroom environment. The strength of this approach, therefore, is that the voice of each teacher is uniquely heard and meaning captured directly from the 'lived experienced' without sacrificing richness and complexity. [300]As the researcher extracting meaning from the teachers' discourse, there is the potential power conflict of a 'double hermeneutic' in which I interpret an *already interpreted* experience; at first this may seem at odds with my transformative paradigm, however, participant teachers were also invited to provide feedback on my interpretations of their views, which scholars like Porter and Bradbury-Jones contend is integral to a phenomenological approach.[301]

As argued by Langdridge, a purposive sampling approach should ideally be used to select the participant teachers for this study,[302] however, as this was already done at the school level, it was left to the Head Teachers to determine the final participants depending on interest and availability. The phenomenological inquiry adopted a semi-structured interview with teachers as the method of data collection. Originally, I planned to also perform observations in the classroom environment to supplement the interviews, and as a way of discerning more of the 'lived experience' of teachers. However, due to scarcity of time and resources for fieldwork, class time observations

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[299] Patton, M. Q. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods, SAGE Publications, inc.

[300] Geertz, C. (1973). The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays, Basic books, Denzin, N. K. (1989). "Interpretive interactionism."

[301] Porter, E. J. (1998). "On" being inspired" by Husserl's phenomenology: Reflections on Omery's exposition of phenomenology as a method of nursing research." Advances in Nursing Science **21**(1): 16-28, Bradbury-Jones, C., F. Irvine and S. Sambrook (2009). "Phenomenology and participant feedback: convention or contention?" Nurse researcher **17**(2): 25-33.

[302] Langdridge, D. (2007). Phenomenological psychology: Theory, research and method, Pearson Education.

were limited to a 20-minute session, which was not measurably enough for consideration within a phenomenological approach.

Table 3.1.2 provides a brief overview of the semi-structured interview in the context of application to my aims under a phenomenological methodology. Chapters Four and Five present the findings of this inquiry using thematic analysis, and the 'hermeneutic circle'[303] is completed in Chapter Six by way of comparison of insights from the teachers sampled across Australia and England.

Table 3.1.2: Phenomenological Method

Phenomenological Inquiry	INTERVIEW
DESCRIPTION	• Semi-structured interview – in person with teachers individually
AIMS	**Pedagogy:** To probe issues encountered by teachers in mediating prescribed texts in the senior English classroom
ADVANTAGES	• Questions can be open-ended to some extent and take into consideration teachers' years of experience or type of school, etc. • Suitable for phenomenology as teachers are able to share their 'lived' experiences in the classroom and draw from all aspects of their experience
DISADVANTAGES	• Teachers cooperation and/or timetabling constraints to participate and conduct one on one interviews • Comparative approach might be difficult to access teachers in different life contexts to generalise the 'mediation of texts' phenomenon • May be difficult to separate teachers' lived experiences from their opinions on the experiences of other educators
DATA ANALYSIS	• Exemplars used to demonstrate expressions of teachers and their feelings and mindset in the context of 'mediating texts' • Thematic analysis used to determine commonalities in descriptions of or extrapolations from the 'lived' experience in classrooms.[304]

[303] Langdridge explains the 'hermeneutic circle' as the process of moving between the whole of the data to the individual parts and back again to establish the full truth of the phenomenon. Ibid.
[304] Brauer, L. and C. T. Clark (2008). "The Trouble Is English: Reframing English Studies in Secondary Schools." English Education **40**(4): 293-313, Ebe, A. E. (2012). "Supporting the Reading Development of

The teacher interview questions were broadly grouped into sections to guide information on the; (i) background of teacher and school, (ii) curriculum and prescribed texts, (iii) pedagogical practices and policy questions, and (iv) quality versus equity in education. The school interviews were conducted with 24 English teachers (12 per country across four different schools; two HPS and LPS). These recorded interviews have been structured into four sections to investigate issues and challenges arising when meditating the current list of prescribed texts in senior English classes (see Appendices C and D).[305] Overall, the plan to visit schools and teachers included scheduling time to interview three English teachers separately (45 mins to one hour interviews), observe three different English classes being taught (45 minutes each) and to note that 15-20 minutes was needed towards the end of the lesson for students to complete the questionnaire. The interview questions for teachers in the Australian and British case were differentiated in order to focus on what teachers thought about the current events and changes to policies that were specific to each country (refer to Appendix C and D). These questions aim to investigate the extent to which the current selection of English texts are effective for engaging contemporary senior students in discussions of cultural differences, in terms of teachers' pedagogical styles. Interviews will include discussions about how teachers use English texts to promote or inhibit the achievement of curriculum learning goals, and how reinforce engagement and challenge students to address issues related to these texts in their classrooms.

As all interviews were voice recorded these audio files were saved and transcribed by the researcher. The software programme known as Express Scribe (F5),[306] was used to assist with transciption of audio files. Express Scribe hosts a series of editorial features to enhance sound quality and slows down

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Middle School English Language Learners Through Culturally Relevant Texts." Reading & Writing Quarterly **28**(2): 179.

[305] For Appendix C—English Teacher Interview Questions Australia, and Appendix D—English Teacher Interview Questions England, refer to pgs. 330 and 332, respectively.

[306] NCH Software. (2013). "Express Scribe Transciption Software." Retrieved November 13, 2013, from http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/index.html?gclid=COj0-KWlm8kCFQyZvAodPmYGuA.

the audio file to enable transcription without much need to stop and start recording text. Transcripts were coded by number, thus removing the identity of participants, then collated in order of exam board and school participation before being saved in as Microsoft Word documents. Thematic analysis of interviews included choosing a software programme to utilise qualitative coding and analysis of interview transcipts. Using software programmes does not mean that interviews are automatically coded since data still need to be managed manually. However, software programmes for qualititative analysis assist with the efficiency of locating and grouping of information for analysis. After reviewing a series of qualititative software the Researchware Incorporated programme known as HyperRESEARCH was selected. [307] HyperRESEARCH is an American-based software programme which, at that time, seemed to be more advanced than the majority of qualititative programmes available for use. This programme was selected because of the availabilty of online programmes and video tutorials about using the programme, ability to operate the software on both Apple and PC devices, and the fact that it is adaptable for different types of files including the ability to faciliate the coding of digital or photographic imagery.

Transcripts were uploaded to HyperRESEARCH and saved as separate samples for comparative purposes. The coding method outlined by Neuman was followed to deconstruct the themes present in participants interview dialogue.[308] To explain this approach, first data was Open coded, where large sections of text were coded under a heading. The interview questions themselves broadly formed the basis for the Open coding of transcripts. The second stage of analysis was Axil coding, where Open codes were further subdivided into sub-categories, for example, teachers were asked how many years they spent working as an English teachers? The entire response to this

[307] HyperRESEARCH. (2013). Retrieved November 24, 2015, from http://www.researchware.com/products/hyperresearch.html.
[308] Neuman, L. W. (2002). "Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches."

question was Open coded as 'Years of Experience' and then Axil coded into 'number of years' and 'experience at different schools' since some teachers explained their years teaching and the types of schools they worked at over this time. Finally, Selective coding is the last process where Axil codes are grouped and analysed to establish common links.

3.1.9 Content analysis and correlation analysis

My final aim is to 'sample students' perceptions of and responses to issues of cultural difference in prescribed texts within the English curriculum'. To do this I designed a questionnaire which requested students of the schools sampled to complete: (i) background data on their gender, ancestry, languages, religious beliefs, socioeconomic and educational status within their household, (ii) 5-point Likert scales indicating whether they like, discuss, relate to, contend with others' interpretations of texts, and how often, and (iii) open-ended responses to generic themes and issues of culture and society which they can recognise within the texts they study. This instrument supports, respectively, two individual quantitative methodologies, aligned with the nature of the data collected: (i) content analysis of the open-ended responses and, (ii) correlational analysis of the categorical background and student profile data, the ordinal Likert scale response data, and the categorical data on themes drawn from the content analysis.[309] Many scholars like Flick Mayring and Krippendorf envision content analysis as structured, rigorous and allowing inferences to be drawn from the nature and meaning of qualitative text.[310] Anderson and Arsenault further extrapolate this to "[involves] counting concepts, words or occurrences in documents and

[309] Refer to Figure 3.1.1: Methodological Framework.

[310] Krippendorff, K. (2004). Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology, Sage, Mayring, P. (2004). Qualitative content analysis. A companion to qualitative research. B. Jenner, U. Flick, E. von Kardoff and I. Steinke. London, Sage, Flick, U. (2009). An introduction to qualitative research, Sage.

reporting them in tabular form" (102).[311] This transposition to a quantitative data form uses the technique of coding. I achieved this with Kellogg Hunt's method of dividing thought units into referents.[312], which in the typology of Hsieh and Shannon,[313] would be considered 'summative content analysis'; wherein the form of the referents is influenced by my own assessment of the topics which students chose to respond about. The strength of this technique is that it readily offers insight into students' reflections on texts and the words they choose to give meaning to the themes they engage with.[314]

This is then complemented by the correlational analysis, jointly with the other data collected from the questionnaire, to explore associative patterns between background, relative expressions of like or dislike, and the themes identified as being meaningful. Mertens and Lodico *et al*., identify two broad methodologies for nonexperimental quantitative analysis; correlational and causal-comparative.[315] I choose correlational as it allows me to explore possible strengths of associations and patterns within the data, without needing to infer causal relationships between independent or dependent variables. Patterns in the data can have their own voice and value is not ascribed to any singular interpretation of the results. The suitability of the sample of students in each country is satisfied; benchmarked against Mertens' recommendation of at least 82 participants for a correlational study.[316]

Both levels of quantitative methodologies collected data using a

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[311] Anderson, G. and N. Arsenault (1998). Fundamentals of educational research. London, Falmer Press.
[312] Hunt, K. W. (1965). "Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels. NCTE Research Report No. 3."
[313] Hsieh, H.-F. and S. E. Shannon (2005). "Three approaches to qualitative content analysis." Qualitative health research **15**(9): 1277-1288.
[314] To explain, if a student responded 'I like this text because it talks about family and values', then this response was coded into two parts 'I like this text because it talks about family' (positive response to topic focused on), 'I like this text because it talks about values' (second positive topic focused on). These parts were then grouped quantified or counted and then analysed and discussed using tables and figures.
[315] Lodico, M. G. and K. H. Voegtle (2006). Methods in Educational Research: From Theory to Practice. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, An Imprint of Wiley, Mertens, D. M. (2010). Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology, + the Literature Review, Sage Publications.
[316] Mertens presents a table on pg.,331 which provides typical sample size recommendations for quantitative studies, assuming criteria for 0.8 power and a 5% level of significance. Mertens, D. M. (2010). Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology, + the Literature Review, Sage Publications.

questionnaire administered to the students of the teachers who were interviewed with the sample schools. Table 3.1.3 below provides a brief overview of the questionnaire instrument under the quantitative methodologies of correlation and content analysis.

Table 3.1.3: Quantitative Method

Correlation Analysis & Content Analysis	QUESTIONNAIRE
DESCRIPTION	• Questionnaire with - qualitative categorical questions - structured questions using a five-point Likert scale - open-ended free response questions
AIMS	**Student Responses:** To sample students' perceptions of and responses to issues of cultural difference in prescribed texts within the English curriculum
ADVANTAGES	• The same questionnaire can be use in both comparator countries • Questionnairesfrom students in classrooms mean immediate response and return of data • Researcher on site to answer questions or address queries in questionnaire • Questions can be targeted to provide a range of background profile information • Teachers from the classes who are interviewed can also provide supplementary context for analysis
DISADVANTAGES	• Tedious ethical approval to conduct research with students 16 to 18 years' old • Students under 16 are required to submit evidence of parental consent before participating in the questionnaire • Difficult to find allocated time during school hours to distribute the questionnaire if too long • Students must be willing to participate for the data to have integrity
DATA ANALYSIS	• Coding used to determine the key referents which students present in their responses to the open-ended questions • Correspondence Analysis as a descriptive statistical technique to untangle complex relationships in the data and provide measures to the depth of any patterns in the data

The student questionnaire was designed by the researcher with the assistance of the supervisory panel as well as a statistical consultant from the Australian National University (see Appendix E)[317]. The questionnaire was tailored to collect responses from students about how the English texts studied at school helped them engage in discussions of cultural differences. Appendix E provides a list of all the questions, which specifically target their responses on how they related to these texts, as well as how these texts assisted with their understanding of cultural issues, their own and that of others, in contemporary society. The questionnaire has both quantitative and qualitative sections. The quantitative section was divided into parts that asked questions related to their personal information such as sex, country of birth, religion, languages spoken, family ancestry. This included questions pertaining to their family information such as income, parents'/guardians' education background. The questionnaire also asks for an overview of how often students refer to texts to discuss contentious cultural issues related to ethnicity, social class and gender with their teachers, friends and parents/guardians.

The qualitative section of the questionnaire focuses on capturing responses to individual texts with the aim of receiving comments and statements from students about how, in their words, these prescribed texts help them understand cultural differences in society. In the conceptual design phase, suggestions for improving the questionnaire included changing the layout and structure of questions, so that there was less focus on the texts that were studied and more emphasis on how students responded to these texts. This change was proposed as no two schools or classes in the research were studying the same texts. Therefore, it would be impossible to do a statistical analysis of specific responses to individual texts. As well, teachers supplied the list of texts they were studying with each class, however as most senior

[317] For Appendix E—Student questionaries, see on pg., 334.

classes were at the beginning of the term (March in Australia, and September in England), students were not able to make comments on each of the texts studied. Students were asked personal information in order to gain an appreciation of their cultural, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. This is valuable information because it informs the background of students at different types of schools (HPS and LPS). It was essential to obtain this information because it would be used to contextualise the cultural background of the sample against the cultural issues raised and disucssed in texts studied at schools.

Other questions focused on students' perceptions, such as their likeness to prescribed texts and how these are used to discuss issues of ethnicity, social class and gender with different groups of people such as their teachers, friends and parents/guardians. These cultural issues (ethnicity, social class, gender) are explored based on existing scholarship that suggests that cultural issues particularly related to race, social class, and gender are increasingly difficult themes to discuss when using prescribed texts in English classrooms across North American schools.[318] For this purpose, similar questions have been included to understand how these cultural issues are discussed through texts in Australian and British schools. The software programme Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the quantitative data. In addition to support from the statistician, training sessions at the Australian National University were attended to learn how to utilise the software programme.

Data from the questionnaire was preliminary entered using Microsoft Excel and then imported into SPSS for further analysis. Analysis first comprised coding referents[319] to uncover the key referents in students' responses to the open-ended questions. Background profile data is presented

[318] Johnston, I. and J. Mangat (2012). Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literature, and Cultural Mediation in the Classroom. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers.
[319] Refer to, Hunt, K. W. (1965). "Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels. NCTE Research Report No. 3."

using simple descriptive bar and pie charts where appropriate. Additionally, for data involving the complex responses on the Likert scale, a mathematical technique called correspondence (inspired by Bourdieu's application to the social sciences)[320] is used to represent the data visually in terms of a two-dimensional plot of points called a 'biplot'. The relative distance between the points on the biplot, between members of different categories of variables is indicative of the degree association between those members.[321] Relationships pertinent for investigation are further tested using Chi-squared or correlation measures and hypothesis tests.

3.2 Field Implementation

Field research occurred in Australia during March-April 2013, and in England during the months of September-October 2013. Interviews with Curriculum Boards were conducted in Sydney (Australia) and Guildford (England) respectively, and these lasted for approximately 2.5 hours in each instance.

Overall three types of ethical approvals were obtained in order to conduct fieldwork with participating schools. These include; (i) Human Research Ethnics Committee at the Australian National University, (ii) State Education Research Application Process (SERAP) at the NSW Government Department of Education & Communities, and (iii) British Educational Research Association (BERA) in the United Kingdom.[322] In both countries, a

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[320] Bourdieu, P. (1984). Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste, Harvard University Press.

[321] An example of correspondence analysis as applied to education research is given in this article by Funnell *et al.*, Funnell, B., F. Bryer, P. Grimbeek and M. Davies (2004). "Demographic profiling for educational researchers: Using SPSS Optimal Scaling to identify distinct groups of participants." Educating: Weaving Research into Practice: Volume 2: 94.

[322] Australian National University ethnical application #2012/509 for Expedited Ethical Review (E2) was granted approval from 01/01/2013 to 01/01/2015. NSW Government Department of Education & Communities SERAP ethical application #2012213 was granted approval until 12/10/2013. For the United Kingdom BERA advised that non-UK citizens were required to seek ethical approval from the Principal of each participating school, therefore consent to conduct research at schools in the United Kingdom was subject to approval from the Principal.

week was designated to visit each participating school. Closer to the scheduled visit, the Head of English at the school, was contacted to review the plan for the visit in terms of checking school schedules and availability of participants. During the visit, there was a need to be flexible and adapt to daily school routines such as assembly, teachers on school duty during scheduled lunch or recess breaks. Therefore, some of the interviews were paused and returned to later during the school day. After the school visit, there was an agreement to follow up with an email if there were further questions or clarifications required for their responses to questions.

All participating students were briefed by the researcher and informed that their participation was voluntary and anonymous. When briefing students the objective of this research was explained as a study to obtain feedback from students about the English texts they studied at school, and how these texts helped them learn about different cultural groups in society. Each student was given a door-hanger supplied by the ANU Marketing Department as a small token of appreciation for their participation. Student questionnaires were filled out in the classroom and collected and numbered by the researcher before each class was dismissed. To secure the return of information, students were surveyed during one of their English lessons to make this aspect of the data collection process easier to manage. The field work was successfully completed in the allocated times in 2013, apart from a few follow ups in relation to teacher interviews and student questionnaires.

3.2.1 Deviations from the plan during implementation

The main deviations from the data collection plan occurred when conducting research in England. One school, which had consented to participate in the research was unable to do so two weeks before the scheduled visit. To manage this change in the research plan, a Head of English from a participating school was consulted and he recommended a second school (his

former school) which also fitted the research profile for this project. Because of this assistance, four schools were visited, and the research was completed during the time allotted for data collection overseas.

Teacher interviews were planned to be one-on-one for the research, however at two participating schools in England, teachers requested to be interviewed together in a group. Teachers suggested a group session would be better because they were unable to allocate time during the week for one-on-one interviews. It was important to try to manage this change in interview structure, as it meant that the responses from teachers may not truly reflect their 'lived' experience and would not be applicable to a pure phenomenological approach. To manage this deviation from the research, each teacher was asked to contribute personal thoughts to the questions. However, despite this request, some teachers either agreed with their colleagues or in some instances sought me after the interview to add more details, which they did not want their colleagues to be privy to, or asked for this to be kept off the record. This seemed to be because they disagreed with some of the practices of the more senior teachers in the Department, or had comments about practices at the school. Some of their comments focused more on the system of management at the school or were related to Government policy on senior education, rather than issues specifically concerning English text selection or pedagogy.

One observation made in the field was that students seemed most uncertain about the questions relating to their family income.[323] This was observed in classrooms as some of them consulted with their friends to inquire about the categories their friends were selecting. This information was noted in the field for consideration when analysing data and consideration was made on whether the data was fit for purpose, since responses may not be truly indicative of students' personal reflections of their family income.

[323] Refer to Appendix E, Section B—Student Family Income, Question #8, on pg., 337.

3.2.2 Data management

Data were managed and stored as both digital and hard copies of resources. Digital voice recordings, transcripts and scans of questionnaires are saved with a password encrypted data folder. As well, hard copies of all transcripts and questionnaire responses as well as observation notes are stored in a locked cabinet at the research office located at the Centre for European Studies at the Australian National University.

Chapter Four

Sample Findings: Australia

4.1 Curriculum and Prescribed Texts

4.1.1 Board of Studies, NSW English Stage 6: Higher School Certificate (HSC)[324]

Across Australia English is "one of the few subjects, and often the only subject, that most states and territories require students to study in order to achieve a tertiary entry rank" (312).[325] The Australian examination body known as the Board of Studies New South Wales[326] (referred to as NSW) has been selected for this research since it regards English as "the core of the humanities [and] the only compulsory subject for the HSC" (66).[327] The general aim of the NSW senior English curriculum is "to enable students to understand, use, enjoy and value the English language in its various textual forms and to become thoughtful, imaginative and effective communicators in a diverse and changing society" (7).[328] Since English is a compulsory subject, the NSW curriculum is divided into courses to cater to the learning needs of all secondary students. This general aim is adjusted to challenge students at different learning levels; for example providing students with highly technical and complex texts often requires them to demonstrate greater depth in critical analysis and written expression.

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[324] The first HSC examination was held in 1967, see: Barcan, A. (2003). More Means Worse, Again: What the Year 12 Exams Reveal, Quadrant Magazine. **47:** 63-71.

[325] Patterson, A. (2008). "Teaching Literature in Australia: Examining and Reviewing Senior English." Changing English **15**(3): 311-322.

[326] Refer to Chapter 3 – Methodology for more information about the selection of Board of Studies, NSW for this research, see pg., 79.

[327] Students are given the option in NSW to discontinue studying any other subject (including Mathematics), aside from English. Barcan, A. (2003). More Means Worse, Again: What the Year 12 Exams Reveal, Quadrant Magazine. **47:** 63-71.

[328] New South Wales Board of Studies (2012). English : Stage 6 Syllabus : English (Standard), English (Advanced), English as a Second Language (ESL), English (Extension), Fundamentals of English / Board of Studies, New South Wales, Sydney Board of Studies NSW.

The NSW English curriculum is divided into five different courses so that all students regardless of their learning abilities can obtain an English certificate of secondary education. The English curriculum for senior students, commonly referred to as English Stage 6, is divided into: English (Standard), English (Advanced), English (Extension), English as a Second Language (ESL), and Fundamentals of English (for students with low learning abilities).[329] According to the Board of Studies NSW, the majority of students undertake either Standard or Advanced English programmes.[330] Both these courses share a common compulsory section called the Area of Study, where the curriculum aim encourages students to discuss cultural differences in society by using prescribed texts. It is important to stress here that the Area of Study is selected for examination as it is the compulsory section of the English curriculum for the majority of students in NSW who sit either the Standard or Advanced English course. The remainder of the curricula aside from the Area of Study are comprised of elective modules, which are different in the Standard and Advanced curricula. For instance, the elective modules in the Standard course are; (a) experience through language, (b) close study of texts, and (c) texts and society. This is different to those modules offered in the Advanced course; (a) comparative study of texts and contexts, (b) critical study of texts and (c)

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[329] "*English (Standard)* is designed for students to increase their expertise in English in order to enhance their personal, social and vocational lives. The students learn to respond to and compose a wide variety of texts in a range of situations in order to be effective, creative and confident communicators. *English (Advanced)* is designed for students to undertake the challenge of higher-order thinking to enhance their personal, social and vocational lives. These students apply critical and creative skills in their composition of and response to texts in order to develop their academic achievement through understanding the nature and function of complex texts. *English as a Second Language (ESL)* is designed for students from diverse non-English speaking, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island backgrounds as designated by the course entry requirements. The students engage in a variety of language learning experiences to develop and consolidate their use, understanding and appreciation of English, so as to enhance their personal, social and vocational lives. *English (Extension)* is designed for students undertaking English (Advanced) who choose to study at a more intensive level in diverse but specific areas. They enjoy engaging with complex levels of conceptualisation and seek the opportunity to work in increasingly independent ways. *Fundamentals of English* is designed for those students who need to develop skills in using the English language effectively. The course equips students to participate in more satisfying learning. It assists them to meet the requirements of the English (Standard) courses or the English as a Second Language (ESL) courses and to achieve English language outcomes to support their study at Stage 6." See ibid.

[330] Board of Studies New South Wales. (2014). "2014 HSC Course Enrolments." Educational Resource Board of Studies NSW Retrieved October 26, 2014, from http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/news-media/media-guide-2014/stats/enrolments-course.html.

representation and text.[331] For this research, it seems more important to focus on the common section of both curricula because everyone must study it and this makes it easier to approach schools to participate in the research. The following compares how the general curriculum aim (defined above) is differentiated for those studying Standard and Advanced English courses. This comparison identifies the learning goals students are expected to achieve when engaging in discussions about cultural differences.

The Standard English curriculum (Standard course) is currently taught to the majority of students in NSW each year. This programme sets the benchmark for English competency. The Standard English course is challenging for students with low to mid-range abilities. The Standard English curriculum aims to

> … provide diverse approaches to texts so that students may become flexible and critical thinkers, capable of appreciating the variety of cultural heritages and differences that make up Australian society. They also encourage the development of skills in independent, collaborative and reflective learning … encourage students to reconsider and refine meaning and reflect on their own processes of responding, composing and learning (20).[332]

The Standard course encourages students to be exposed to an assortment of texts, where they can explore different cultures that make up Australian society. It is not possible to discuss every culture present in Australia through prescribed texts. The Standard curriculum encourages students to learn about a range of cultures that make up Australian society.

The Advanced course is for students who have higher than mid-range or standard abilities. These students are encouraged to read more challenging and complex texts and provide deeper analytical and critical reflective

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[331] Refer to pages 14 and 15 in, Board of Studies New South Wales (2013). English Stage 6 Prescriptions: Area of Study, Electives and Texts Higher School Certificate 2015-20,. State of New South Wales. Sydney, Board of Studies NSW,: 1-47.

[332] New South Wales Board of Studies (2012). English : Stage 6 Syllabus : English (Standard), English (Advanced), English as a Second Language (ESL), English (Extension), Fundamentals of English / Board of Studies, New South Wales, Sydney Board of Studies NSW.

responses. The rationale for the Advanced English curriculum requires students to

> … foster an appreciation of aesthetic values and provide students with opportunities for enhancing their understanding of literary expression. Students explore the different ways in which texts rewrite and represent conventions used in other texts, and they consider how these representations achieve meaning. They learn that different ways of reading may produce different meanings and may reflect different attitudes and values (36).[333]

The Advanced course requires students to demonstrate more technical or critical skills associated with reading and interpreting texts. These skills include incorporating their understanding of culture by layering their responses with examples from texts followed by interpretations (their own and others) of these texts. Through studying the Advanced course, students are expected to demonstrate their understanding of cultural issues while also incorporating a range of interpretations and critical analysis in prescribed texts.

Of most interest are the similarities to both Standard and Advanced rationales, which require students to read critically and extract meanings from texts, and apply their interpretations of these texts to reflect on their culture and that of others. Based on the expectation of the curricula it seems that the resources would need to have scope and range so that students can find their unique cultural voices within them and make connections to others. The following examines a section of the senior curriculum that is compulsory and common to both Standard and Advanced English courses, known as the Area of Study. Although the Area of Study is one section of the curriculum, it has been selected for study as it focuses on issues related to reciprocation of cultural differences in society between readers (students) and texts.334

[333] Ibid.

[334] On 22 October 2015, the Board of Studies NSW announced that it intends to remove the Area of Study section off the curriculum before 2020. The general reason for the change is to shift students away from

Though there are other modules in both Standard and Advanced English curricula which examine aspects of culture, the Area of Study maintains its stronghold as the place where students are asked to extract meaning from texts and demonstrate how this is shaped, interpreted and reflected through their understanding of texts.

4.1.2 Area of Study (section)

The Area of Study is a compulsory concept or theme based component of study for both Standard and Advanced English courses, and it comprises 40% of the final HSC grade.[335] The theme is central to the Area of Study as it guides the intention behind *why*, and *how*, students read and analyse texts. The Area of Study guides students to

> … explore and examine relationships between language and text, and interrelationships among texts. [Students] examine closely the individual qualities of texts while considering the texts' relationships to the wider context of the Area of Study [theme]. They synthesise ideas to clarify meaning and develop new meanings. They take into account whether aspects such as context, purpose and register, text structures, stylistic features, grammatical features and vocabulary are appropriate to the particular text. (9)[336]

In the past, Area of Study themes have included: *Changing* (2001-2003), *Journeys* (2004-2008), *Belonging* (2009-2014) and now *Discovery* (2015-2020).[337] These concepts or themes are quite broad, yet similar in scope. To understand

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focusing on specific themes to a closer reading of texts themselves. The discussions in this thesis are still applicable regarding the teaching and selection of prescribed texts for the curriculum. Bagshaw, E. (2015). HSC 2015: Board of Studies to Drop Most Unpopular Component of the HSC. The Sydney Morning Herald,. Sydney, Australia, Fairfax Media.

[335] New South Wales Board of Studies (2010). Higher School Certificate Course Descriptions. Board of Studies New South Wales. Sydney.

[336] Board of Studies New South Wales (2013). English Stage 6 Prescriptions: Area of Study, Electives and Texts Higher School Certificate 2015-20,. State of New South Wales. Sydney, Board of Studies NSW,**:** 1-47. and Board of Studies New South Wales (2007). English Stage 6 Prescriptions: Area of Study, Electives and Texts Higher School Certificate 2009-2014. State of New South Wales. Sydney, Board of Studies NSW,**:** 1-43.

[337] New South Wales Government. (27 August 2012). "Board of Studies New South Wales." Retrieved March 21, 2014, from www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au.

why such similar thematic options are chosen for study, I visited the Board of Studies Headquarters in George Street Sydney and interviewed the NSW Curriculum Officer who clarified that "broad themes that can sustain up to four or five years of examination questions, and considering every text on our list has a *Journey* or [themes of] *Belonging* or even not-*Belonging*, examples from these texts can be easily discussed using broad themes."[338] Therefore, themes are regarded as all-encompassing to facilitate accessibility for teaching a wide range of texts. However, these themes are also similar in scope, meaning that examples used to discuss concepts like *Changing* can also be used to discuss themes of *Journeys,* or *Belonging.* In the interview the NSW Curriculum Officer suggested that "since these concepts tend to overlap, prescribed texts can be used again for teaching different themes."[339] Therefore, it is important to gain an understanding of these themes or concepts listed in the Area of Study, regarding how these are framed to challenge students to consider cultural differences in society.

In June 2013, the English Stage 6 HSC curriculum for 2015 to 2020 was published announcing the new theme *Discovery*, along with an updated prescribed text list.[340] A comparison between the new theme *Discovery* and its predecessor *Belonging* is done to compare the extent to which themes or concepts overlap or are similar in scope.[341] The *Discovery* theme is described as, "an individual's discoveries and their process of discovering can vary according to ***personal, cultural, historical and social contexts*** and values … discoveries may be … viewed from different perspectives and their worth may be reassessed over time … ***discoveries may differ for individuals and their***

[338] NSW Curriculum Officer Interview, Sydney, March 2012.
[339] NSW Curriculum Officer Interview, Sydney, March 2012.
[340] Prescribed texts listed for Standard and Advanced English courses are presented in Section 4.1 of this chapter, see pg., 112.
[341] '*Belonging*' was the theme being studied at schools when the fieldwork for this research was conducted in March 2013.

worlds" (9).[342] Compared to its successor *Belonging* was described as, "ideas of belonging or of not belonging … are shaped within ***personal, cultural, historical and social contexts*** … ***belonging can emerge from the connections made with people***, places, groups, communities and ***the larger world***" (10).[343] Both descriptions navigate students to use prescribed texts to discuss themes while analysing interpretations (their own and others) and reflecting these onto themselves and their world.

Students taking Standard and Advanced English courses are required to study a fixed number of prescribed texts. In both curricula, texts are broadly grouped into four or five categories, [344] where only one of these categories is used to respond to the Area of Study section of both curricula. For the Standard course, students must study one text from each of these four categories of prescribed texts: (i) prose fiction, (ii) drama, (iii) poetry and (iv) non-fiction or film or media or multimedia text. However, for the Advanced course, students study one text from each category (mentioned above) and an additional Shakespearean drama.[345] The onus is left to the Head of English at each school to choose or organise their department to choose options from the list of prescribed texts. This decision goes alongside the nomination of additional resources to complement texts and include opinions from senior teachers in the English department. Teachers are responsible for choosing texts (prescribed and additional resources), researching and planning units of work for their classes.[346] It is the responsibility of teachers to research and

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[342] Board of Studies New South Wales (2013). English Stage 6 Prescriptions: Area of Study, Electives and Texts Higher School Certificate 2015-20,. State of New South Wales. Sydney, Board of Studies NSW,**:** 1-47.

[343] Board of Studies New South Wales (2007). English Stage 6 Prescriptions: Area of Study, Electives and Texts Higher School Certificate 2009-2014. State of New South Wales. Sydney, Board of Studies NSW,**:** 1-43.

[344] For a detailed description of textual categories and options for study, refer to Section 4.1—Curriculum and Prescribed Texts in this chapter, on pg., 112.

[345] Board of Studies New South Wales (2013). English Stage 6 Prescriptions: Area of Study, Electives and Texts Higher School Certificate 2015-20,. State of New South Wales. Sydney, Board of Studies NSW,**:** 1-47.

[346] 'Unit of Work' is an academic annual plan designed by the Head of English and/or English Teachers at respective schools. This annual plan is further subdivided and broken into terms or semesters and then into weekly tasks or goals.

develop strategies for completing the curriculum aims using the prescribed texts.

While conducting research for this thesis, Australia is going through significant change in terms of consolidating a National Curriculum for primary and secondary education. This decision brought about significant concerns from states, particularly the Board of Studies NSW, teachers and scholars, whose concerns were that moving to the Australian National Curriculum for senior students might present unwarranted challenges for educators. [347] Of the objectors, perhaps the Board of Studies NSW is most adamantly against changing or adapting their state curriculum and this is largely because of issues they have encountered in the content and design. In July 2012, the Board of Studies NSW consolidated reports with state educators and stakeholders and made several criticisms of the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) senior secondary curriculum drafts, particularly the English curriculum.[348] The Board of Studies NSW issued a report criticising the ACARA draft of the curriculum saying it provided "limited opportunities for the development of independent learning and metacognition", and that all subject drafts, "focus on texts and language rather than on cognitive development or concepts, and thus do not make explicit or encourage higher-order thinking" (4).[349] Based on these criticisms the Board of Studies has confirmed that it will not replace the current NSW senior curriculum with ACARA's National Curriculum.[350]

Changes to the current system in NSW is not seen by the Board of Studies as constructive curriculum development, but rather as reducing the quality of existing programmes. According to the NSW Curriculum Officer,

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[347] By May 2009 through the initiatives of the Federal Government (also known as the Commonwealth Government), the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) was established.

[348] Board of Studies New South Wales (2012). Draft Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum English Consultation Report September 2012. Sydney NSW 2001.

[349] Ibid.

[350] In December 2012, English (senior secondary) was endorsed by the council of federal, state and territory education ministers across Australia.

the Board of Studies NSW holds their state curriculum and "the HSC as a prize possession after years of curriculum development and the HSC having attained international recognition as a secondary qualification."[351] These sentiments were also echoed by former NSW Manager of Curriculum Jenny Allum who suggested that NSW should simply accept the National Curriculum because, "in trying to write a curriculum to which all states can agree [ACARA] will be forced to offer something that is of lesser quality than currently exists in NSW. And, unfortunately, that is exactly what has happened … we should be proud of what we have here in NSW and not accept anything of lesser quality" (19).[352] While this is a value-laden statement, it summaries an issue at state level; under the National Curriculum teachers might feel their former English programmes have been compromised and reduced in quality.

Though encountering much criticism from other states about their lack of participation in the National Curriculum, NSW did not let this discourage them from continuing their improvements on the current senior curriculum design. For instance, in October 2015, the Board of Studies NSW announced that changes are to be made sometime before 2020 to modernise the current English curriculum. These changes include removing the Area of Study so that students can focus less on themes and more on a "specific person, idea or event through texts or how language is used to portray the natural environment and landscapes".[353] It can be speculated that these changes were brought about as a means to cement the HSC as a superior product against the National Curriculum, and when questioned about motives in making these changes the NSW Curriculum Officer explained that, "we have always been listening to educators in our community and taking on board new considerations for

[351] NSW Curriculum Officer Interview, Sydney, March 2012.

[352] Allum, J. (2007). "The Case for State Curricula." The Journal of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia **32**(2): 18-19.

[353] Bagshaw, E. (2015). HSC 2015: Board of Studies to Drop Most Unpopular Component of the HSC. The Sydney Morning Herald,. Sydney, Australia, Fairfax Media.

improvement and change. I won't say we are doing this as a statement against the National Curriculum, this is what we've always done."[354]It can be speculated that this shift of focus from teaching themes that are drawn from texts (Area of Study), to teaching texts without themes (National Curriculum), indicates that regardless of the reasons that have brought about this change, the Board of Studies NSW is now singing from a similar *songsheet* to that of the National Curriculum, but this transition has not come easily.

According to scholars like Moni, an additional challenge in adopting the Australian National Curriculum for English is that it "provides teachers with information about *what* to teach but not *how* to teach; the notion of informed prescription and informed professionalism" (15).[355] However, this absence of information about how to teach might not currently pose a new challenge for teachers in NSW. Currently, NSW teachers are provided with some curriculum resources that are accessible through the Board of Studies, for example, the Prescriptions document, which provides a basic summary of prescribed texts.[356] This document does not provide strategies or activities that can be used for teaching. As teachers have different interpretations and approaches for teaching texts, this usually results in students unpacking or discussing cultural issues in a common text in different ways. Given the above descriptions of the aim and the flexibility associated with interpreting and teaching of cultural issues in texts, it becomes apparent that the prescribed texts play a crucial role in the English curriculum. The following section presents a rationale for selecting the prescribed texts used for the Area of Study, and this rationale is important because these texts are the only tools

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[354] NSW Curriculum Officer Interview, Sydney, March 2012.

[355] Moni, K. (2012). "Keep your Eyes on the Horizon and your Feet on the Ground: Some Reflections on Implementing the Australian Curriculum: English." English in Australia **47**(3): 13-19.

[356] Teachers self-source their resources from existing stock in the school book room, purchasing additional resources, use the internet, or obtain materials from their colleagues. Prescriptions document available at, Board of Studies New South Wales (2007). English Stage 6 Prescriptions: Area of Study, Electives and Texts Higher School Certificate 2009-2014. State of New South Wales. Sydney, Board of Studies NSW,**:** 1-43, Board of Studies New South Wales (2013). English Stage 6 Prescriptions: Area of Study, Electives and Texts Higher School Certificate 2015-20,. State of New South Wales. Sydney, Board of Studies NSW,**:** 1-47.

students can use to express their understanding and aptitude in achieving the curriculum goals.

4.1.3. Prescribed texts (2006-2020)

The prescribed text list for Standard and Advanced English programmes, as shown in Table 4.1.1, covers fourteen years of texts listed in the Area of Study section of the curriculum.

Table 4.1.1: Prescribed Texts NSW English Curriculum 2006-2020

Text Category	2004-2008 (Journey)	2009-2014 (Belonging)	2015-2020 (Discovery)
Prose Fiction	• **Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, 1885** (Mark Twain) • **Ender's Game, 1985** (Orson Card) • **Empire of the Sun, 1984** (JG Ballard)	• **Great Expectations, 1861** (Charles Dickens) • **The Joy Luck Club, 1989** (Amy Tan) • **Swallow the Air, 2006** (Tara J. Winch,) • ***The Namesake, 2003** (Jhumpa Lahiri) • **Heat and Dust 1975** (Ruth P. Jhabvala)	• **The Awakening 1899** (Kate Chopin) • **Wrack, 1997** (James Bradley) • **Swallow the Air, 2006** (Tara J. Winch)
Non-fiction	• **Lionheart, 2001** (Jesse Martin) • **On Giants' Shoulders, 1999** (Melvyn Bragg) • **My Place, 1982** (Sally Morgan)	• ***Romulus, My Father 1998** (Raimond Gaita)	• **A Short History of Nearly Everything, 2003** (Bill Bryson) • **The Motorcycle Diaries, 2003** (Ernesto 'Che' Guevara)
Drama	• **Away, 1986** (Michael Gow) • ***Così, 1992** (Louis Nowra) • **The Tempest, 1610-1611** (Shakespeare)	• ***The Crucible, 1953** (Arthur Miller) • **Rainbows End, 2005** (Jane Harrison)	• **Away, 1986** (Michael Gow) • **Rainbows End, 2005** (Jane Harrison)
Poetry	• **Immigrant Chronicle, 1975** (Peter Skrzynecki) *(Selected poems- 'Immigrants at Central Station 1951', 'Feliks Skrzynecki', 'Crossing the Red Sea', 'Leaving home', 'Migrant hostel', A drive in the country', 'Postcard'.* • ***Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Complete Poems, 1912** *(Selected poems- 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner (1834)', 'This Lime Tree Bower My Prison', 'Frost at Midnight', Kubla Khan')* • ***Imagined Corners, 1999** (Ken Watson ed,) *(Selected poems 'The one who got away' (S.Bhatt), 'Of Eurydice' (I.Lalic), 'Fax X' (G. Lewis), 'A Righteous Day' (Mudrooroo), 'The French Prisoner' (J. Pilinsky), 'A Dream' (V. Sereni), 'Worried over days past' (X. Quynh)*	• **Immigrant Chronicle, 1975** (Peter Skrzynecki) *(Selected poems- 'Immigrants at Central Station 1951', 'Feliks Skrzynecki', 'Postcard', 'Migrant hostel', 'St Patrick's college', 'Ancestors', 10 Mary Street', 'In the folk museum')* • ***Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson, 1955** *(Selected poems, 66 'This is my letter to the world', 67 'I died for beauty but was scarce', 82 'I had been hungry all the years', 83 'I gave myself to him', 127 'A narrow fellow in the grass', 154 'A word dropped careless on the page', 161 'What mystery pervades a well!', 181 'Saddest noise, the sweetest noise'* • **The Simple Gift, 2000** (Steven Herrick)	• ***Rosemary Dobson, 1920-2012** *(Selected Poems- 'Young girl at the window', 'Wonder', 'Painter of Antwerp', 'Traveller's Tale', 'The Tiger', 'Cock Crow', 'Ghost town: New England')* • ***Robert Frost, 1874-1963** *(Selected poems- 'The Tuft of Flowers', 'Mending Wall', 'Home Burial', 'After Apple-Picking', 'Fire and Ice', 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening')* • **Robert Gray, 1762-1834** *(Selected poems 'Journey: The North Coast', 'The Meatworks', 'North Coast Town', 'Late Ferry', 'Flames and Dangling Wire', 'Diptych')*
Film	• ***Rabbit-Proof-Fence, 2002** (Phillip Noyce) • **Contact, 2001** (Robert Zemeckis) • **Life is Beautiful, 1999** (Roberto Benigni)	• ***Strictly Ballroom, 1992** (Baz Luhrmann) • ***Ten Canoes, 2006** (Rolf De Heer)	• **Life of Pi, 2012** (Ang Lee)
Media			• **Frank Hurley- The Man Who Made History, 2005** (Simon Nasht) • **Go back to where you came from, 2012**- Series 1: Episodes 1,2,3 and the Response (Ivan O'Mahoney)
Shakespeare	• **The Tempest, 1610-1611**	• **As you like it, 1598-1600**	• **The Tempest, 1610-1611**

Table 4.1.1 shows the Area of Study theme is reviewed every four years, except for 2009-2014, which had been extended because of the anticipated changes resulting from the introduction of the National Curriculum. After the announcement of the *Discovery* theme, the Board of Studies NSW extended the period for reviewing prescribed texts from four years to every five years. Table 4.1.3 shows that some texts, such as *'Away'*, *'Swallow the Air'*, *'Rainbow's End'*, *'Immigrant Chronicle'* and *'The Tempest'* have been repeatedly listed as prescribed texts over the period of 2006 to 2020.

Examining the categories or text types in Table 4.1.3 shows that the introduction of the new Media classification in 2015 to 2020 has resulted in the reduction of texts from fiction and non-fiction categories to cater for new options for Film and Media studies. It can be seen that the number of texts available for study is unevenly scattered under different text types or text categories. The total number of prescribed text options available for study has reduced from a sum of 16 in 2004 to 2008, to a total of 14 texts in 2009 to 2014. When questioned about why the total number of texts had been reduced from a total of 16 to 14 in 2009, the NSW Curriculum Officer explains

> … if anything we [Board of Studies] have structured the Area of Study, so students cover a range of text types. We have fixed a number of texts per category, so teachers can think through fewer options and consider what might be best for their English classes. More importantly, the HSC examiners need to be well-acquainted with all the texts, because they [examiners] don't know which texts students will respond to in their exams, so they need to be prepared.[357]

This statement suggests the Board of Studies interpret '*range of texts*' as being access to text types (prose, poetry, film) rather than '*range*' in terms of a variety of content , for instance under 'poetry' is there a selection that is appealing to students from different backgrounds? Aside from 'range of texts' the NSW officer addresses text options in relation to examinations, explaining that the number of texts need to be fixed so examiners can cover the material for

[357] Board of Studies NSW, Curriculum Officer Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

marking. As well, the justification that the number of texts need to be fixed as examiners have to be across all the categories seems to be an exaggeration. Since the examination caucas is made up of past and present English teachers who are often well-accquanited with these texts because they have been been teaching some of these resources for years, they do not require much additional time to read/view texts before marking. Though examination marking is not a focus of this research, it must be suggested that if a wider variety of options are placed on lists (more than 14), why not group examiners into categories, so they can cover more options per text type?

Despite introducing a new textual form (Media), the Board of Studies NSW has decided that for 2015 to 2020 the total number of available options for study should remain at 14 texts. Based on this information, of interest is the shift or reduction in the number of texts listed for reading to increase or create options for viewing texts. This issue was not included for discussion in this research because the announcement of the 2015 to 2020 curriculum did not occur until September 2013, and data collection for this research took place in March earlier that year. However, one might be inclined to question the potential benefits associated with reducing the quantity of more traditional forms of text types such as fiction and non-fiction books, to accommodate more multimodal (film and media) texts? Further to this, the inclusion of contemporary English text types raises broad questions as to what other text types might be considered in the future for inclusion in the English text lists e.g. social media forums or text messages, audiobooks? In addition, what are the key issues in on-going debates about the inclusion of media texts on school lists?

New media researchers, Maloch, Sefton-Green and Buckingham, write about the benefits of using media multi-modal texts for English studies.[358]

[358] Buckingham, D. and J. Sefton-Green (1994). Cultural Studies Goes to School: Reading and Teaching Popular Media, Taylor & Francis, Sefton-Green, J. (2006). "Chapter 8: Youth, Technology, and Media Cultures." Review of Research in Education **30**(1): 279-306, Maloch, B. (2008). "Beyond Exposure: The

Sefton-Green says that "studies in this area have argued that changing technological regimes (those afforded by the Internet in particular) offer young people a new '*agency*' and new power within the contemporary media environment" (293).[359] Therefore in the Board of Studies English curriculum media and film studies are the more contemporary categories, where students can seemingly engage with technology to explore issues, like culture, (presented in these texts) and also express their opinions using technology (e.g. video-blog on community and *Belonging*). However, it is unclear the extent to which learning is about the engagement with the digital resource, rather than focusing on how meaning and connections are being made within texts. Overall these text types appear to be different media through which students can explore cultural differences, yet Buckingham and Sefton-Green argue that teaching literature via conventional methods is "developing students' receptiveness to something that is seen as fundamentally good, [whereas media teaching is about] encouraging them to resist or '*see through*' something that is fundamentally bad" (132).[360] This statement reveals that a variety of text types are meant to help students develop different perspectives of interpreting both reading and viewing texts. If multimodal texts are beneficial for helping students to engage in discussions of cultural differences by using a variety of text forms, then how does the Board of Studies decide on the number of texts, and which texts should be taught in each category?

While it may seem progressive that the Board of Studies introduced a Media text type, it does not seem advantageous to reduce the total of (fiction and non-fiction) texts to keep the overall number of options at 14. As mentioned earlier, students are required to study only one text from each category, so why should the number of texts per category be reduced or kept

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Uses of Informational Texts in a Second Grade Classroom." Research in the Teaching of English **42**(3): 315-362.

[359] Sefton-Green, J. (2006). "Chapter 8: Youth, Technology, and Media Cultures." Review of Research in Education **30**(1): 279-306.

[360] Buckingham, D. and J. Sefton-Green (1994). Cultural Studies Goes to School: Reading and Teaching Popular Media, Taylor & Francis.

at a total sum of 14 texts?[361] However, when discussing the number of texts usually selected to be on prescribed list, the NSW Curriculum Officer states, "… current texts that are engaging and relevant to students have always been on the list of prescribed texts … at the end of the day it is about the quality of the curriculum, not the texts",[362] which suggests that type and number of prescribed texts are not seen as being more important than the curriculum aims. Other academics, like Michaels and Gold, agree that while, "texts are not an end in themselves … texts are not what students learn about, but they are the vehicles through which students learn about how meaning is made" (91).[363] However, curriculum aims seem more difficult to achieve if students are not motivated to read and engage with the prescribed texts.

Based on research conducted in the United States, Applebee argues against this method of curriculum first and text second, he suggests "if we build curricula in which texts are related in meaningful ways, learning becomes cumulative and reinforcing" (50).[364] Therefore, more students are likely to achieve and retain knowledge outlined in the aims of the curriculum if they understand or can relate to the medium (or texts) through which these aims are taught. The NSW Curriculum Officer advocates that the current prescribed texts are '*engaging*' and '*relevant*' to students. As well, he/she claims that texts are reviewed every four years, and there is a "10-15% turnover so teachers have new texts to work with".[365] However, Table 4.1.3 shows that this turnover does not necessarily reflect that newer texts are always added to the prescribed list. In Table 4.1.3 texts marked with an asterisk (*) next to the title have been moved from other parts of the English curriculum into the prescribed reading list. So, how are newer, engaging and relevant options

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[361] The NSW Curriculum interview was conducted in March 2013 and the 2015-2020 '*Discovery*' theme was not announced until June 2013. Therefore, comments could not be obtained about the introduction of the Media text type.

[362] Board of Studies NSW, Curriculum Officer Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

[363] Michaels, W. and E. Gold (2006). "'As Time Goes By' or Read it Again, Sam." Metaphor(1): 90-99.

[364] Applebee, A. N. (1994). "Toward Thoughtful Curriculum: Fostering Discipline-Based Conversation." The English Journal **83**(3): 45-52.

[365] Board of Studies NSW, Curriculum Officer Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

really being added to prescribed lists?

In this research, an attempt to capture '*engagement*' and '*relevance*' is done by categorising texts into timeframes to estimate the cultural motifs raised in these texts according to the dates of publication. This method of analysis seems to be most useful to track how texts are changing in curricula, as it will look at the repetition of texts on lists and the timeframes of publication of resources. To transform text types into time frames, the prescribed texts are regrouped into three categories based on dates of publication; Group A (up to 1900s), Group B (1901-1999) and Group C (2000 to present). Texts have been grouped into time frames rather than genres, as conversations about cultural issues are indefinite. To explain, the text '*Heat and Dust*', can be used to discuss cultural issues such as ethnicity, gender and social class under a theme like *Belonging*. However, bridging the generational gap between issues of colonial times in India (in the text), to more contemporary topics in Australian classrooms might be difficult for some students to relate to, or find engaging and/or relevant.

Table 4.1.2 reorders the prescribed texts from their primary categories (prose fiction, drama, etc. from Table 4.1.2) into timeframes to understand the quantity of recently published texts being added to the prescribed list.

Table 4.1.2: Area of Study Texts Categorised by Timeframes

Group A (Pre-1900)	Group B (1901-1999)	Group C (2000- present)
As You Like it (1598-1600)	Poetry R. Frost (1874-1963) *	The Simple Gift (2000)
The Tempest (1610-1611)	The Crucible (1953) *	Lionheart (2001)
Poetry R. Gray (1762-1834)	Poetry P. Skrzynecki (1975)	Contact (2001)
Great Expectations (1861)	Heat and Dust (1975)	Rabbit-Proof Fence (2002) *
Huckleberry Finn (1885)	Empire of the Sun (1984)	The Namesake (2003) *
The Awakening (1899)	Ender's Game (1985)	Short History Everything (2003)
Poetry of S. Coleridge (1772-1834) *	Away (1986)	Motorcycle Diaries (2003)
Poetry of E. Dickinson (1830-1886) *	My Place (1982)	Rainbow's End (2005)
	Joy Luck Club (1989)	The Man Made History (2005)
	Così (1992) *	Ten Canoes (2006) *
	Strictly Ballroom (1992) *	Swallow the Air (2006)
	On Giants' Shoulders (1999)	Poetry R. Dobson (1920-2012)*
	Imagined Corners (1999) *	Life of Pi (2012)
	Life is Beautiful (1999)	Go back to came from (2012)
	Romulus, My Father (1998) *	
	Wrack (1997)	

Table 4.1.2 shows that, over fourteen years of the Area of Study (2004 to 2020), 21% of the all prescribed texts belong to Group A (up to 1900), 42% of the texts are from Group B (1900-2000), and 37% of texts are from Group C (2000 to present). This suggests that most of the texts taught in the Area of Study come from Group B, which hosts the largest number of texts that were published from 1963 to 1997. As mentioned earlier, the asterisk next to titles indicates texts that were already listed under different sections of the English curriculum. Approximately 37% of texts in Group B and 30% of texts in Group C were comprised of texts that were already listed in other parts of the curriculum.

Table 4.1.3 presents texts listed by both theme and timeframe in the Area of Study.

Table 4.1.3: Texts Listed by Theme and Timeframe

Area of Study Theme	Group A (Pre-1900)	Group B (1900-2000)	Group C (2000-present)
Journey	2	10	3
Belonging	2	7	5
Discovery	3	3	8

Table 4.1.3 shows the number of texts from Group B (1900-2000) has been gradually reducing with the introduction of new themes. To elaborate, under the *Journey* theme ten texts were selected from this timeframe as opposed to seven texts for *Belonging*, and now three texts for *Discovery*. This contrasts with the number of texts increasing from Group C (2000 to present), with the highest number of texts (eight) selected for the *Discovery* theme. For the theme *Belonging* (2009-2014), most of the prescribed texts were from Group B, whereas for *Discovery* (2015-2020) the majority of texts are from Group C. Therefore, the current 2015-2020 Area of Study hosts the highest number of texts published from 2000 onwards, which might be more engaging or relevant to contemporary learners. While this seems to be a move in a positive direction, one might question how this process of streamlining newer options

is being accomplished, and across which text categories? For instance are newer options from Group C being added to the category of each text type?

If the prescribed texts for themes *Belonging* and *Discovery* are compared by date of publication and by text category or types, it shows that, while the prescribed texts for the *Discovery* theme include the highest number of texts published from 2000 onwards, greater emphasis has been placed on media, film and non-fiction texts.[366] This is in contrast to the prescribed texts used for the *Belonging* theme where most of the texts from Group B were listed in the poetry, prose fiction and non-fiction categories. As mentioned earlier, the Board of Studies indicates every four years it has a "10-15% turnover of new texts", [367] yet changes to text options (new texts and numbers of texts) are irregular and inconsistent. For instance, more attention seems to be placed on the selection of newer texts for some categories like media than others like poetry.

Indeed, it seems that the prose fiction and poetry categories have the fewest new texts added to reading lists; the least number of texts published post-2000 and, the highest number of texts repeated from other parts of the curriculum. Perhaps the Board of Studies considers prose fiction and poetry as less favourable or relevant or engaging options for contemporary students. Consequently, it is interesting to investigate what is the Board of Studies' current process for selecting texts for study at secondary schools given the current international spate of publications in prose fiction and poetry, which address issues relevant to contemporary society. So, why are some of these newer publications not being considered or included on prescribed lists?

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[366] For the *Discovery* theme most of the texts from Group C, that have been prescribed for use in the 2015-2020 curriculum belong to the categories of media, film, drama and non-fiction, leaving the prose fiction and poetry category with the majority of texts from Group A and B.

[367] Board of Studies NSW, Curriculum Officer Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

4.1.4. Rationale for text selection

Every four years, the Board of Studies sets a new theme for the Area of Study and seeks recommendations from stakeholders or consultative groups about the selection of texts. The Board of Studies invites a range of stakeholders and members of various consultative groups to assist with composing and providing opinion on texts (new and existing) for the new curriculum. Table 4.1.4 shows a list of stakeholders who are from reference, expert and community groups.

Table 4.1.4: Board of Studies Text Selection Consultative Groups

Reference Groups	Expert Groups	Community Groups
*Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates NSW/ACT	Australian Film Television and Radio	Aboriginal Education Council (NSW)
*NSW Department of Education and Communities	Australian Library and Information Association	Anglican Education Commission
*TAFE NSW	*Australian Society of Authors	Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW
*NSW Teachers Federation	Australian Writers' Guild	Australian Human Rights Commission
*NSW/ACT Independent Education Union	*Bell Shakespeare	Christian Parent Controlled Schools Ltd
*Aboriginal Education Commission NSW	*Children's Book Council of Australia	*Christians Schools Australia
*Australian Association of Independent Schools of NSW	Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance	*Community Relations Commission
Australian Association of Special Education Incorporation	National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA)	*Islamic Council of NSW
*Professional Teachers' Council NSW	*Sydney Theatre Company	*NSW Jewish Board of Deputies
Council of Catholic School Parents NSW/ACT		NSW Council of Churches
*NSW Parents Council		*NSW Council for Civil Liberties
*NSW Secondary Principals' Council		Sydney Business Chamber
*Associate Professor Jackie Manuel- Board Member and BCC Chair		

Table 4.1.4 shows that, of the 34 groups normally consulted 38% are from reference groups, 35% community groups and 26% from expert groups. These groups determine the suitability of these texts for the new theme and if any additional or new texts can be added to the curriculum. The Board of Studies NSW Curriculum Officer stressed the text selection process is "time-consuming, since there are so many people to consult with, but the input from groups is taken quite seriously,"[368] as they represent a cross-section of Australian society. However, it is optional for groups to participate in the consultation process. Not having full representation of all groups can result in the Board of Studies considering the input of only a few participating groups, which means the text selection process is not truly representative of consultations with all groups listed. For instance, the asterisk (*) in Table 4.1.6 identifies stakeholders who participated in the consultations for the 2015-2020 list for the new theme *Discovery*. Of all stakeholders, less than 60% participated in the text selection process for 2015-2020.

Not all the experts were apparently consulted to select texts for the new Media category in the 2015-2020 curriculum.[369] The Media expert groups, namely Media Entertainment, Arts Alliance or the Australian Film and Television and Radio were not consulted when selecting texts for this category. This raises pertinent questions, for instance, what is the purpose of having relevant stakeholders if they are not consulted when introducing a new text type in their area of expertise? This presents a discrepancy in the text selection process as the purpose of expert groups are to make text recommendations, which are further reinforced by the support and advice from a range of established experts in the field. As well there is no definite means of knowing the level of expertise that stakeholders who were consulted might have in Media texts, which flags an issue for concern; to what extent does the Board of Studies evaluate the opinions of their expert/stakeholder

[368] Board of Studies NSW, Curriculum Officer Interview, Sydney, March 2013.
[369] See Section 4.1.3—Prescribed texts (2006-2020), on pg., 122.

groups?

The Board of Studies presents an argument that it does not need to have additional standards in place to address text selection, because stakeholders are from various fields of expertise, with years of experience and different levels of qualifications. The NSW Curriculum Officer explains that "the discipline background, training or qualifications depends on who is from that particular stakeholder group; we consult with a wide range of stakeholders".[370] By inviting stakeholders to participate, the Board of Studies delegates the responsibility of groups to nominate or offer consultative positions to person(s) who are suitably experienced or qualified to assist in the text selection process. However, the NSW Curriculum Officer could not confirm the skills and expertise of the members who represented these groups. Scholars like Leigh, Tatum, Shanley and Newell, to name a few, argue that knowledge of the content of the text, and the expectations of the curriculum, are both important factors relevant to the text selection process.[371] Presently, there is no evidence that suggests the Board of Studies pre-emptively advises that members of these consultative groups must meet certain prerequisites regarding qualifications, skills or experience. So, how does the Board of Studies guide experts to provide opinions on texts?

In the interview with the NSW Curriculum Officer, it was explained that the Board of Studies provides a rationale within the curriculum listing reasons of how and why these texts are most suitable for achieving the desired learning goals. This rationale is structured to provide responses in three key areas; (i) merit and cultural significance, (ii) needs and interests of students,

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[370] Board of Studies NSW, Curriculum Officer Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

[371] Galloway, P. (1973). "How Secondary Students and Teachers Read Textbooks." Journal of Reading **17**(3): 216-219, Newell, G. E., R. S. Gingrich and A. B. Johnson (2001). "Considering the Contexts for Appropriating Theoretical and Practical Tools for Teaching Middle and Secondary English." Research in the Teaching of English **35**(3): 302-343, Shanley, R. W. (2006). "From the Secondary Section: Novel Choices, Pun Intended." The English Journal **95**(3): 11-13, Tatum, A., L. S. Wold and L. Elish-Piper (2009). "Adolescents and Texts: Scaffolding the English Canon with Linked Text Sets." Ibid. **98**(6): 88-91, Hall, L. A. and S. V. Piazza (2010). "Challenging Texts: Engaging with Critical Literacy: Reflections on Teaching and Learning." Ibid. **99**(5): 91-94.

and (iii) opportunities for challenging teaching and learning. In addition to completing the areas of this rationale, the Board of Studies provides stakeholder groups with a framework for selecting texts. The conditions set in the framework include "films that are rated MA 15+ are not considered, community values and standards are put first, and stakeholder groups determine what is considered culturally appropriate".[372] Therefore, stakeholders are required to consider how texts are culturally meaningful, engaging and appropriate for teenage students.

Given this rationale for text selection, it seems the Board of Studies is open to receiving opinions from stakeholders about texts that are culturally relevant and appropriate for young learners. However, if one were to compare this rationale with the last 14 years of texts selected for the Area of Study (refer to Table 4.1.4), there seems to be more focus on the structural aspects of the curriculum, such as expanding the text categories rather than focusing on the actual content or texts placed within these groups. This is evidenced by the quantity of texts that are being moved from other parts of the curriculum, or texts that are often repeated on prescribed lists. So, how are stakeholders recommending/selecting newer texts that might be more appealing to students' interests?

One of three possibilities can be applied to speculate why texts from some categories are repeated on the curriculum more than others are that; (i) suggestions being put forward by the stakeholder groups are being overruled by the Board of Studies, (ii) stakeholder groups are providing limited suggestions for new texts, or (iii) there are set rules and conditions that prevent the introduction of new texts on the curriculum. In this research, the NSW Curriculum Officer did not clarify the processes of how the Board of Studies assesses contributions put forward by stakeholder groups, aside from the comment that "we make the final decisions about what will be on the

[372] Board of Studies NSW, Curriculum Officer Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

curriculum but … there are so many people to consult with, the input from groups is taken quite seriously".[373] However, these are important questions to consider because prescribed texts are one of the main resources teachers have to guide students to achieve curriculum goals. Therefore, it is important in the text selection process to consider the challenges teachers encounter when using these prescribed texts in senior English classrooms. The following section presents the main pedagogical challenges teachers encounter when mediating prescribed texts for the Area of Study to students doing Standard and Advanced English courses.

4.2 Pedagogy

4.2.1 Profile of participating English teachers from Sydney, NSW

Table 4.1.5 provides an overview of the English teachers who participated in this research in Sydney, NSW.

Table 4.1.5: Profile of Participating English Teachers from Sydney, NSW

School	Type of School	Teacher ID	Sex	Years of Experience
1	Lower-performing	1	Female	20
		2	Female	12
		3	Female	10
2	Higher-performing	4	Female	30
		5	Female	5
		6	Female	30
3	Higher-performing	7	Male	6
		8	Female	10
		9	Male	10
4	Lower-performing	10	Female	13
		11	Male	8
		12	Male	5

Table 4.1.5 shows that overall close to 70% of participants are female English teachers, most with over 10 to 30 years of teaching experience. Of the four schools, there are two male representatives in both higher-performing schools

[373] Board of Studies NSW, Curriculum Officer Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

(HPS) and lower-performing schools (LPS). The subsections that follow relate to the relevant themes that have been found from the thematic analysis of interview transcripts.

4.2.2 Planning and preparing to teach prescribed texts

When teachers are asked about some of the issues they encounter when planning and preparing to teach prescribed texts, most of them began by explaining that the English texts themselves, as unrelated to the curriculum, are good texts. However, it is the structure and aims of the curriculum that force an unnatural manipulation of the meaning within these texts to fulfil the learning goals of the curriculum. This forced or unnatural method of interpreting texts raises concerns for teachers about the overall purpose of the senior English curriculum. Teachers seem to question the aims and objectives students are intended to achieve by studying these prescribed texts. One teacher elaborated on this issue, identifying that preparing to teach Year 12 (senior secondary) students goes against all principles of being an effective English teacher.[374] Teacher 5 explains that

> English just isn't about—and I hope this isn't where it's heading—techniques and structure … we need to get rid of the HSC. It has to go; it's so old! … I get to the end of a ten-week unit, knowing that all the amazing learning and discussion happening in your classroom will be reduced to a 1000-word essay, and to a certain point they can rote learn elements of it. This is because our rubrics are so parochial, and it's forcing the way we teach texts. Students are losing their creative thinking skills, they're losing their ability to take risks, they just want to be spoon-fed, and they know that is exactly what the HSC is about. When I teach Year 12, I'm the teacher I never wanted to be; I'm a lecturer and a spoon-feeder![375]

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[374] There are no set rules of what it means to be an effective English teacher as the definition of *'effectiveness'* is dependent on many factors within each country, school and classroom. However, there are some publications which speculate about the general guidelines for being an effective educator, such as Anderson's 30 principles for being a good English teacher include, "#25- If your curriculum guide looks outdated or unusable, veer from it." Anderson, R. (1985). "Notes to My Daughter, the New English Teacher." The English Journal **74**(3): 74-75.

[375] School 2, HPS, Teacher 5 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

Teacher 5 suggests the curriculum sets expectations which limit how she is able to teach texts, and this has a general impact on how her students interpret texts and the knowledge they acquire from them.

The Board of Studies justifies that the curriculum and prescribed texts are relevant and engaging for students to study as it helps develop their understanding of culture through reading and interpreting texts, yet teachers argue that this is not the case.[376] Teacher 7 explains that one of his challenges with the senior English curriculum (particularly the Standard course) is that it seems that students must be able to demonstrate skills of interpreting and applying meaning to their lives, but they have to represent these interpretations through very strict guidelines to do well in the HSC. Teacher 7 considers if

> … you wonder why kids are bored of English? … because we exhaust texts with themes like *'Belonging*.' Whatever the [Board of Studies] thought they were doing when they set the syllabus—that kids would go out and appreciate texts? … and in fact it's the first thing [you read] on every rubric in the prescriptions document for each text that, *'students will appreciate and enjoy …'*, which is absolute bullshit! Students are only concerned about what they need to know to do well in their HSC, and if we [teachers] actually impart some meaning, then that's a bonus.[377]

This teacher and others share the view that students do not necessarily learn to seek meaning through texts as outlined by the curriculum, since considerable emphasis is placed on teaching them to prepare model responses to perform well in the HSC. However, it seems they must place greater emphasis on teaching students how to respond to texts to do well in the HSC, rather than focusing on developing skills to review and critique texts. This is evidenced by the fact that many teachers interviewed in this research share

[376] Refer to Section 4.1—Curriculum and Prescribed Texts, on pg., 112.
[377] School 3, HPS, Teacher 7 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

concerns that prescribed texts do not naturally fit the aims of the Area of Study.

The Area of Study has been described as a module that exists to unify both the Standard and Advanced English courses. Several teachers, in this research, criticise the Area of Study as being an unnecessary module since it does not test any specific skills and "it's not intellectually stimulating, it makes my students bored and it really challenges me to find new ways to teach them about *Belonging*, they are super intelligent and it just isn't suitable for their level."[378] They argue that they are not able to challenge their students doing Advanced English through the Area of study theme and texts, and most students doing the Standard course find it difficult to engage with the theme and texts. Teacher 4 explains that the Area of Study has become repetitive for her to teach as, "the Board of Studies make us [teachers] do the same texts year after year, and when they do change, it doesn't seem to change by very much."[379] As mentioned above, prescribed texts are often repeated and newer, or recently published materials are not easily added to school lists.

It must be noted that there are some teachers who believe that theme-teaching is a beneficial approach for teaching texts in an English curriculum, as it frames and guides meanings students can extract from texts. However, they suggest that theme teaching could be more effective if the theme and texts were selected to complement each other. Teacher 9 recommends that to improve the Area of Study "maybe concepts need to be chosen more carefully… there is a tendency to impose concepts on texts, rather than derive it from the text, when it's imposed on the text it's completely useless because it's false and it's artificial and it reads like that. And there is a labour, an absolute labour, to be involved in it."[380] It will be interesting to understand how educators are attempting to diversify the teaching of these texts to

[378] School 3, HPS, Teacher 8 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.
[379] School 2, HPS, Teacher 4 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.
[380] School 3, HPS, Teacher 9 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

prevent this 'labour' from happening in classrooms?

Teachers expressed there are unnatural or forced connections they need to make between prescribed texts and the Area of Study theme. Teacher 5 explains that one effect of forcing the pairing of themes and prescribed texts results in the potential narrowing of students' interpretations and engagement with these texts. She explains with the Area of Study

> … the disadvantage is that we fit texts that were never intended to be about belonging to [the theme] *Belonging*. For instance, Shakespeare's *'As You Like It'*, which we've been teaching for the last six years … the links between this play and *Belonging* are so tenuous; we are really making superficial inroads here [and] there is really no deep learning occurring. If we see the word *'connection'* or '*I love you'* we go great that's about *Belonging* to other people. So here we are studying Shakespeare who is meant to be really challenging, and we study it at a superficial level because we're being forced to fit it with this concept of *Belonging* that Shakespeare would have never intended 200 years ago. This kind of teaching narrows our focus because there are such stronger themes in *'As You Like It.'*[381]

Some teachers believe that teaching themes potentially results in dredging for meanings, or reading meaning into texts that were never intended to be there. This means that currently they must link their discussions about cultural differences encountered in prescribed texts for the Area of Study to the theme *Belonging*. However, not all cultural themes are necessarily or easily linked to issues of *Belonging* or not-*Belonging*. So, how do teachers approach issues that are not related to themes addressed in classrooms? Do they discuss these cultural issues or do they put them aside to focus on those issues related to the curriculum?

Teacher 8 acknowledged that she rarely discusses issues beyond those necessary to prepare senior students for the HSC and that "the entire senior curriculum is about focusing on exams, our students are prepared to be drilled

[381] School 2, HPS, Teacher 5 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

for the HSC and there are restrictions on our time and ability and motivation to want to work on anything else other than exams."[382] This is basically due to the time restraints as there is limited teaching time in a term, and secondly there is the pressure to complete the entire curriculum on time. Regarding the Area of Study, it is interesting to note that HPS teachers made remarks that quite often their senior students doing Advanced English courses were not interested in discussing texts beyond what was necessary for them to know for the HSC. On the other hand, LPS teachers suggest it is difficult to extend their students to engage in anything beyond curriculum goals because their students usually struggle at times to cover the basic concepts outlined in the curriculum. Overall, it seems that teachers at both HPS and LPS institutions limit their discussions of texts to help senior secondary students focus and prepare for the HSC.

LPS Teachers comment that they tend to strategically select texts that are perceived as being less popular options for the HSC examinations. Teacher 1 expresses that

> … we make choices on some bizarre grounds, for instance 'there's not many kids doing this text, so I think there will be less competition for them getting higher marks', or 'I'm at a selective school, therefore, I need to choose very academic texts for my kids to do' … so priority lies mostly in these choices, not choosing texts that are interesting for their students.[383]

It is interesting to note how teachers may be motivated to employ strategies for their text selections, given their goal of 'mediation'. LPS teachers might be more inclined to choose the least popular text options while HPS teachers choose more difficult options based on perceptions of being academically higher-performing institutions. This issue is further compounded by the fact that teachers want their students to do well in their final examinations so they often repeat texts taught for several years to help students focus on the

[382] School 3, HPS, Teacher 8 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.
[383] School 1, LPS, Teacher 1 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

specifics that will enable them to do well in the HSC. The following raises specific pedagogical issues involved when mediating these texts to students from diverse cultural backgrounds. This is relevant to understand how choice of prescribed texts is diversified in the classroom to cater to the needs of culturally diverse learners.

Following on from the assessment of the fixed number of texts listed for study in the Area of Study where there is a total of 14 texts distributed across five categories, teachers were asked to give their thoughts about the number of texts listed in the prescribed list.[384] Almost all the teachers participating in this research, unanimously voiced their concerns about the fixed number of prescribed texts listed for the Area of Study. They find this restriction of text choice makes it difficult to plan units of work and select options that are most suitable or appropriate for their students. Presently, the English Stage 6 Area of Study section of the curriculum is structured so that only one prescribed text from each category must be studied.[385] Teacher 12 summarises a recurring issue with this design and presents

> … you have to choose so that each unit has a different text and there are only about two or three [texts] for each unit, so for *Belonging* there is about two or three novels you can do, even one or two [texts] for some units. So when you've put in all of your preferences, there's always one unit where you say to yourself, *'I don't want to study this text, it doesn't suit my kids at all, it doesn't suit my preferred teaching style, but I have to do it because if I don't do it in Module A, I'm going to have to change all of the texts that I teach'* … we need more texts for study, so there is variety for teachers to choose from.[386]

A fixed number of texts seems to have an impact on the methods teachers use for choosing texts in senior English classrooms.

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[384] To review the number of texts listed under the Area of Study refer to Section 4.1.3—Prescribed texts (2006-2020), on pg., 122.

[385] For information about the requirements of the Area of Study, refer to Section 4.1.2—Area of Study (Section), on pg., 116.

[386] School 4, LPS, Teacher 12 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

4.2.3 Teaching prescribed texts to contemporary students

To address the curriculum aims using the current prescribed texts teachers are seemingly narrowing their pedagogical strategies to focus on issues relevant to the HSC examinations. For Advanced courses, students are more concerned about applying the information they learn in text to writing model essays for the HSC. Teacher 5 explains "our kids because they are gifted and talented they get to a point where they just freeze up, and they don't want to take risks and don't want to play with creativity and innovation. They get scared about doing anything that isn't necessarily linked to a formula."[387] Teachers seem to limit both their engagement with texts and how they apply knowledge of their own or other cultures to their interpretations of these texts. Teacher 9 finds formula teaching is rampant in the NSW education system, and believes this perhaps a consequence of examination testing, given that he sees it as being pervasive. He argues that "formula teaching is being encouraged perhaps not deliberately and perhaps not intentionally by our system in NSW, but the fact is it's an entire industry and it's being encouraged."[388] Given the nature of the HSC teachers explain that they focus more on securing examination results, rather than engaging students to read. The following section presents the collated responses from students who participated in this research to understand the extent to which students engage with and enjoy the texts they study in senior English classes, and therefore, whether they objectively appear to share the same views as their teachers.

Teachers comment that it is a continuous challenge to engage contemporary and culturally diverse students using the current range of texts, as the options are not frequently changed, they lack diversity, and are not

[387] School 2, HPS, Teacher 5 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.
[388] School 3, HPS, Teacher 9 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

balanced with more modern texts. A participating English teacher with over thirty years of experience explains that

> … the texts [are] primarily pretty old school literary canon types, with no emphasis on cultural diversity, considering the Australian population. I believe it would be nice if there was more of a balance with the canon, Australian Indigenous texts and other culturally diverse texts, but this would mean completely changing the HSC scaling and marking … but [a balance of texts] would certainly equip the kids for life better.[389]

This teacher believes a wider range of contemporary texts for the HSC might be beneficial to inform and engage students in discussions of cultural differences in current society, but caveats quickly the potential difficulties in implementation. While adding or changing texts on prescribed lists seems like a simple solution, teachers confirm that stocking book rooms with newer texts can become quite expensive. This makes texts less of a priority so "[the text list] does not change often enough, but there are practicalities involved, teachers have to read them and be able to teach them, and you need skill and time to do that. You need training, resources, strategies, approaches."[390] Second to this, some teachers argue they simply don't have enough time to prepare to teach newer options and little or no critical resources available on recently published texts.

It became apparent during this research that the current list of prescribed texts for the Area of Study poses different challenges for students depending on their learning abilities. Teachers have shown to be very aware of this issue. For instance, HPS institutions only offered Advanced English courses and teachers from these schools advocated for texts to be removed on the basis that they were not challenging enough for their students. Teacher 9 suggests that "I would be tempted to take some of the easier texts off the Advanced course. I really don't see *'Romulus, My Father'* as a text that would

[389] School 2, HPS, Teacher 4 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.
[390] School 3, HPS, Teacher 9 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

challenge Advanced students."[391] However, LPS teachers mostly taught students doing the Standard course and they find the current list of texts to be too challenging for their students. Teacher 1 states "sometimes it's really hard for our kids to engage with these texts and while we want to give them the opportunity to experience them, more focus on texts that are more culturally relevant to them might be more useful and help us reach them."[392] As the majority of students across NSW sit either Standard or Advanced courses the current lists of texts in the Area of Study seems to pose a challenge for HPS and LPS students alike.

Some teachers offered responses based on their experiences of working with HPS and LPS students. After 30 years of being in the profession, Teacher 6 had experience facilitating both Standard and Advanced English courses at different schools. In addition to disliking the Area of Study, Teacher 6 found Standard and Advanced courses quite frustrating because the texts do not adequately satisfy the diversity requirements or varying levels of challenge needed to inspire students in either programme. Teacher 6 argues that

> The scope of books are very unimaginative. I don't think there is great text diversity out there. It seems the Board of Studies does not take notice of all the prize-winning literature that's coming out … I think if I was teaching perhaps you know at a school with many culturally different backgrounds, that was less advantaged, and I was teaching Standard English, oh that would be woeful! You know I did teach a couple of years ago at a disadvantaged school, but I have to say the texts did not inspire the students one bit.[393]

This statement, by Teacher 6, indicates that her experience of mediating texts has perhaps been less than optimal, as she believes the options on the reading list do not comprise the best selection of texts to engage students from different cultural backgrounds.

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[391] School 3, HPS, Teacher 9 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.
[392] School 1, LPS, Teacher 1 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.
[393] School 2, HPS, Teacher 6 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

Nine teachers mention current prescribed texts do not engage their diverse learners because the issues in texts are far removed from those more contemporary cultural situations their students might be more inclined to contribute towards. Teacher 3 suggests that her Standard classes are comprised of students from a range of cultural backgrounds and reading these texts become monotonous for her students because texts are "… very Anglo-centred, yeah they are! And there's like a smattering of text from other backgrounds but not a lot. There's still a fairly strong focus on what's considered to be important, *white* texts."[394] In discussions with Teacher 8, it was suggested that perhaps she could inspire students doing the Standard course more with cultural texts, especially those who "aren't very interested in English usually need more motivation. I've taught lower ability students at my previous school and they struggled with the lanaguge and analysing meanings, so these students [lower ability] need motivation to come from the books themselves, the stories must be relatable; they must want to get to the end, because often it's a struggle to get them through the bare process of reading."[395] This suggests that books that can engage learners immediately might be more efficient for targeting those students who struggle with other aspects of English and perhaps need more motivation to get through texts.

Other pedagogical issues associated with teaching more traditional or canonical texts seems to be the quantity of time spent in classrooms providing historical context for these literary works. Teacher 9 suggests that as an educator

> you can't assume that kids today [in Year 12 English] would have come across certain, let's say Christian iconography … [for instance] when you've got a text that might allude to classic religious themes—I don't know the fall of Adam and Eve, the Serpent, [or the] Garden of Eden—you look across the

[394] School 1, LPS, Teacher 3 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.
[395] School 3, HPS, Teacher 8 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

> room, and there're a sea blank faces, they don't know what you're talking about. So you have to do all of that![396]

Although it is anticipated that with most canonical texts there is always a certain amount of history or context that should be covered before reading the text itself, these are some of the merits of having traditional or canonical texts on the curriculum so that students can gain appreciation for classical literature. It must be noted; all participating teachers agreed that more traditional or well-known texts are extremely important to the curriculum, especially for those students doing Advanced or Extension courses. Teacher 11 summarises that

> there is always a place for the traditional text. I just think depending on the group you're targeting, if you're looking at Advanced or Extension students, yeah you certainly need to have a focus on the traditional texts, but I think when it comes to the lower levels of English, like I teach the Standard groups, they don't even want to know Shakespeare.[397]

This statement alludes to the importance of canonical texts for those students doing Advanced and Extension English courses.

[396] School 3, HPS, Teacher 9 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.
[397] School 4, LPS, Teacher 11 Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

4.3 Student questionnaire responses to prescribed texts

4.3.1 Description of the sample

The 199 senior secondary students surveyed for the Australian sample represent a sample of the views of English pupils preparing for their HSC examinations at four participating schools in New South Wales. The following graphs give an overview of students by their gender, place of birth, languages spoken and school types (HPS and LPS). Figures 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 present the composition of the student respondents by perceived family ancestry split by gender, for each of HPS and LPS types.

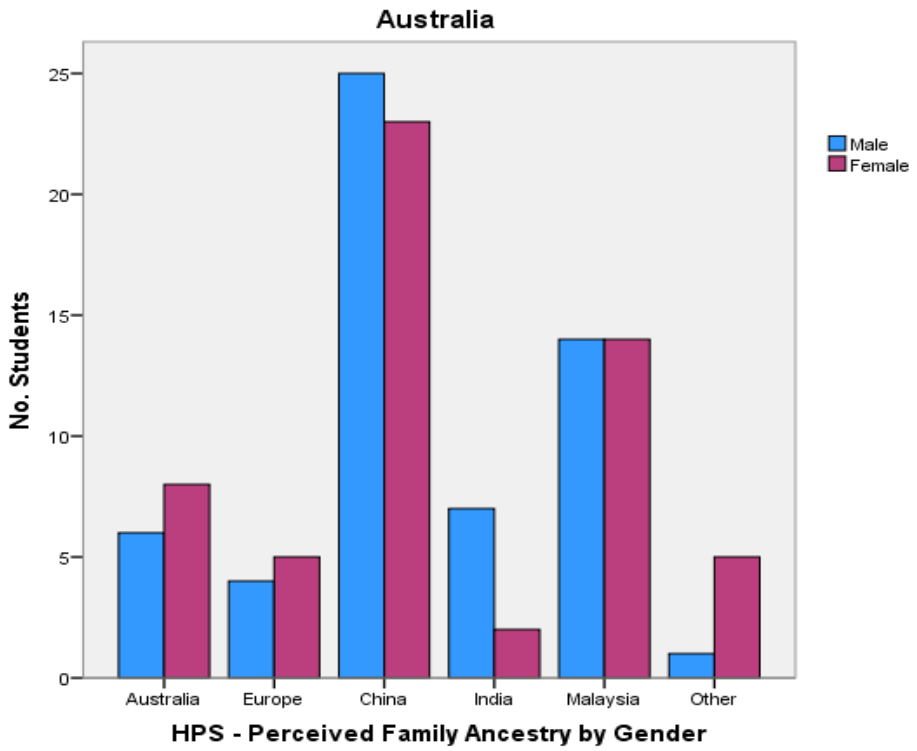

Figure 4.3.1: HPS – Perceived Family Ancestry by Gender

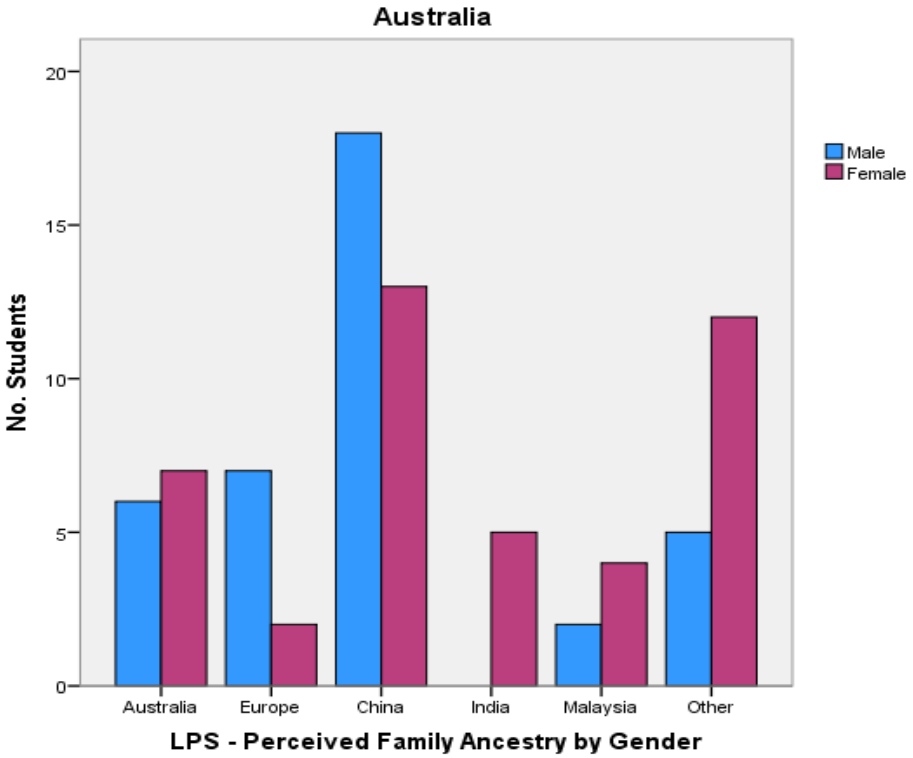

Figure 4.3.2: LPS – Perceived Family Ancestry by Gender

In both HPS and LPS schools there are relatively equal numbers of male and female participants, with LPS schools having a slightly higher proportion (53%) of females than males. For both types of school, most of the students identify their ancestry as belonging to China, India, Malaysia and Other (which includes South Asian countries of Vietnam and the Philippines).

While the distribution from each of these countries of ancestry is roughly the same for males and females in HPS schools, for LPS, most males are from China, Australia and Europe, while there is more of a balance of females across all countries of ancestry.

Figures 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 show perceived ancestry by country of birth to try to understand whether students had stronger connections of identity to their birthplace.

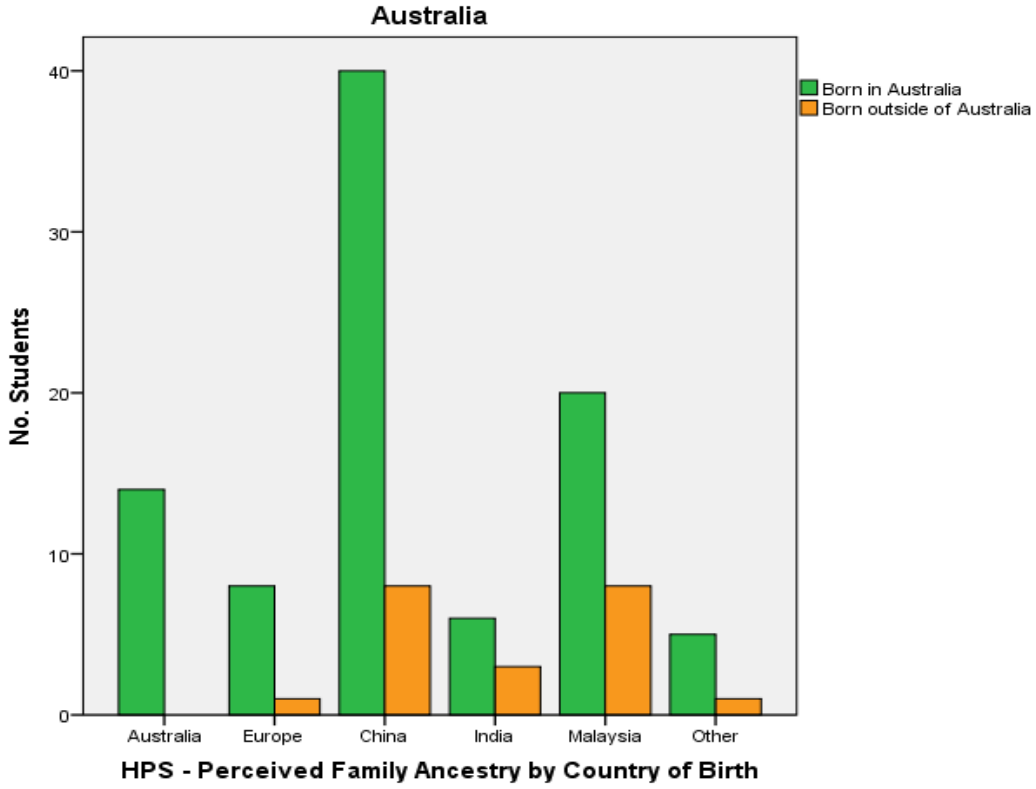

Figure 4.3.3: HPS – Perceived Family Ancestry by Country of Birth

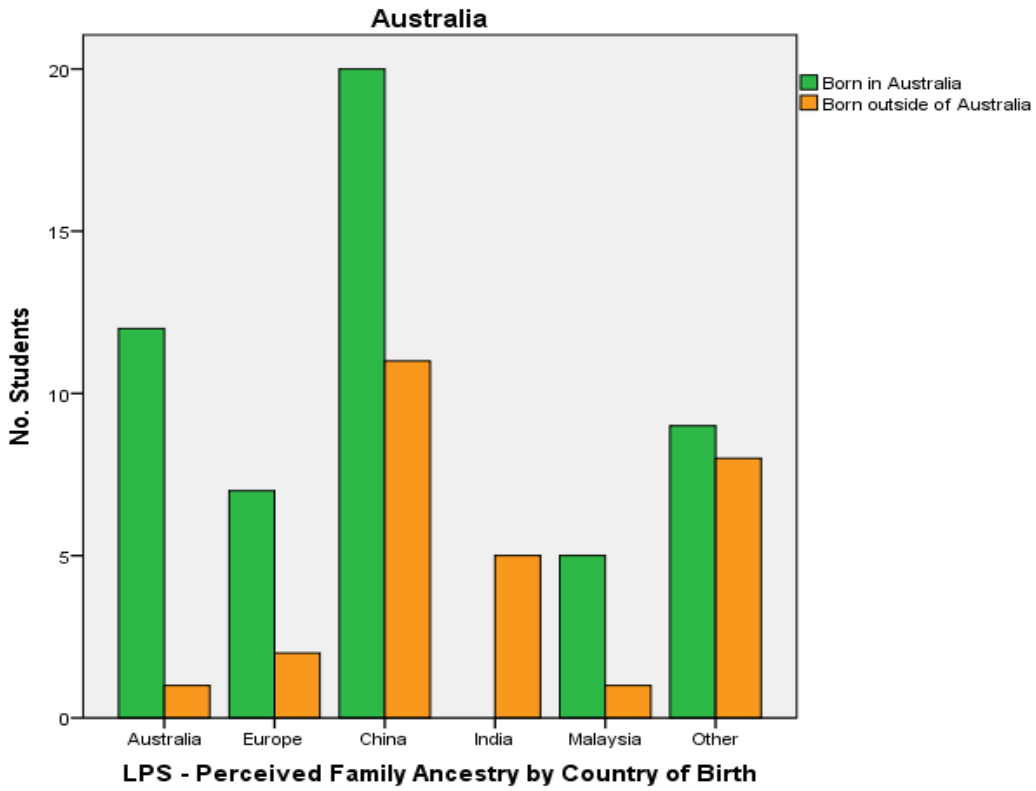

Figure 4.3.4: LPS – Perceived Family Ancestry by Country of Birth

The figures show that although 75% of all students (HPS and LPS combined) were born in Australia, most of them identify with countries other than Australia as their place of ancestry. However, the relative proportions who do so are higher in HPS than LPS. For example, 83% of the students who identify as having Chinese ancestry were born in Australia from HPS; whereas the equivalent for LPS was just 65%. To get a mapping of the strengths of some of these relationships altogether, a biplot is demonstrated below in Figure 4.3.5. For clarity purposes, it is important to state that when reading a biplot, it is only the relative distances between members of different comparison groups (defined by the legend, where each item in the legend constitutes a group), for example we can look at the relationship of 'India' to being 'Born outside of Australia', but cannot meaningfully make an association between 'India' and 'Australia' as both are members of the 'Family Ancestry' group. Rather, biplot associations are determined based on the closeness of members of one group to a different group.

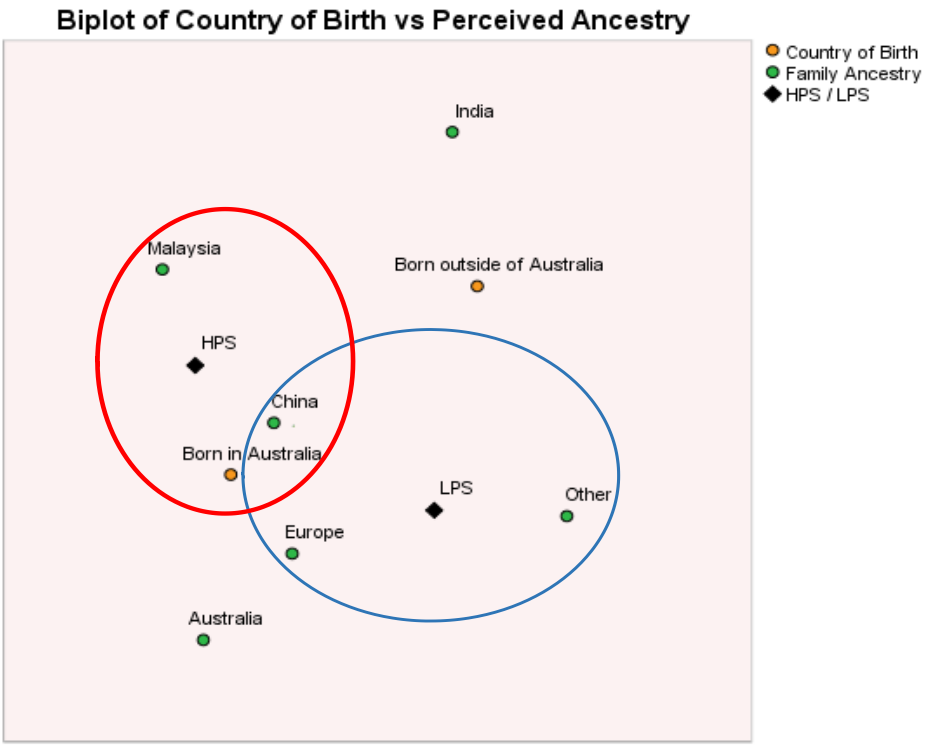

Figure 4.3.5: Biplot of Country of Birth vs Perceived Ancestry

The group of points in the red circle above indicates HPS relations and shows that generally these students were born in Australia and tended to identify more with Chinese and Malaysian ancestry. The group in the blue circle, meanwhile, associates LPS students more with Chinese, but also European and Other (Vietnamese and Philippines) ancestry.

Figure 4.3.6 shows the number of languages they spoke in addition to English.

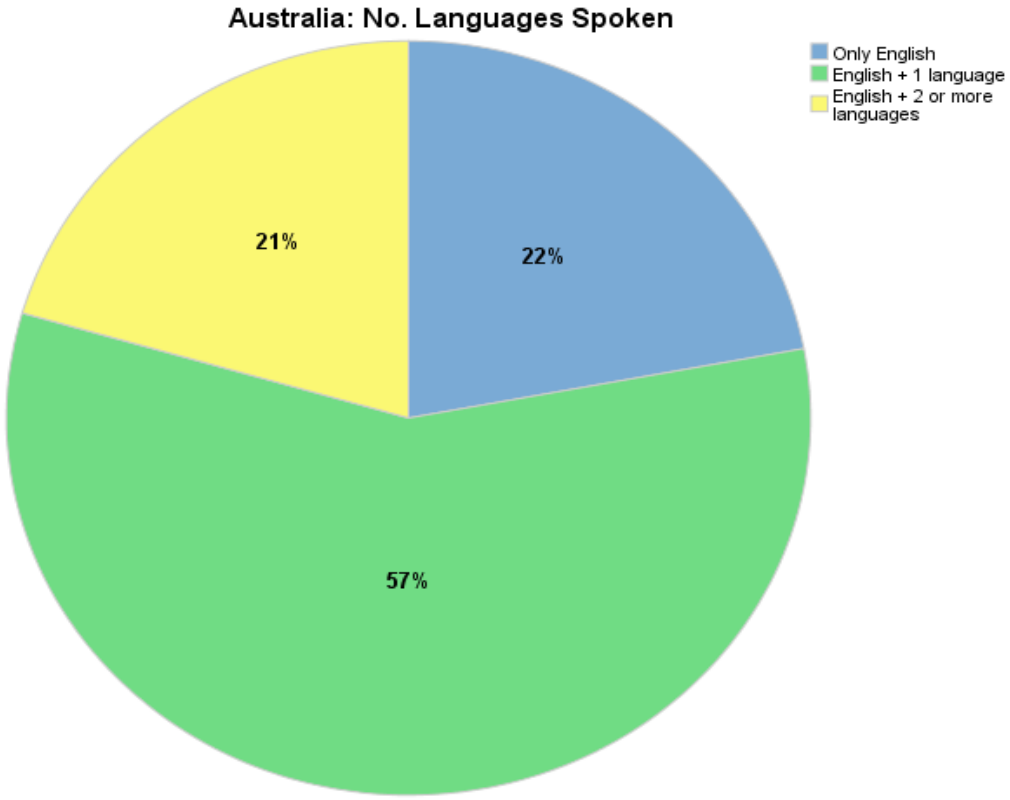

Figure 4.3.6: No. Languages Spoken in addition to English

The majority of students are at least bilingual, but this is unsurprising when taking into account the diversity of students in terms of their perceived country of ancestry.

Figures 4.3.7 and 4.3.8 below shows the composition of the students split by their religion and gender for HPS and LPS.

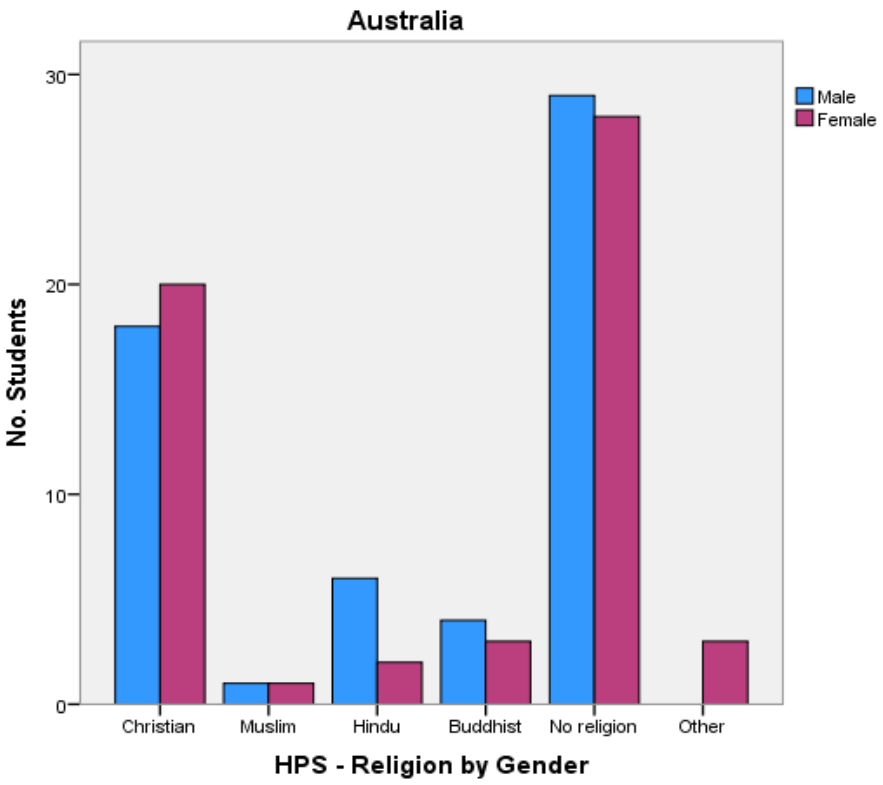

Figure 4.3.7: HPS – Religion by Gender

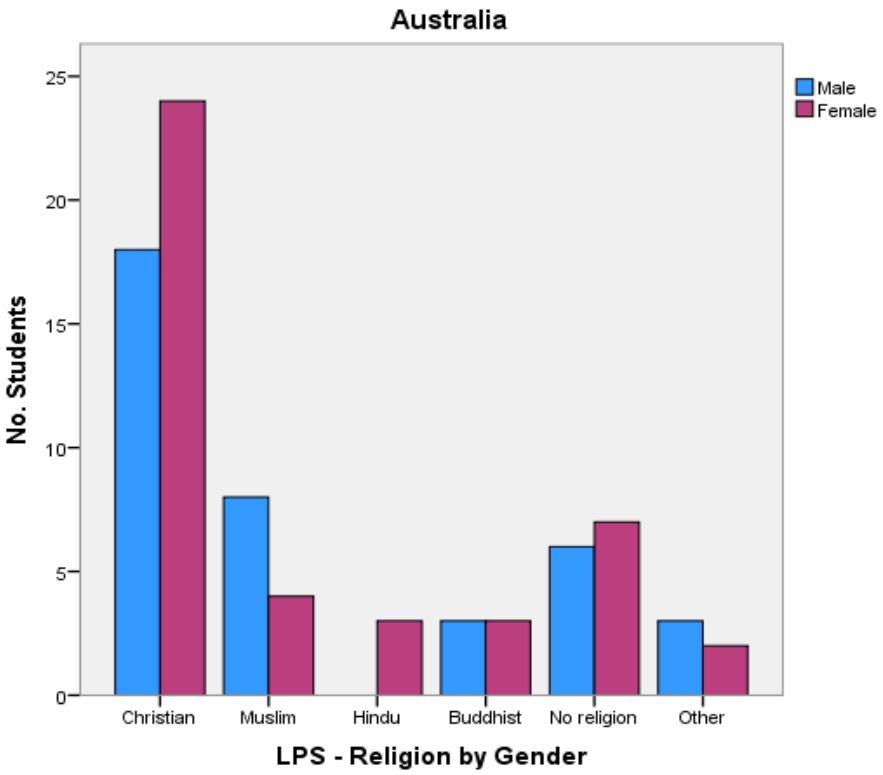

Figure 4.3.8: LPS – Religion by Gender

Approximately 41% of all students identified as coming from a 'Christian' religious background, while 36% identified as having 'No religion'. However, the distribution was different by school type; 33% of HPS students were of 'Christian' faith with almost 50% having 'No religion'; in contrast, the equivalent numbers for LPS were 52% and 16% respectively. By extension, this means that 'Muslim', 'Hindu', 'Buddhist' and 'Other' faiths accounted for only 17% of HPS students, but 32% of LPS students.

Figure 4.3.9 shows the relation between students' percevied ancestry and their religion as a biplot.

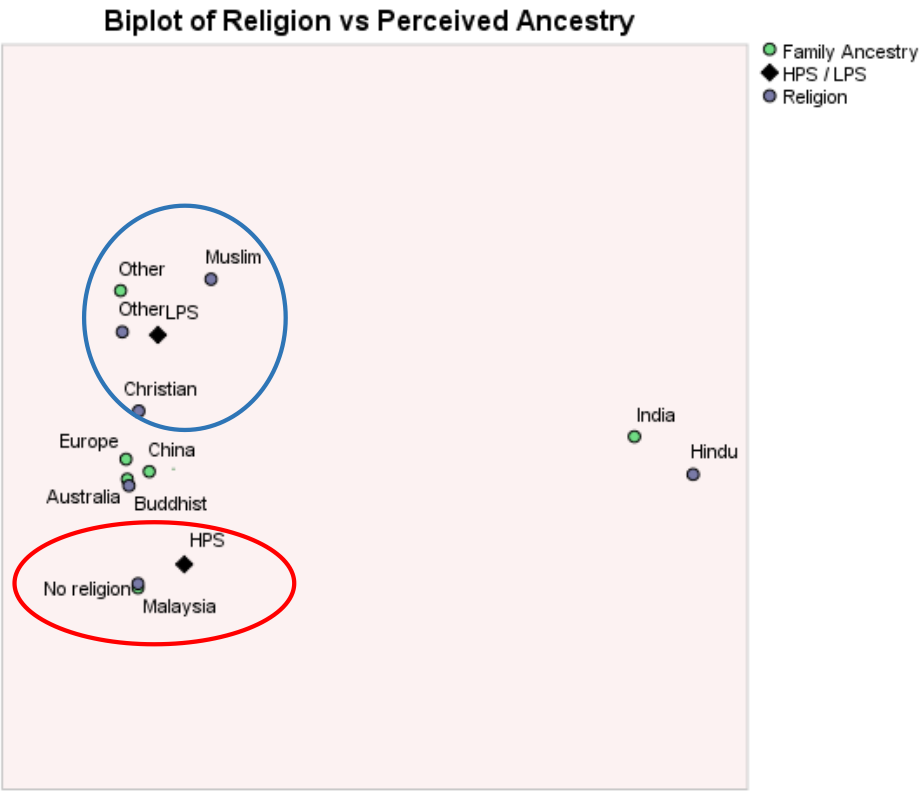

Figure 4.3.9: Biplot of Religion vs Perceived Ancestry

The red circle highlights that HPS students tend to be more associated with having 'No religion' compared with LPS students. It is also of note that Malaysian students identified predominantly as having 'No religion' irrespective of the type of school. On the other hand, the blue circle grouping

indicates broadly that a high proportion of Christian, Muslim and Other faiths tended to be associated with LPS, in other words, there seemed to be a higher relative distribution of these faiths to LPS rather than HPS.

4.3.2 Students' engagement with texts

As mentioned in the Methodology, students' response to their level of enjoyment of English was originally measured on a five-point Likert scale. However, it was determined subsequently that there was a bias with this design with the questions as delivered to LPS students; their responses tended to be polarised to the extremes of the scales. This is an issue because introducing such bias would confound the efforts to compare the responses against each other. Therefore, to mitigate the effect of this bias, the responses were reclassified into a three point Likert scale, with the extreme levels combined with the moderate ones.

Figures 4.3.10 and 4.3.11 show the relationship between students' enjoyment of English Literature according to their gender for HPS and LPS on the modified three-point scale.

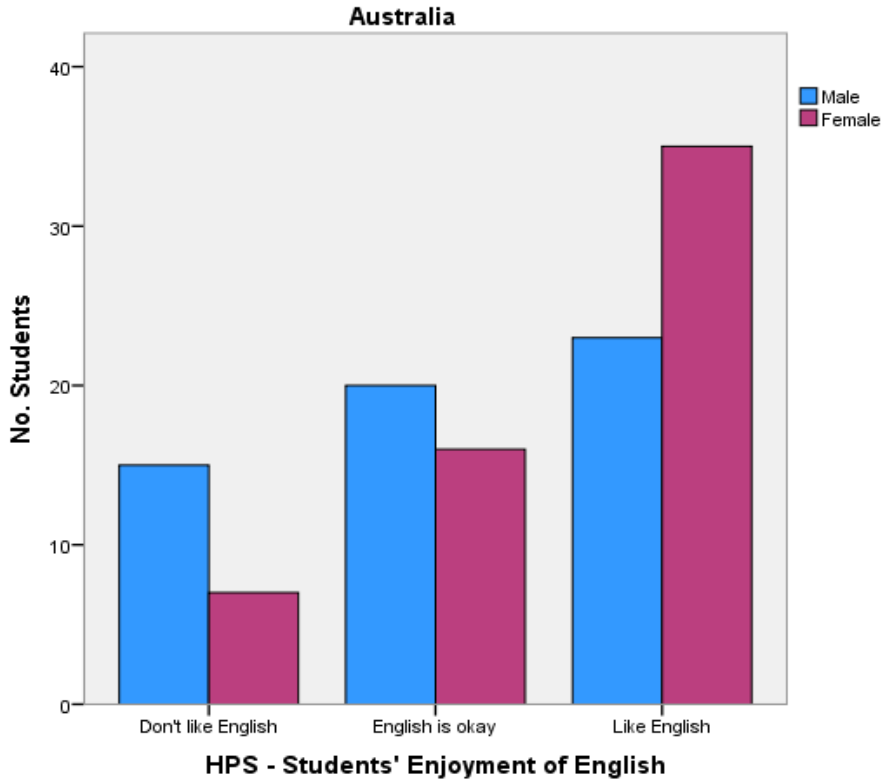

Figure 4.3.10: HPS – Students' Enjoyment of English

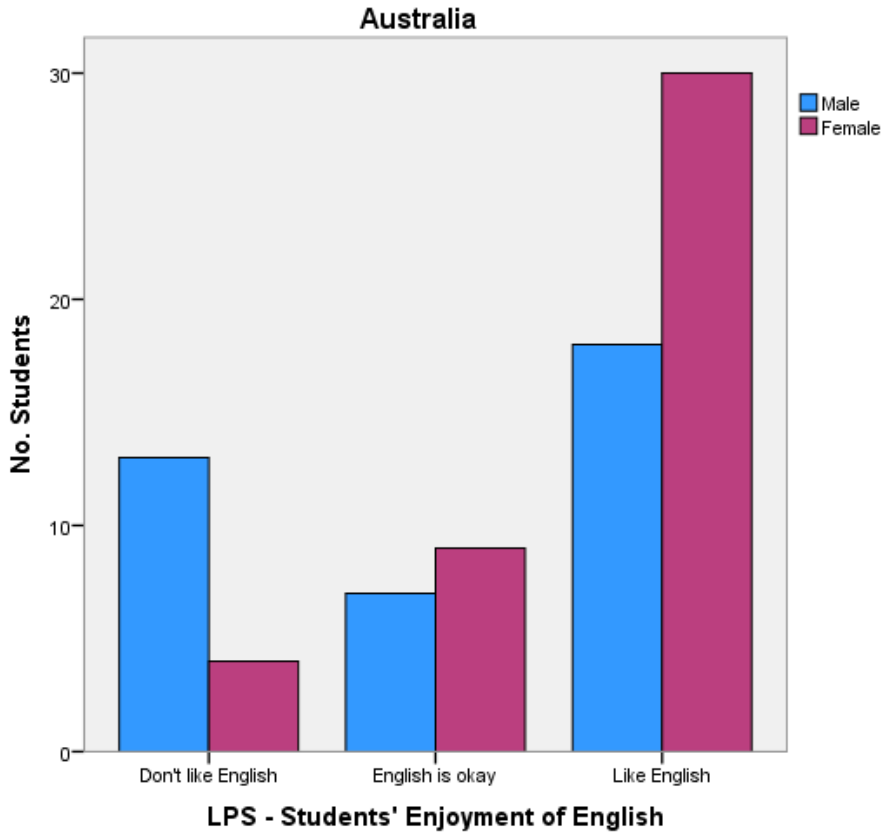

Figure 4.3.11: LPS – Students' Enjoyment of English

50% of HPS students claim to 'Like English' while the equivalent proportion of LPS students is even higher at 59%. While there may appear to be, some bias left in the relative responses between HPS and LPS, there is no statistically significant difference at the 5% level using a Mann-Whitney U test.[398] Additionally, the figures both show an imbalance in the responses by gender; 65% of girls overall claim to 'Like English'. This relationship between gender and enjoyment of English is statistically significant at the 5% level for both the individual HPS and LPS samples.

Figures 4.3.12 and 4.3.13 show the relationship between students' perceptions of whether texts refer to their culture or religion, according to their gender for HPS and LPS on the modified three-point scale.

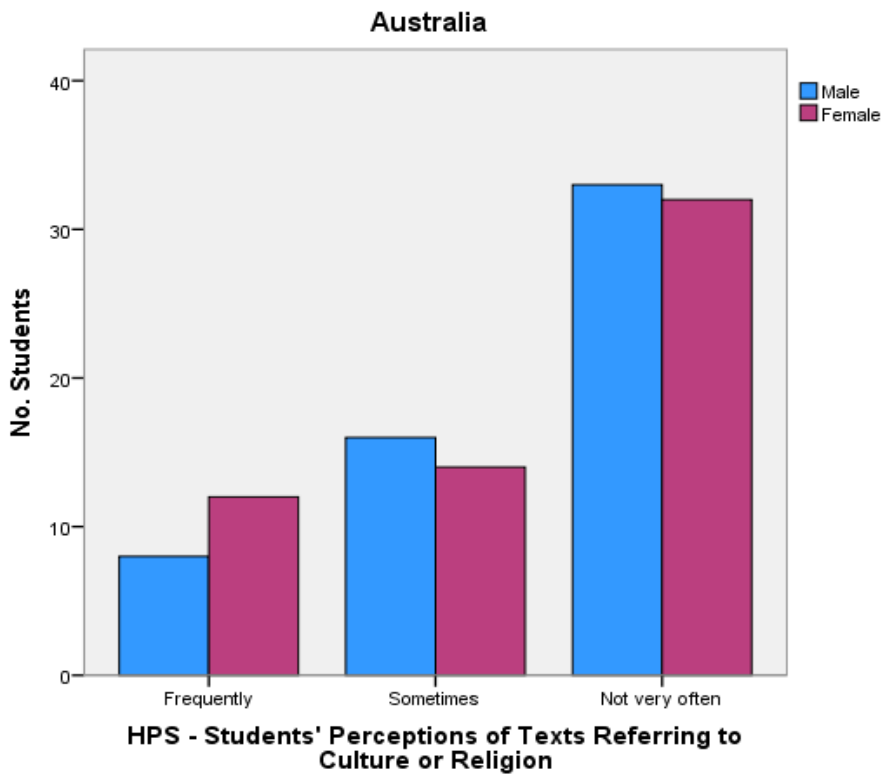

Figure 4.3.12: HPS – Students' Perceptions of Texts Referring to Culture or Religion

[398] The Mann-Whitney U test is a statistical test for equality of distribution between two groups, in this case, males and females. See: Howell, D. C. (2012). Statistical methods for psychology, Cengage Learning.

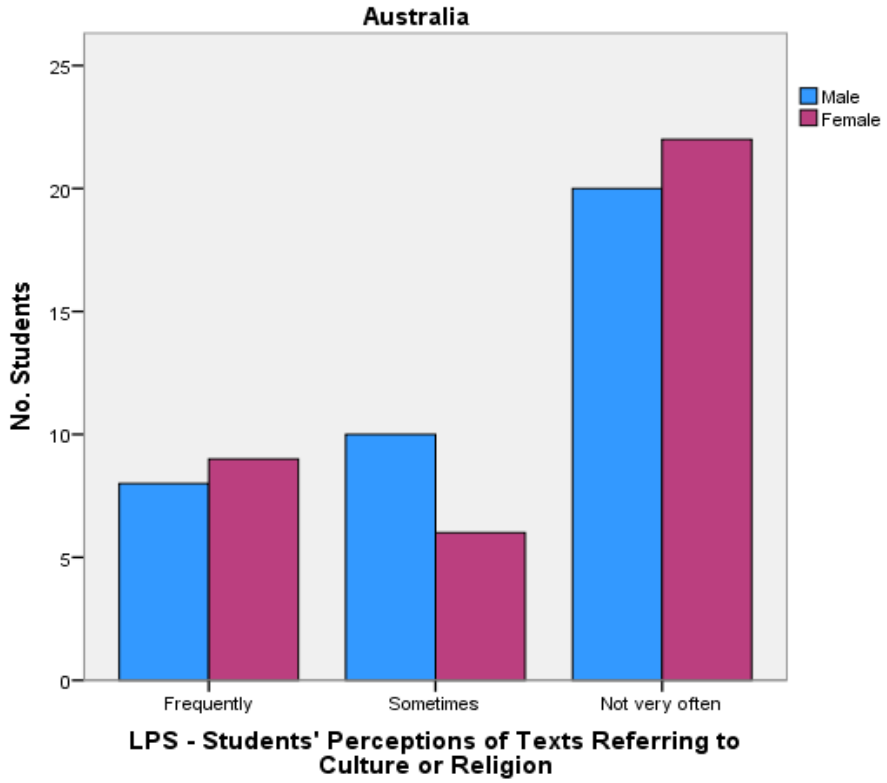

Figure 4.3.13: LPS – Students' Perceptions of Texts Referring to Culture or Religion

The distribution of responses is broadly the same across HPS and LPS students, and across males and females; approximately 56% of both HPS and LPS students claim that texts do not refer to culture or religion very often and this is in equal proportion by gender.

Figure 4.3.14 shows the relation between students' perceptions of texts referring to their culture or religion, versus their religion as a biplot.

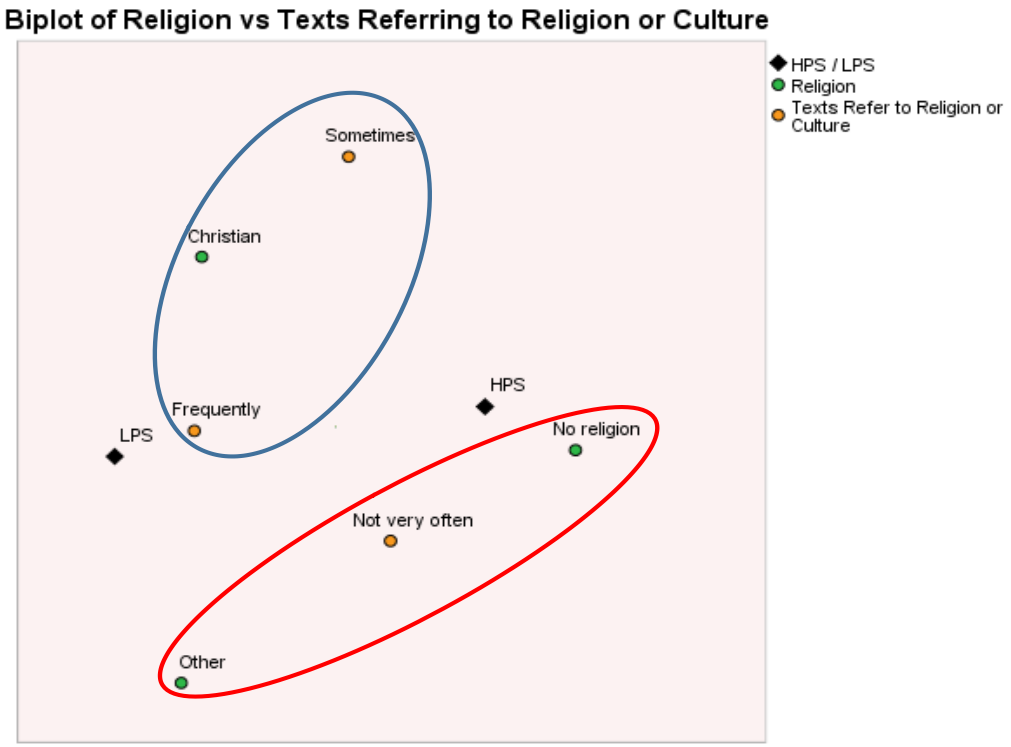

Figure 4.3.14: Biplot of Religion vs Texts Referring to Religion or Culture

The red circle grouping indicates that of those students who responded that texts do not refer to their religion or culture very often, they tended to be non-Christians (either 'No religion' or 'Other', which includes Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists), while the blue grouping demonstrates the inverse relationship – that Christian students tended to respond that texts reference their religion or culture, at least 'Sometimes', if not 'Frequently'.

Figure 4.3.15 shows the relation between students' perceptions of texts referring to their culture or religion, versus their perceived family ancestry as a biplot.

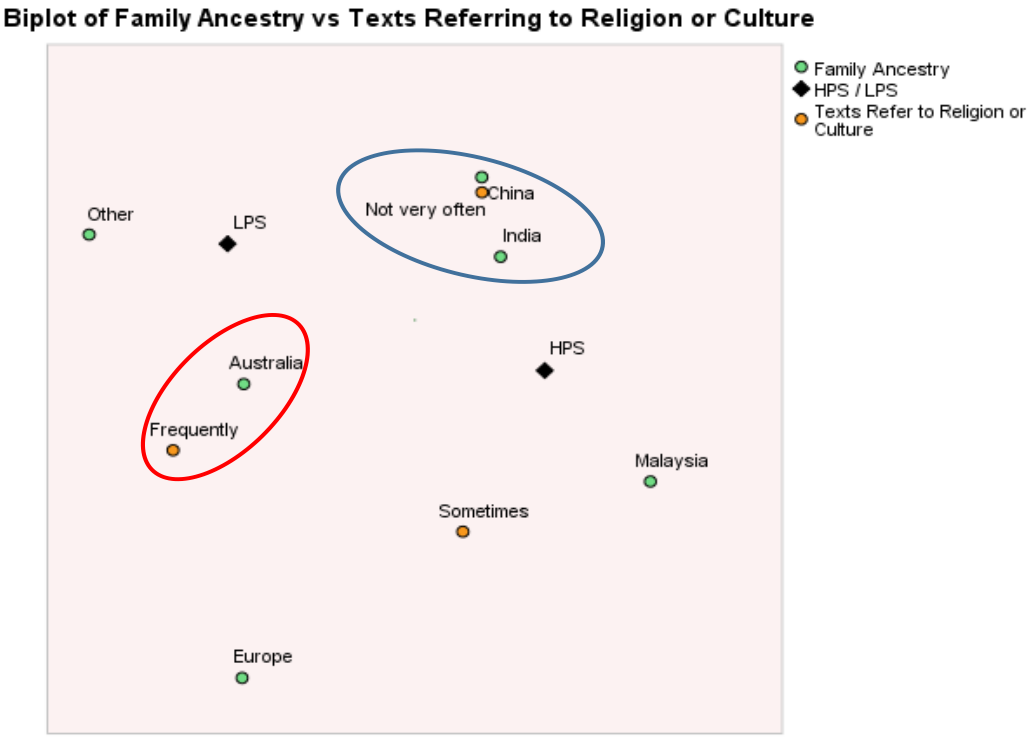

Figure 4.3.15: Biplot of Family Ancestry vs Texts Referring to Religion or Culture

The blue circle grouping indicates that of those students who responded that texts do not refer to their religion or culture very often, they tended to be of Chinese or Indian background, while the red circle demonstrates the very close association between Australian culture being discussed 'Frequently' in texts, compared to any other ancestral culture of students.

Figures 4.3.16 and 4.3.17 show the relationship between students' perceptions of whether texts refer to societal issues, according to their gender for HPS and LPS on the modified three-point scale.

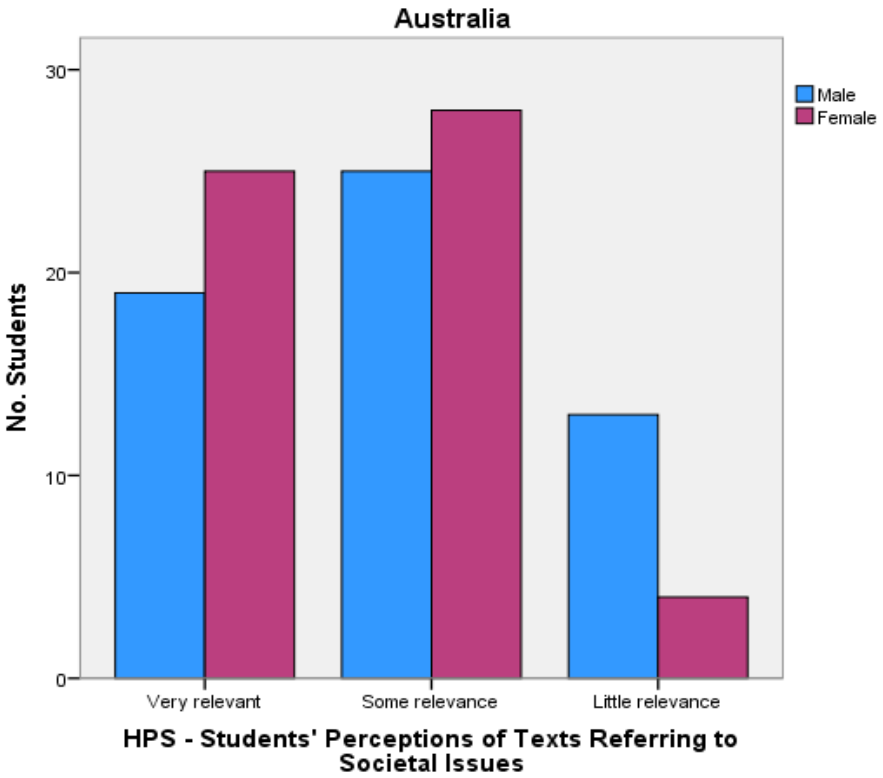

Figure 4.3.16: HPS - Students' Perceptions of Texts Referring to Societal Issues

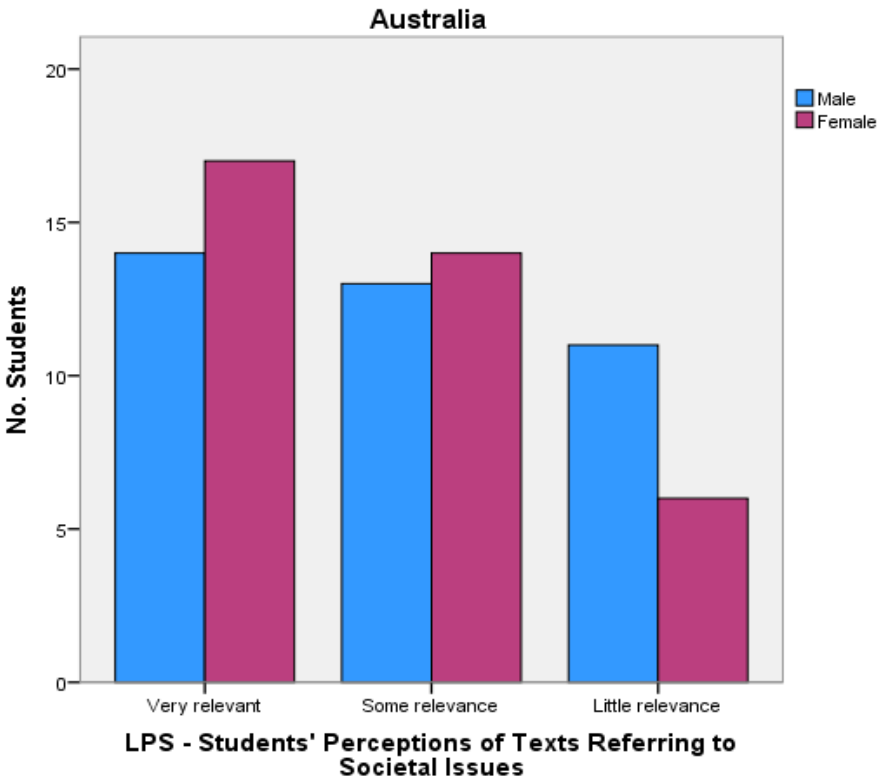

Figure 4.3.17: LPS - Students' Perceptions of Texts Referring to Societal Issues

The figures above show broadly similar characteristics for HPS and LPS overall; 39% of HPS and 41% of LPS claim that texts are 'Very relevant' to discussing societal issues. However, looking at the distributions by gender, it is clearer that the responses vary; for HPS, 44% of females think texts are 'Very relevant', but only 33% of males. This is a statistically significant difference at the 5% level. This contrasts with the sample of students from LPS, where the difference is response between males and females is not significant.

The following two questions attempted to determine students' level of reflection on the texts as a component of their engagement. The first question seeks to establish how personally related the students felt to the texts they study – this is introspective. The second question seeks to establish whether students can relate to the interpretation of texts provided to them by their teachers – this is outwardly reflexive. Table 4.3.1 below shows students' relatedness to texts by HPS and LPS and gender.

Table 4.3.1: Students' Personal Relatedness to Texts

Schools	Very well		Related well		Somewhat related		Not very well		Not at all	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	f	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*
HPS	2	6	12	14	20	22	16	10	8	8
LPS	6	4	9	4	12	14	4	8	8	12
Total	***8***	***10***	***21***	***18***	***32***	***36***	***20***	***18***	***16***	***20***

The Table shows that the distribution of students' relatedness to texts was roughly equal by gender across both HPS and LPS. The five-point Likert scale did not appear to introduce any obvious bias, and the relative number of responses was balanced both in respect of the central 'somewhat related' indicator (approximately one third), as well as to the more extreme responses. There was no significant difference in response category distribution across HPS and LPS, either on the five-point or three-point versions of this scale.

Table 4.3.2 presents students' responses to their understanding of their teachers' interpretation of texts.

Table 4.3.2: Students' Understanding of Teachers' Interpretations of Texts

Schools	Very clear		Clear		Somewhat clear		Not very clear		Not clear at all	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	f	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*
HPS	16	14	30	28	7	9	6	6	0	2
LPS	8	8	11	18	9	5	4	2	4	12
Total	***24***	***22***	***41***	***46***	***16***	***14***	***10***	***8***	***4***	***14***

This table shows that the majority of students (75%) in HPS found their teachers' interpretations of texts to be 'clear' or 'very clear'; these responses were balanced evenly by gender. However, the equivalent for LPS was only 56%. In addition, 22% of the male students in LPS responded that teachers' interpretations were 'not very clear' or 'not clear' to them, compared to 31% of the female students. Figure 4.3.18 shows these figures for both male and female students combined for each of HPS and LPS.

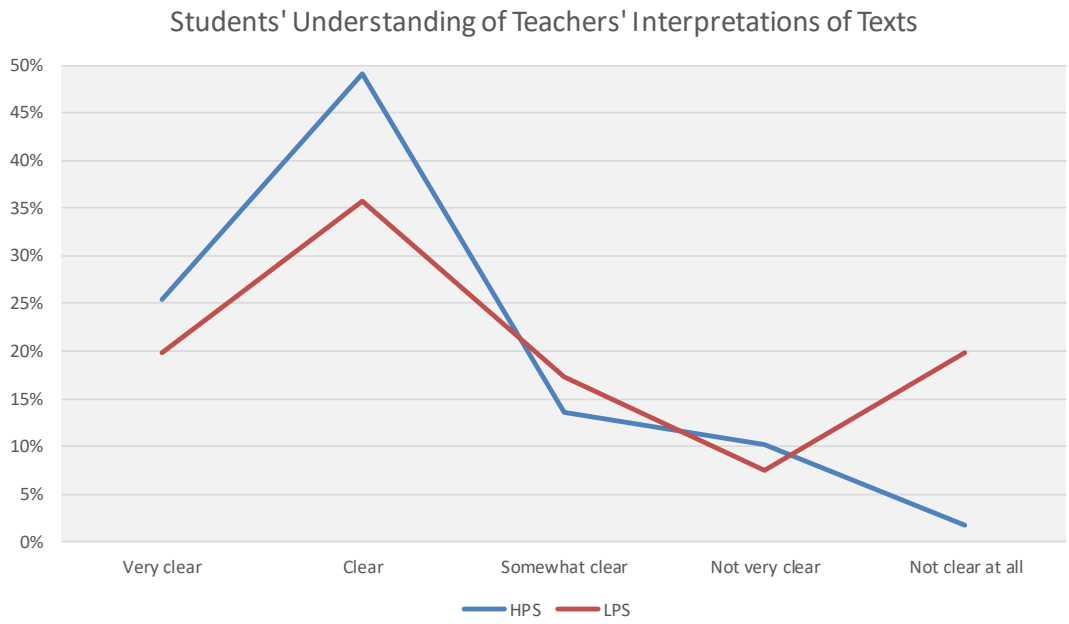

Figure 4.3.18: Illustrating Students' Understanding of Teacher's Interpretation of Texts in HPS and LPS

4.3.3 Ethnicity, social class and gender referents in discussions of prescribed texts

The following sections collate how often students refer to texts they study at school when having discussions about cultural issues such as ethnicity, social class and gender with their teachers, parents/guardians and friends.

(i) Ethnicity

Table 4.3.3 shows how often students refer to texts when discussing ethnicity with their teachers, parents/guardians and friends.

Table 4.3.3: Students' Regularity of Referring to Texts when Discussing Ethnicity with Teachers, Parents/Guardians and Friends

Ethnicity	HPS						LPS					
	Teachers		Parents/Guardians		Friends		Teachers		Parents/Guardians		Friends	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	f	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*
All the time	6	4	4	0	10	8	8	11	6	4	8	8
Frequently	8	7	8	14	10	12	11	6	2	6	4	6
Sometimes	17	14	10	14	22	18	9	8	6	6	8	10
Not often	7	11	10	14	8	12	6	6	9	8	9	8
Not at all	20	24	27	17	8	10	4	12	15	19	9	11

Overall, HPS students' responses indicated that they would refer to texts more often when discussing issues of ethnicity with their friends rather than teachers or parents/guardians. Texts would not be referred to 'often' or 'at all' with friends for 32% of HPS students, compared to 53% with teachers 58% with parents or guardians, for the same categories. This contrasts with LPS students, of whom 63% would rarely discuss with parents, but the equivalent proportion for friends was 46%, and teachers only 35%. There is also some evidence that female students discuss themes of ethnicity generally less frequently with anyone, than their male counterparts, however this is not very

significant at the 5% confidence level.

(ii) Social class

Table 4.3.4 indicates how often students refer to texts when discussing social class with their teachers, parents/guardians and friends.

Table 4.3.4: Students' Regularity of Referring to Texts when Discussing Social Class with Teachers, Parents/Guardians and Friends

Social class	HPS						LPS					
	Teachers		Parents/Guardians		Friends		Teachers		Parents/Guardians		Friends	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	f	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*
All the time	16	10	4	4	4	2	8	9	2	2	6	4
Frequently	22	20	8	8	6	10	9	10	4	7	6	14
Sometimes	12	12	10	8	12	18	13	7	8	5	6	2
Not often	8	10	6	16	17	15	4	6	5	10	6	10
Not at all	2	6	30	24	21	13	4	11	19	19	14	13

In general, both HPS and LPS students claimed to refer to texts more often in discussions with teachers, than with parents or friends, with respect to issues of social class. Approximately 65% of both HPS and LPS students avoided referring to texts frequently ('not often' or 'not at all') when discussing with parents, and the equivalent proportion which discussed with friends were 56% (HPS) and 53% (LPS). In contrast, 78% of HPS and 69% of LPS students referred to texts with teachers at least 'Sometimes' if not more 'Frequently'.

(iii) Gender

Table 4.3.5 (below) presents students' perception of how frequently texts are referred to when discussing issues related to gender with teachers, parents/guardians and friends.

Table 4.3.5: Students' Regularity of Referring to Texts when Discussing Gender with Teachers, Parents/Guardians and Friends

Gender	HPS						LPS					
	Teachers		Parents/Guardians		Friends		Teachers		Parents/Guardians		Friends	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	f	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*
All the time	21	15	6	2	4	8	6	9	4	4	6	6
Frequently	19	19	2	10	12	15	7	6	4	4	6	9
Sometimes	9	15	8	16	17	17	11	8	7	6	6	6
Not often	3	3	10	14	13	12	6	6	5	11	7	7
Not at all	8	6	34	16	14	6	7	15	19	17	13	15

Distributions of responses for males and females were surprisingly similar, taken across both HPS and LPS together as well as individually, in terms of whether they refer to texts when discussing issues of gender. There is also an equal representation between HPS and LPS students when discussing issues of gender with parents and friends. Instead, the main difference in the profile of students' responses for this question comes from the school type in discussions with teachers; 63% of all HPS students refer to texts at least 'Frequently', while the equivalent number for LPS students is only 35%.

4.3.4 Qualitative student responses to texts and cultural diversity

This section of the questionnaire invited students to give short sentence responses to (i) briefly describe what they liked most about the texts studied at school, (ii) identify and explain how texts helped engage an understanding of issues related to cultural diversity and, (iii) describe how cultural issues raised in texts are relevant to contemporary society.

(i) Students' responses to liking or disliking texts

Students' qualitative responses to the three short response questions formed the basis for the development of data-driven categories.[399] Each response was divided into thought units that, after Kellogg Hunt[400] are described as discrete referents and each referent was coded by its dominant content. For the question of student liking or disliking texts, nine overarching categories encompassed the content of the total student corpus of 384 referents based on the responses from 157 students; the remaining 42 surveyed students provided no pertinent response. It must be noted here that the number of referents varied considerably from student to student.

The nine overarching categories are themes; Narration; Language; Characters; Settings; the Experience of Text; Different Cultures; Empathy and History. Of these, the first five categories were created on the basis that students directly used these words in their descriptions, for example, "I liked the use of interesting themes."[401] The remaining four referents (Experience of the Text, Different Cultures, Empathy and History) were derived from interpretation of students' descriptions as to why they liked or disliked texts. The referent 'Experience of Text' for example, encompasses all statements students made about personally relating to texts and examples of these are, "I like the story because it related to me as a student,"[402] or "[I] disliked it wasn't enjoyable to read."[403] One sentence can contain several different referents, for example, the following response contains two referents, "I liked the use of emotive language/ and how I felt when the poems discussed journeys", which are categorised into language and themes, respectively.[404] Table 4.3.6 provides exemplar referents for each category.

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[399] Refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.5–Analysis of Data for a description of data-driven categories, on pg., 87.
[400] Hunt, K. W. (1965). "Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels. NCTE Research Report No. 3."
[401] Survey, School 2, (Male), Student #114.
[402] Survey, School 3, (Female), Student #12.
[403] Survey, School 2, (Female), Student #112.
[404] Survey, School 3, (Female), Student #7.

Table 4.3.6: Category System Derived from Students' Reflections about Liking/Disliking Texts

Category	Exemplars	
	Positive	***Negative***
Themes	• 'Themes helped provide a vivid account of foreigners rendering the text both informative and engaging' (S1, HPS, M, 70). • 'I liked the use of interesting themes' (S2, HPS, M, 114). • 'MacLeod's stories explore many other themes associated with globalisation in a clear and succinct way' (S1, HPS, F, 48). • 'The text explores many themes of the human condition (S4, LPS, M, 193).	• 'I disliked that themes were too complex' (S2, HPS, M, 114). • 'A poem is full of many meanings and themes that made it hard to understand' (S2, HPS, M, 129). • 'I disliked the fact the poem was only focusing on the journey theme' (S3, LPS, F, 25).
Narration	• 'Liked the discussion of the role of the writer that made me appreciate literature even more' (S1, HPS, F, 45). • 'I like the journey the author tells stories of conflict throughout the story' (S4, LPS, M, 190). • 'I like the way the author narrates it or telling it' (S3, LPS, F, 12).	
Language	• 'I liked that the language was understandable and not particularly flowery, which makes it easier to read and understand' (S1, HPS, F, 70). • 'I really liked the language of MacLeod's writing (S1, HPS, F, 47) • 'I like how much she describes it' (S3, LPS, M, 29).	• 'Disliked some of the language was hard to understand' (S1, HPS, M, 44). • 'Disliked confusing to interpret, confusing to read and hard to understand' (S2, HPS, F, 109). • 'I disliked that it was hard to annotate' (S3, LPS, F, 30). • 'I disliked the writing parts' (S3, LPS, M, 28).
Experience of text	• 'The loss of tradition as a result of globalisation is something that I personally face as well' (S1, HPS, F, 47). • 'I liked that also gives you an idea of experience other people have been through' (S3, LPS, F, 8). • 'I like the story because it relates to me as a student' (S3, LPS, F, 12). • 'I like that text has issues that still relate today' (S1, HPS, F, 70).	• 'Do not talk about universal issues' (S2, HPS, F, 110). • 'Disliked it wasn't enjoyable to read' (S2, HPS, F, 112). • 'Poems are not relevant in my life' (S3, LPS, M, 21). • 'It was boring and unrelatable to me' (S4, LPS, M, 185). • 'I disliked everything because it was irrelevant to my life' (S3, LPS, M, 37).
Different cultures	• 'I liked that texts gave vivid experience of a uniquely Eastern culture' (S1, HPS, M, 70). • 'I liked how I learn about different cultures' (S4, LPS, F, 188). • 'Learn about how people in other countries migrated' (S3, LPS, M, 39). • 'I liked that it was about Aboriginal culture' (S3, LPS, F, 4).	• 'Examines Australian culture/society and I could not relate to the text' (S2, HPS, M, 118). • 'Disliked it was difficult to understand different cultures' (S2, HPS, M, 115). • 'Disliked at times how we only talk about Aboriginal cultures and not others' (S3, LPS, F, 10).
Empathy	• 'I felt sad for the female protagonist' (S1, HPS, M, 97). • 'Because it shows many types of emotions' (S3, LPS, M, 17). • 'It relates to the sadness of how immigrants came to Australia' (S3, LPS, M, 24).	• 'Stories about migrants were dark and displeasing to read' (S2, HPS, F, 113). • 'I disliked the fact that poetry naturally is boring and depressing' (S2, HPS, M, 101). • 'I disliked how sad it was' (S3, LPS, F, 6). • 'Disliked that the texts were very morbid'

	• 'MacLeod's writing is melancholy and is quite authentic and realistic' (S1, HPS, F, 47).	(S2, HPS, F, 112).
History	• 'Even though it is set in a different time I could relate to the story' (S1, HPS, F, 88). • 'It was fun to deconstruct the past' (S3, LPS, M, 39). • 'It was based on history and was a true story' (S3, LPS, F, 35).	• 'Disliked the overly repetitive historical detail of Austen's life' (S1, HPS, F, 45). • 'Moderately interesting read a bit harder to relate to due to the issues being from 200 years ago' (S1, HPS, F, 94).
Characters	• 'I enjoyed the characters, sarcasm and humour' (S1, HPS, F, 88). • 'Challenged the role of protagonist, it showed character development' (S1, HPS, M, 93). • 'The use of characters from foreign countries' (S4, LPS, M, 194). • 'I liked that the character (Josephine) is really powerful girl' (S3, LPS, M, 16).	• 'But the thing I don't like the grandmother being mean to her granddaughter and Josephine's father doesn't want Josephine in his life' (S3, LPS, F, 19). • 'The characters in text were dislikeable' (S2, HPS, M, 106). • 'Female characters were confusing' (S4, LPS, M, 199).
Settings	• 'The setting was fascinating' (S1, HPS, M, 93). • 'I liked that this text was recently written' (S1, HPS, F, 70). • 'I like that unusual settings of the text' (S3, LPS, F, 11). • 'The text was set in such a way that I felt I was there in the book' (S2, HPS, F, 102).	• 'The poetry setting made it difficult to understand' (S3, LPS, M, 13). • 'The setting was boring and even with my teacher's help it was incomprehensible' (S2, HPS, M, 104). • 'The setting of the novel was distracting from the meaning in the text' (S1, HPS, F, 68).

Figure 4.3.19 shows the distribution of the 384 total referents by category and school type.

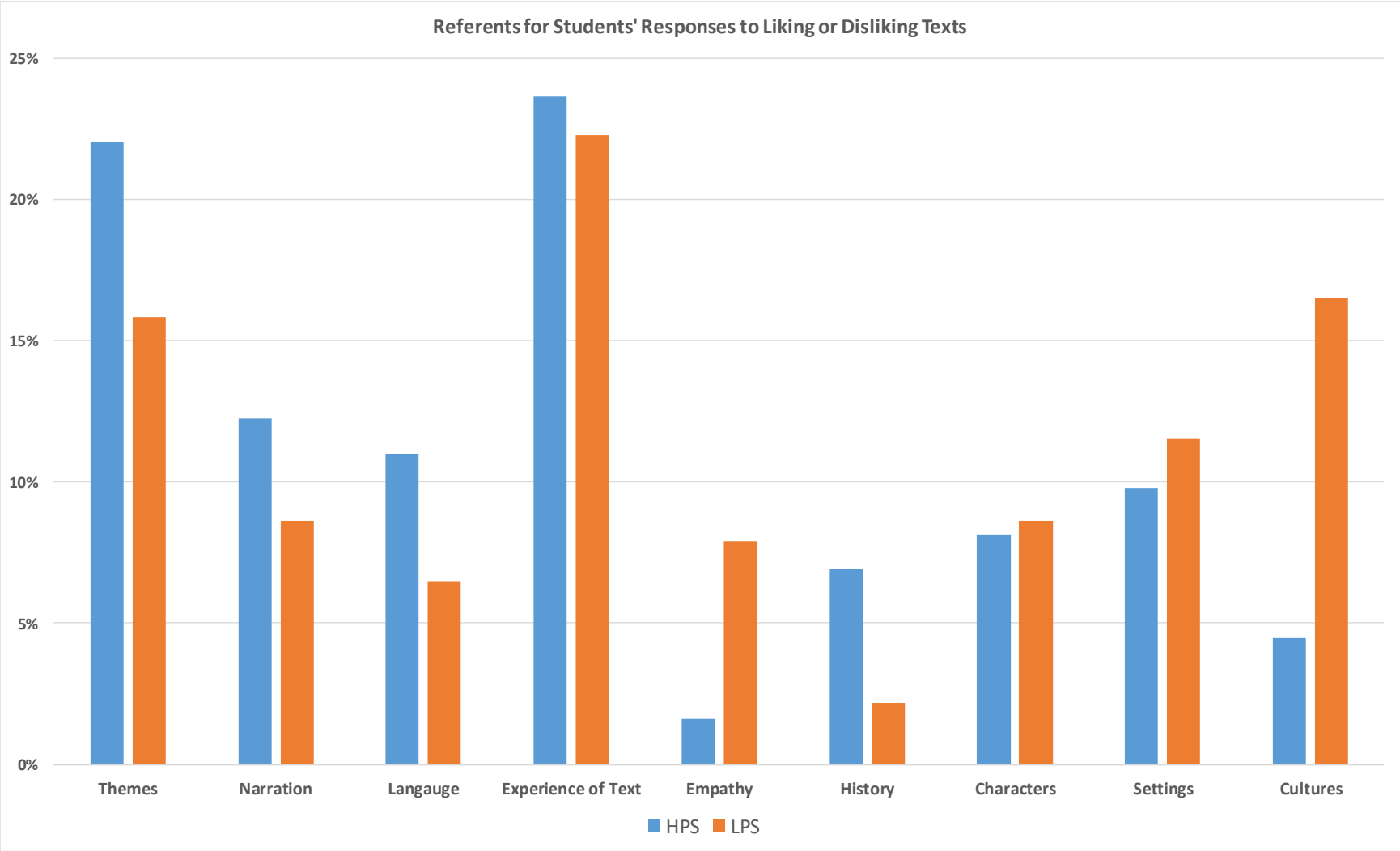

Figure 4.3.19: Referents for Students' Responses to Liking or Disliking Texts

Overall Experience of Texts was the category focussed on the most by both HPS (24%) and LPS (22%) students. Additionally, HPS students seemed to focus more on Themes (22%) while LPS students focussed on Cultures (17%). Figure 4.3.20 shows additionally a biplot representing both students' responses and non-responses to each of the nine referent categories.

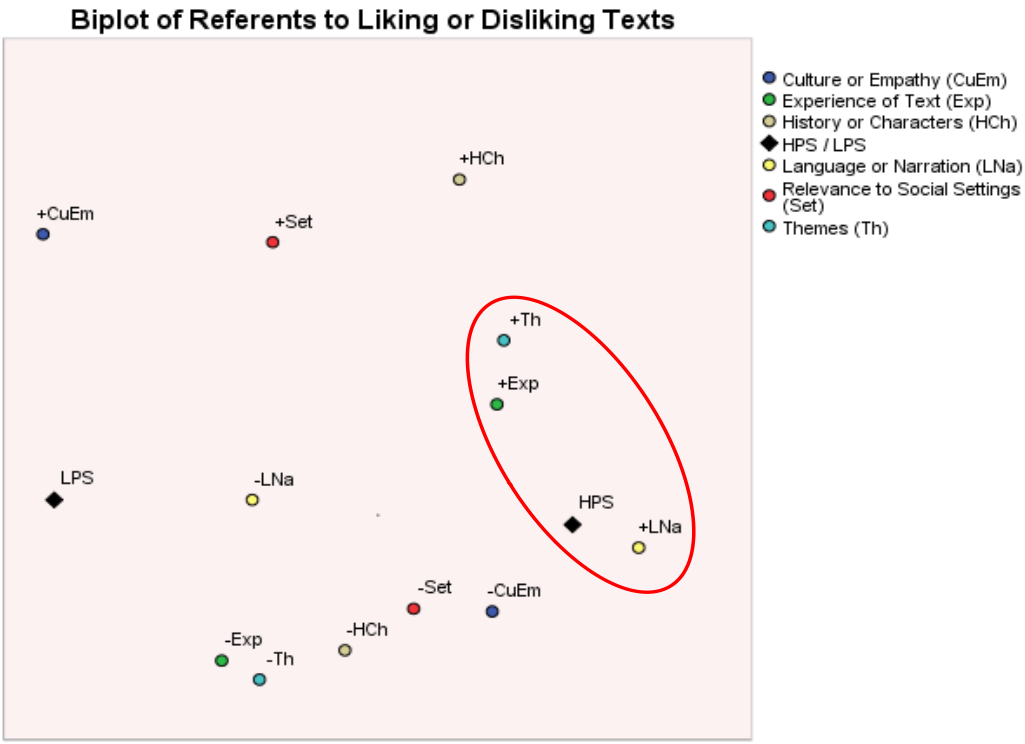

Figure 4.3.20: Biplot of Referents to Liking or Disliking Texts

Some of the categories have been combined into pairs to simplify the representation, where common associations of the categories were already pre-determined from the data. For example, 'Language' has been combined with 'Narration', 'History' with 'Characters' and 'Culture' with 'Empathy'. Non-responses for a given category of referent are denoted with a '-' prefix; where a pertinent answer was provided these are denoted with a '+'. In general, therefore, it would be expected that the '-' categories on the biplot are grouped in the same space, as most students' responses would not be assigned to very many referent categories. On the other hand, the red circle group

demonstrates two findings. Firstly, where students' responses involved some aspect of 'Themes', they tended to simultaneously involve aspects of 'Experience with Text'. Secondly, where these responses were given by students in HPS, they tended to also be accompanied by issues of 'Language' or 'Narration'.

(ii) Student responses to how texts helped engage an understanding of issues related to cultural diversity

In this section of the questionnaire, students were invited to describe how texts helped them engage with an understanding of issues related to cultural diversity. Students were invited to specifically comment on texts in relation to understanding 'cultural diversity', since the senior English curricula for secondary education from the Board of Studies NSW (see Section 4.1—Curriculum, of this chapter) aims that students be able to use prescribed texts to make cultural connections about students' experiences in relation to the Area of Study concept (e.g. '*Belonging*') and prescribed texts. This section helps identify how students perceive issues of cultural difference and diversity as presented and discussed in prescribed texts in classrooms.

Students were invited to give a short response to explain aspects of texts identified as engaging them in discussions of cultural diversity. In other words, what aspects of cultural diversity did students believe prescribed texts referred to, or was frequently discussed in classrooms. For this section of the questionnaire, referents (again, after Kellogg Hunt) were coded by dominant content, and 152 total referents (from 109 pertinent student responses) were grouped into four categories; (i) Cultural Displacement, (ii) Cultural Differences, (iii) Relevant Current Events, and (iv) Historical Culture. These categories are populated by examples of students referring to examples in the text that made them link cultural diversity to one of these four categories. For example, Student #74 (S1, HPS, M) observed that cultural diversity was not discussed through Jane Austen's (Pride and Prejudice) text because, "It did

not explore any other cultures other than Regency England"; this was coded as a negative referent under 'historical culture' since this text spoke more about historical culture or the culture of past times and distant places. Table 4.3.7 lists examples of students' responses for referents in each of the above categories.

Table 4.3.7: Category System Derived from Students' Reflections on Texts Discussing Issues Related to Cultural Diversity

Category	Exemplars	
	Positive	***Negative***
Cultural displacement	• 'The text helped me understand some cultures have to go through' (S3, LPS, M, 22). • 'Text told me about how culture dealt with the intrusion of other cultures' (S1, HPS, M, 42). • Yes, because it was always about people's cultural struggles' (S3, LPS, F, 31).	• 'Aboriginals are still not considered Australians by white people' (S3, LPS, F, 4). • 'Not really it concerned the English culture, not them and others' (S1, HPS, F, 94). • 'Did not look at what Australian/English culture did to other cultures' (S1, HPS, F, 101).
Cultural differences	• 'The text helped me better understand the culture of Japan' (S1, HPS, M, 40). • 'A little more about the Scottish culture in Nova Scotia' (S1, HPS, F, 47). • 'Yes because I learn about other people's culture' (S3, LPS, F, 10). • 'It explores and discusses different cultures in the novel' (S3, LPS, M, 20).	• 'No, it did not really tell me about other cultures' (S1, HPS, M, 42). • 'There were really only European people' (S1, HPS, F, 60). • 'Did not explore different cultures but rather the lack of culture' (S1, HPS, F, 57). • 'Not really, this text focuses on society's rejection of those who are different rather than cultural diversity' (S2, HPS, M, 92).
Relevant current events	• 'Discussions of culture broadened my perspective on how communities respond to external pressures and still fight to keep their culture alive' (S1, HPS, F, 47). • 'Yes, text discussed current issues with diversity and globalisation' (S1, HPS, M, 41). • 'Yes because it shows/tells me what migrants or refugees who come to Australia go through' (S3, LPS, F, 33). • 'Incorporation of Western culture into Japan changing landscape' (S1, HPS, M, 79).	• 'Not really since capitalism, American culture and intrusive influence of multinational corporations is always/has always been here' (S1, HPS, M, 51). • 'Not really because the text does not focus on cultural diversity for our society' (S1, HPS, M, 53). • 'It helped me understand cultural barriers but not the ones relevant to us today' (S4, LPS, M, 194).
Historical culture	• 'Yes because it was based on events that happened' (S3, LPS, F, 25). • 'Yes, the stories of Polish immigrants in coming to Australia' (S1, HPS, M, 43). • 'It helped me realise how bad things were in history' (S3, LPS, F, 35). • Yes, the cultural differences between the Jazz and Victorian age, where love in the Vic era was pure, and the Jazz age was cheapened (S4, LPS, 2, 195).	• 'As it was set centuries only it did not discuss many cultures' (S1, HPS, M, 49). 'Not really because it focused on Regency England which was culturally homogenous' (S2, HPS, M, 73). • 'Not really the text was written in the 30s or 40s so the cultural diversity they covered is not relevant today' (S2, HPS, F, 117). • 'Not diversity the poems discussed historical, cultural themes like the

colonisation of Australians by Europeans' (S2, HPS, F, 124).

Figure 4.3.21 presents the frequency and nature of students' qualitative references to issues of cultural diversity arising in discussions of texts.

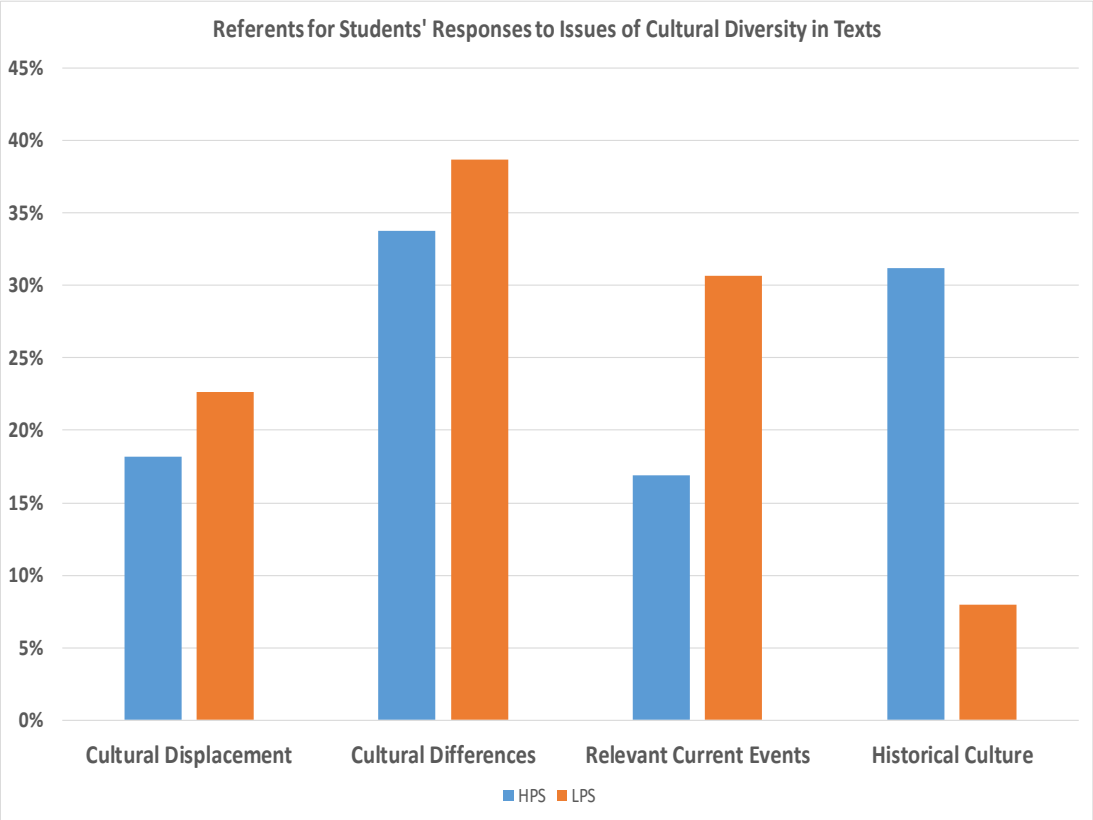

Figure 4.3.21: Referents for Students' Responses to Issues of Cultural Diversity in Texts

Figure 4.3.21 above shows that HPS students' referents captured mainly issues of 'Cultural Differences' (34%) and 'Historical Culture' (31%), while LPS students focussed on 'Cultural Differences' (39%) and 'Relevant Current Events' (31%). Figure 4.3.22 (below) shows additionally a biplot representing both students' responses and non-responses to each of the four referent categories.

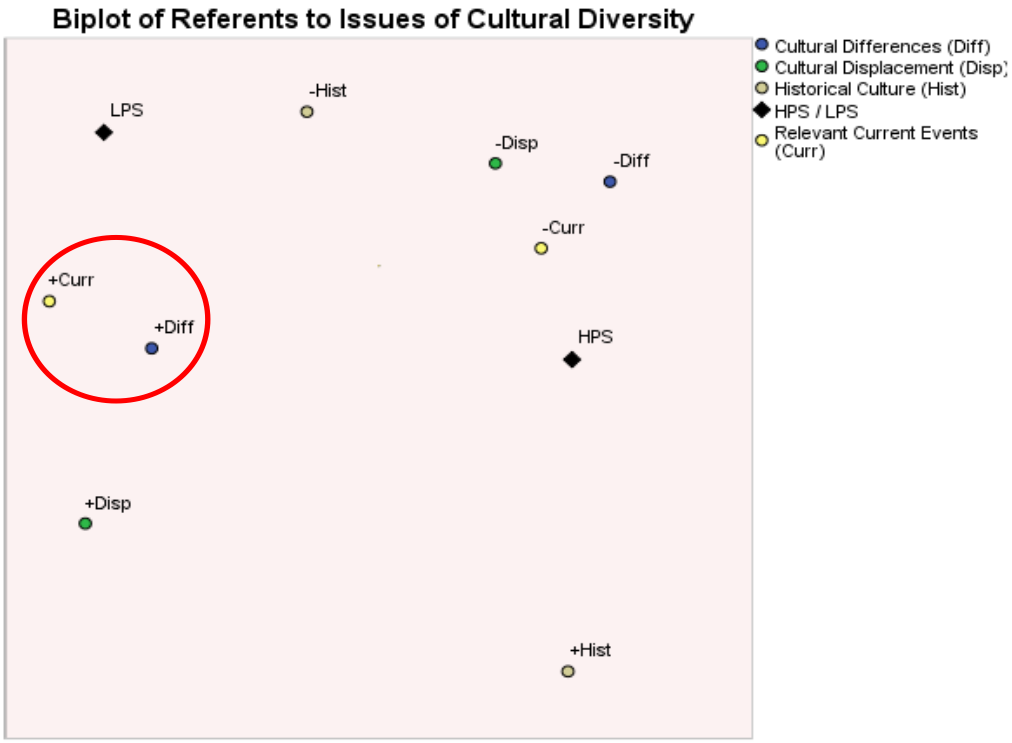

Figure 4.3.22: Biplot of Referents to Issues of Cultural Diversity

The red circle grouped points in the biplot above demonstrate that it was likely that issues of current cultural relevance were mentioned simultaneously alongside issues of cultural difference in student responses. In addition, issues of historical culture seemed to not be strongly associated with any of the other three referents, indicating such issues tended to be drawn in isolation.

(iii) Students' responses to cultural issues in texts being relevant to current society

This section of the questionnaire invited students to comment on how the current texts studied at school were relevant to issues in current society. Students were asked this question to help identify which issues they categorised as being relevant contemporary issues as well as to understand how students might approach discussing issues of cultural difference in modern society through texts and about their culture and that of cultural

others. The referents for 'Social class', 'Gender' and 'Historical issues' were coded thus because students directly used these terms in their descriptions. Students made positive and negative comments regarding how texts can be used to discuss cultural differences that are 'Relevant to Current Society', regarding how they connected issues in texts to present issues in society. For the category 'Relevance to Contemporary Culture,' students made both positive and negative comments about how well these texts generally refer to contemporary culture as this was mostly a personal reflection of what students derived from texts and how these helped them better understand or relate to their society. There were 73 referents based on 53 pertinent student responses indicating how texts were used to discuss contemporary cultural issues. These referents were grouped into five categories as exemplified in Table 4.3.8.

Table 4.3.8: Category System Derived from Students' Reflections on Texts Being Relevant for Discussing Issues in Current Society

Category	Exemplars	
	Positive	***Negative***
Understanding different cultures	• 'I learnt so much about Aboriginal culture' (S2, HPS, F, 102). • 'Reading about cultures is a useful way to learn about other people in current times' (S3, LPS, F, 25). • 'We used texts to discuss how culture sometimes changes with time' (S1, HPS, F, 46).	• 'Culture discussed in texts does not help me understand other people' (S2, HPS, M, 99). • 'In these texts culture is irrelevant to me' (S4, LPS, M, 159). • 'I dislike how Aboriginal culture is discussed in texts because that's not really what all of us are like' (S3, LPS, F, 35). • 'Only focuses on one kind of culture, not a whole lot that I am used to' (S4, LPS, F, 171).
Relevance to contemporary issues	• 'I like that texts discuss society today' (S3, LPS, M, 39). • 'These texts help us break down the stereotypes that currently exist in society' (S1, HPS, F, 51). • 'The texts discuss Italian culture as it really is' (S3, LPS, F, 36). • 'We always apply how culture is presented in texts to current times' (S1, HPS, F, 76).	• 'Why can't texts be related to current real life situations like culture and gay/bi/lesbian' (S3, LPS, M, 29). • 'Maybe include more contemporary texts so we can relate more to it' (S1, HPS, M, 62). • 'Not enough presence of Chinese culture in Australia in texts, but lots of Chinese students in Australian schools' (S1, HPS, F, 94). • 'Struggle to connect old texts to modern cultures' (S2, HPS, F, 147).
Relevance to historical culture	• 'Texts teach about certain periods of time' (S1, HPS, F, 47). • 'Learning about the history of Japan was informative' (S1, HPS, F, 80). • 'It's fun to read about the cultural	• 'If only we could read present day texts, all our texts are set in different contexts and needing to find out about historical backgrounds is an extreme annoyance!' (S2, HPS, F, 58).

	history in texts like Gatsby' (S2, HPS, F, 117).	• 'I don't understand why we need to read historical texts' (S3, LPS, M, 37). • 'Reading about history in current fiction is silly it's not even real unless in a biography and there aren't many of those for us to read' (S1, HPS, M, 97).
Relevance to gender	• 'Yes, it is important to find texts that address modern social issues such as gender inequality' (S1, HPS, F, 48). • 'Talk about women issues that girls can relate to now' (S3, LPS, F, 30). • 'Many gender issues are still relevant today' (S1, HPS, F, 45).	• 'The texts don't reference anything contemporary especially gender' (S3, LPS, M, 29). • 'We talk about gender in current society, but examples in these texts are outdated' (S1, HPS, F, 87). • 'Our gender roles in today's society have changed' (S4, HPS, F, 168). • 'Gender seems misrepresented because women are not just to be admired' (S2, HPS, F, 152).
Relevance to social class	• 'The class system in texts is mostly still around today' (S1, HPS, F, 89). • 'Class is important to understand because it is everywhere even at school (S2, HPS, F, 141). • 'The class divisions in society are exactly as they are in texts' (S2, HPS, F, 144).	• 'The class system is these texts is useless' (S3, HPS, M, 15). • 'Current texts do not relate to issues of social class' (S2, HPS, F, 105). • 'Texts teach me that people from lower classes stay in lower classes, so why teach these texts' (S4, LPS, F, 162).

Figure 4.3.23 shows the distribution of positive and negative referents from HPS and LPS.

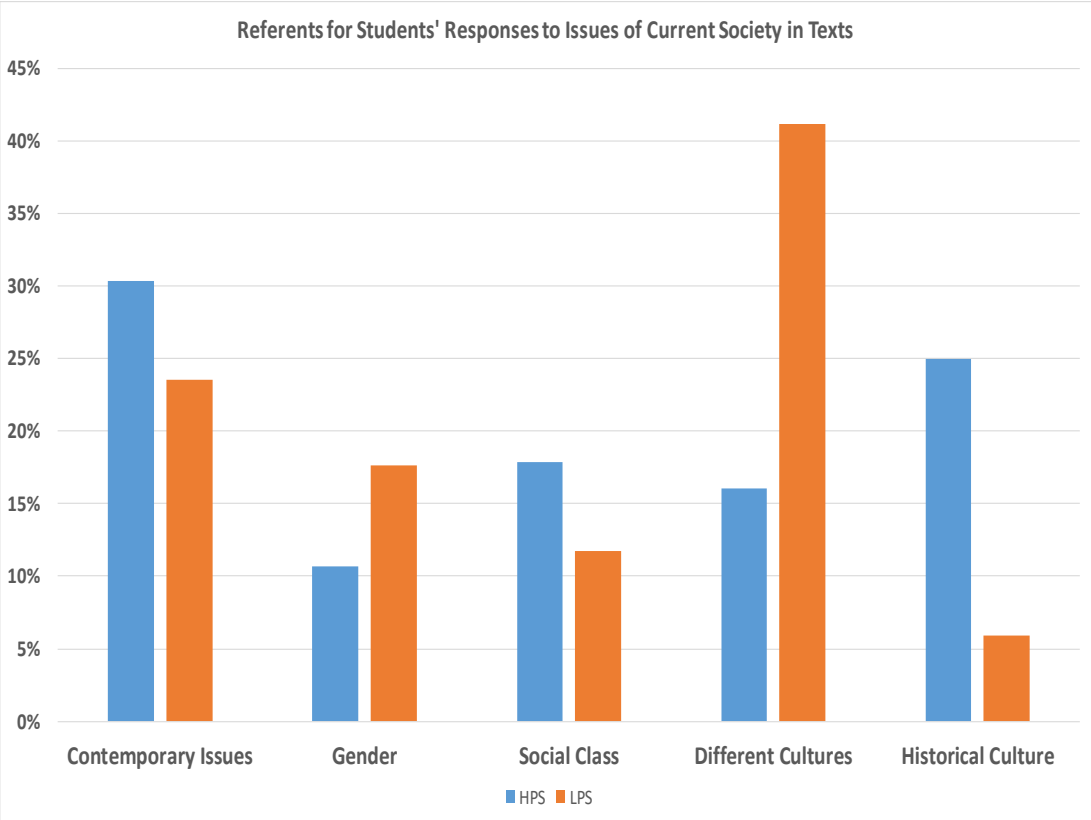

Figure 4.3.23: Referents for Students' Responses to Issues of Current Society in Texts

The above figure shows that the main issues raised by HPS were 'Contemporary Issues' and 'Historical Culture', while LPS students raised issues of 'Different Cultures' the most. Figure 4.3.24 (below) shows additionally a biplot representing both students' responses and non-responses to each of the five referent categories.

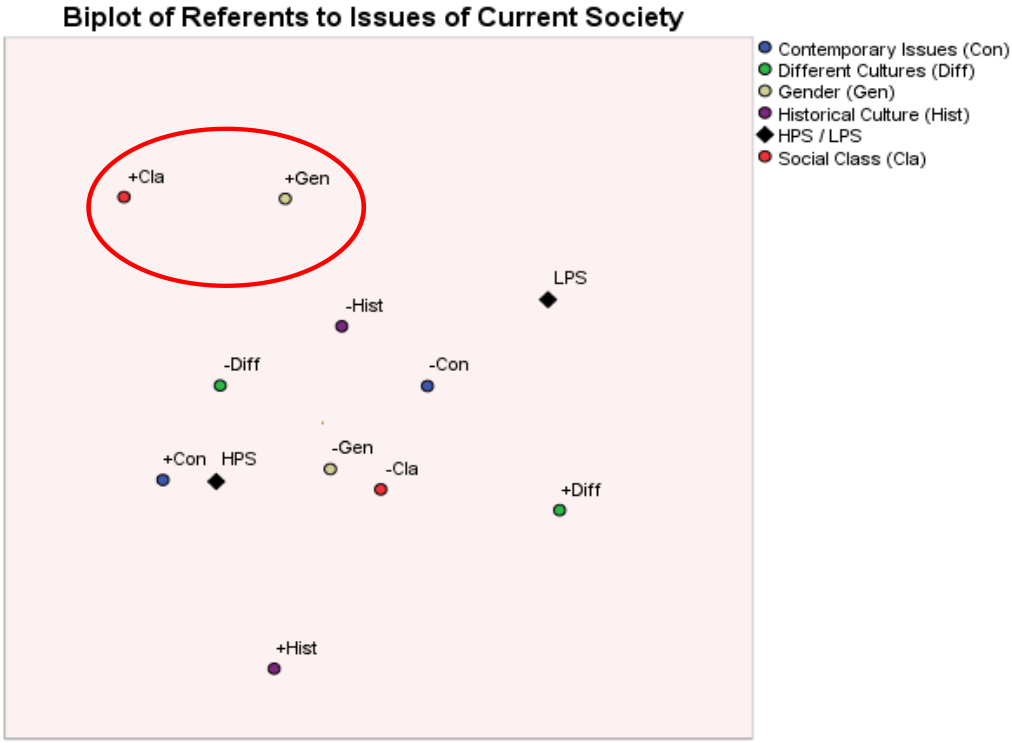

Figure 4.3.24: Biplot of Referents to Issues of Current Society

Like previous figures, the red circle demonstrates that there seemed to be an association in terms of the issues of social class and gender tending to be represented together in students' responses. However, the significance of this association is not high, as this question generated much fewer sample responses than did the previous two open ended questions discussed earlier.

Chapter Five

Sample Findings: England

5.1 Curriculum & Prescribed Texts

5.1.1 Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) A-Levels

The AQA was established in April 2000 following the merger of the Associated Examining Board and the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board, making it the largest of the three Awarding Bodies currently in the United Kingdom.[405] Being one of the largest exam boards is one of the reasons it was selected for this research, since this increased the chances of more schools and educators being familiar with the exam board and its curricula.[406] The AQA is currently led by an Executive Board and governed by a Council of Trustees from schools, colleges, higher education, children's services and the business community. [407] The AQA is responsible for the setting and marking of approximately half of all GCSEs and A-Levels taken each year and is currently administrated in approximately 30 different countries, which means, for English, it helps shape the literacy skills of millions of students in the United Kingdom.[408] Through the administration of an A-Level program, the AQA aims to "provide strong stand-alone qualifications that are fully co-teachable … [with] a raft of resources available to support all aspects of

[405] Kelly, A. (2013). "Monopolising the Examining Board System in England: A Theoretical Perspective in Support of Reform." Journal of Education Policy **29**(1): 44-57.

[406] For more details about why the AQA was selected for this research, see Chapter 3 – Methodology on pg., 79.

[407] The AQA is one of the largest examination boards it currently employs more than 1,200 people and works with approximately 35,000 teachers, lecturers, subject experts and academics who help set and mark examination. Assessment and Qualifications Alliance. (2014). "About us." Retrieved April 25, 2014, from http://www.aqa.org.uk/about-us.

[408] Approximately two-million students sit the AQA examinations, and over seven-million exam scripts are marked annually. Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). (2014). "AQA Welcomes Ofqual Report on Marking." Retrieved April 25, 2014, from http://www.aqa.org.uk/news-and-policy/news/aqa-welcomes-report-on-marking.

teaching and learning to ensure you [educators] have everything you need to help your students achieve more."[409] The following investigates how the AQA senior English curriculum promotes the advancement of knowledge and discussions of cultural differences through its education curricula.

The AQA English curriculum is divided into skill sets, for instance English Language is a different curriculum compared to English Literature. Within these curricula are specifications which are further subdivided into modules for study. Each module is accompanied by specific learning goals with a recommended reading list. The section of the AQA English Curriculum examined in this research encourages students to "become informed, independent readers of literary texts and gain an understanding of a variety of views about texts and how to read them."[410] To understand how the AQA senior English curriculum is framed to encourage discussions of cultural differences, there must first be an overview of a few pertinent issues that have encouraged the current Government to administer an education reform for the present 2015 GCSE and GCE (A-Level) curricula. The following issues are included in this thesis to help contextualise some of the changes suggested in this reform, with particular focus on how these changes affect the administration of the A-Level English program and examinations.

In 2012, the British Government accused all Examination Boards of deliberately competing to simplify the secondary education curriculum, regarding the setting and marking of examinations. [411] Then Education

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[409] Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). (2014). "AQA Subjects English." Retrieved September 15, 2014, from http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english.

[410] Assessment and Qualifications Alliance. (2014). "English Literature A (2740)." AS and A-Level Retrieved October 16, 2014, from http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/as-and-a-level/english-literature-a-2740.

[411] There are currently seven Examination Boards that administer the A-Level to schools across the United Kingdom, namely the; Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), International Baccalaureate (IB), Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts Examinations (OCR), Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) and Pearson Edexcel.[411] Of all these boards the AQA, OCR and Edexcel are English Examination Boards, only two of them are not-for-profit organisations, noting the AQA is a registered charity. This research focuses on the AQA Examination Board, as it is the most popular curriculum used by many schools across England. House of Commons (2012-13). The

Secretary Michael Gove [412] argued that British secondary education had become a "race to the bottom with different boards offering easier courses or assistance to teachers in a corrupt effort to massage up pass rates" (44).[413] Research by Simpson and Baird suggests that in the United Kingdom, Exam Boards are businesses, and they compete to provide schools with the best packages, which include promises of a simple curriculum that can be used to achieve higher examination passes.[414] The independent body known as the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) is a non-ministerial government department, whose chief responsibilities include setting the curriculum criteria, managing examinations (process and standards) and regulating the operations of all Exam Boards. Despite Ofqual's moderating of these practices, the onus remains with Exam Boards to structure and design curriculum, which includes setting the content and resources to be used for study.

The AQA, like other Exam boards, sit under the umbrella of the political decisions made by the British government, which means the reform changes put forward affect options proposed for the study and testing of the A-Level program. These changes were motivated by the United Kingdom's decline in league table performances when compared to other countries in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results.[415] It is

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Administration of Examinations for 15-19 year olds in England: First Report of Session 2012-13. Volume 1-Report, Together with Formal Minutes. London. **1:** 1-101.

[412] In July 2014, there was a cabinet reshuffle where then, Education Secretary Michael Gove was replaced by the Minister for Women and Equalities, Nicky Morgan. This research references the education and policy reform implemented by Education Secretary Gove in 2010 to 2014.

[413] Kelly, A. (2013). "Monopolising the Examining Board System in England: A Theoretical Perspective in Support of Reform." Journal of Education Policy **29**(1): 44-57.

[414] Simpson, L. and J.-A. Baird (2013). "Perceptions of Trust in Public Examinations." Oxford Review of Education **39**(1): 17-35.

[415] Key findings of PISA 2012: (i) United Kingdom performs around the average in reading compared with the 34 OECD countries, (ii) The United Kingdom has a higher GDP and spends more on education than the average in OECD countries, however these comparative advantages do not have a clear relationship with educational outcomes, (iii) Socio-economically disadvantaged students in the United Kingdom are less likely to succeed at school than their more advantaged peers and (iv) PISA 2012 results when compared to PISA 2006 and PISA 2009, there has been no change in performance in any of the subjects tested. Jenny Bradshaw (2012). Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) Results from PISA 2012. United Kingdom: Key Findings, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**:** 1-8.

important to note, this decline in performance was representative of all Examination boards, so this decline is a general reflection of students (15 year old's) skills and capabilities at that particular time of testing. The Government interpreted the decline as a lack of rigidity in the British system. Hence, the major changes proposed by the current Government to improve British standards of education include making the examination system *tougher* by removing the current modular system of testing, and moving back to a linear system, which means students sit one final exam at the end of two years of study rather than a series of modules over two years. A second change includes reducing the number of re-sits of examinations students are allowed to take per course.[416]

Overall, these changes to the British education system seem to partition students at a younger age; separating higher achievers from lower achievers. It is feared that such a division will inevitably affect their future education opportunities, Reay explains "Unfortunately all the evidence seems to indicate that the contemporary [British] education system retains powerful remnants of the past elite prejudices. We still have an education system in which working-class education is made to serve the middle-class interests" (293-4).[417] Perhaps changes to separate high-achieving learners from lower-performing ones might further perpetuate views that the British system operates on elite prejudices. Therefore, it is important to investigate how the current curriculum (post-reform) endeavours to educate its population, for example, what are students now expected to learn in their senior English classes?

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[416] Across all examination boards, prior to the reform the A-Level qualification was comprised of a two-unit program and, from 2008-2013, the AS (unit one) was a stand-alone qualification worth half the value of a full A-Level. The material studied in an AS is usually less demanding than in an A-Level. Until 2013, the A-Level module was composed of the AS and the A2, where the A2 was the more demanding part of the A-Level qualification. From 2013 onwards, the AS and A-Level have returned to being distinct and separate qualifications and the A-Levels have reverted to a qualification where exams are taken at the end of the course. This means that, under the new system, the curriculum will not be divided into separate assessable units (AS+A2), and students will now have to sit one final examination at the end of a two-year course of study rather than separate modular examinations along the way.

[417] Reay, D. (2006). "The Zombie Stalking English Schools: Social Class and Educational Inequality." British Journal of Educational Studies **54**(3): 288-307.

From the AQA's perspective, their growth in the UK means they have always been a favourite amongst many schools and institutions, which is good for their business, but one might ask how does the Government education reform change their appeal to educators? To obtain more information about the British senior secondary system and the role of the AQA as an exam board, I visited the office headquarters in Guildford and interviewed a senior member of staff (AQA Curriculum Officer) in the English department. The AQA Curriculum Officer explains that in the United Kingdom, Exam Boards are like essentially businesses, and they need to stay competitive to appeal to educators. She confirmed an essential strategy of AQA is to place more emphasis on appealing and attracting educators because "these are the people who have to teach our material."[418] Unfortunately, soliciting teachers means incorporating options they want to cover, which might not often be those that are appealing to their students. The AQA Curriculum Officer, explained that education has been a cut-throat business in England and this is evidenced in the high level of secrecy in the English department, particularly when it involves designing new specifications for study because

> … the last thing you want to do is give away to your competitors what it is you're developing [in the curriculum]. Although we're all [Exam Boards] developing to the same criteria, what the [texts] are actually going to be is quite a guarded secret because your text choice is really important in terms of your teacher opening that Spec for the first time and loving or hating the module and texts.[419]

This confirms that, when designing curriculum, more emphasis is apparently placed on the *'sell factor*,' in terms of appealing to the '*buy in*' or interest of teachers. Based on this statement, there seems to be less emphasis on designing a curriculum that attempts to appeal or cater to the learning needs of diverse students in British schools.

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[418] AQA, Curriculum Officer Interview, Guildford, September 2013.
[419] AQA, Curriculum Officer Interview, Guildford, September 2013.

A further attempt to design programmes to appeal to educators is to limit the work of teaching units by selecting resources that match the learning criteria of the curriculum. In 2012, several Examination Boards were discovered to have alliances with publishing companies, who were producing textbooks, written by examiners, which focused on specifically addressing key criteria for examinations.[420] In other words, some Exam Boards were conducting deals with authors and publishers, who were affiliated with the examination process and marking. The AQA was one of the Boards accused of having connections with a publishing company. In the interview conducted for this research, the AQA Curriculum Officer acknowledges "we did have a link with [a company] Nelson Thornes. However, I went to a meeting not long ago where we were told we no longer have this link."[421] This can be seen as another strategy used by examination boards to sell their curriculum as a package, by making the resources simple for teachers to access and use. It must be noted, this might not have had a great impact on the English curriculum since teachers are required to source a wide range of additional resources. The following examines the section of the AQA curriculum which focuses on engaging students in discussions about modern identity and cultural differences.

5.1.2 Specification A& B (Section)

The AQA English curriculum is divided into three areas; English Literature, English Language and English Language and Literature. Each area is further subdivided into two types of specifications known as Spec-A and Spec-B, and there is a separate Creative Writing specification.[422] Specifications

[420] House of Commons (2012-13). The Administration of Examinations for 15-19 year olds in England: First Report of Session 2012-13. Volume 1-Report, Together with Formal Minutes. London. **1:** 1-101.
[421] AQA, Curriculum Officer Interview, Guildford, September 2013.
[422] Creative Writing specification will be redeveloped for teaching in September 2016 at the earliest. AQA is the only board to offer a Creative Writing specification. Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (2014).

(A & B) are quite different from each other in terms of content and pedagogy.[423] Spec-A is considered to be a traditional English curriculum, as it focuses broadly on texts across centuries, genre, gender, concentrating on the skills associated with reading texts,[424] whereas, Spec-B presents modern approaches to texts and learning by examining different ways of reading groups of texts and negotiating meanings in different ways.[425]

By comparing the descriptions of both, it seems that Spec-A covers the fundamental skills of reading texts, which are less challenging than Spec-B, which teaches complex methods of reading and interpreting texts. Schools use their discretion when selecting either Spec-A or B for teaching, and there are very few schools in England that offer both specifications.[426] Although both specifications can be challenging; if schools do not offer a choice in specifications it means students, regardless of their abilities or learning needs, are required to take the Specification offered by the school. While conducting preliminary investigations, it became apparent, based on several conversations with potential schools, that Spec A seems to be the most popular option studied in British schools. Based on this information Spec A is selected for further investigation in this research.[427]

Although Spec-A is comprised of four units of study, this research only examines the option called '*The Struggle for Identity in Modern Literature*', which

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AQA Most Frequently Asked Questions GCSE and A-Level English Subjects (January 2014). Great Britain, Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA): 1-22.

[423] Changes to the AQA A-Level English Specifications A & B were published in September 2014. These changes have occurred as a result of the recent A-Level education reform, where the A-Level system has moved from a modular system of study to a linear program (one final exam as opposed to coursework modules). However, these structural changes have not impacted the AQA aims of Specifications A and B. Ibid.

[424] Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (2014). GCE AS and A Level Specification English Literature A. For exams from June 2014 onwards, For certification from June 2014 onwards. Great Britain, Assessment and Qualifications Alliance: 1-39.

[425] Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (2014). GCE AS and A Level Specification English Literature B. For exams from June 2014 onwards, For certification from June 2014 onwards: 1-30.

[426] AQA, Curriculum Officer Interview, Guildford, September 2013.

[427] All four schools that participated in this research were studying English Spec A. Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). (2014). "AQA Subjects English." Retrieved September 15, 2014, from http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english.

falls under a broader framework of Unit One-Texts and Contexts.[428] The *'Struggle for Identity'* option aims to "consider how readers' responses are shaped by the context, by writers' choices and by other readers' interpretations" (6).[429] Other options within this specification are categorical such as *'Shakespeare'*, *'Unseen Poetry'*, comparing texts and *'World War I and its Aftermath'*. Based on these options, the *'Struggle for Identity'* is the only one which guides learners to consider how they shape their identity and interpret that of others in society.[430] Therefore, examining how this module is taught in schools will inform how conversations about cultural differences are raised through the curriculum and prescribed texts. The reformed curriculum for 2015-2017 was released in September 2014, where the Specifications remained the same, but the *'Struggle for Identity'* option is renamed *'Modern Times: Literature from 1945 to present day'*.[431] The *'Modern Times'* option aims to

> … encourage students to explore aspects of literature connected through a period of time … [this unit] takes the end of World War II as its historical starting point and explores both modern and contemporary literature's engagement with some of the social, political, personal and literary issues which have helped to shape the latter half of the 20th century and the early decades of the 21st century (16).[432]

The new *'Modern Times'* unit is different from its predecessor *'Struggle for Identity'*, as the new unit seems to focus on the historical development of

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[428] The four units of study options are: Unit 1- Texts and Context, Unit 2- Creative Study, Unit 3- Reading for Meaning and Unit 4- Extended Essay and Shakespeare Study. Units 1 & 2 are AS Examination modules and Units 3 & 4 are A2 Examination modules. Both AS + A2 = A-Level qualification. Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (2014). GCE AS and A Level Specification English Literature A. For exams from June 2014 onwards, For certification from June 2014 onwards. Great Britain, Assessment and Qualifications Alliance: 1-39.

[429] Ibid.

[430] Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). (2014). "AQA Subjects English." Retrieved September 15, 2014, from http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english.

[431] The reformed curriculum for 2015-2017 was released in September 2014, where the *'Struggle for Identity'* module has changed to *'Modern Times: Literature from 1945 to Present Day'*. Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (2014). A-Level English Literature A: A-Level Draft 7712. Specification for teaching September 2015 onwards; For A-Level exams in June 2017 onwards. Great Britain, Assessment and Qualifications Alliance: 5-35.

[432] Ibid.

literature and how narratives have changed over the course of time. This is interesting to note as the AQA has shifted (post-reform) the focus of the *'Struggle for Identity'* unit from students' interpretations of identity in texts, to '*Modern Times'* which is less of a personal connection to texts and more of a period study of history and genre in literature. Despite the announcement of the new options for study, the data collected for this research are based on *'The Struggle for Identity'* module, as the proposed changes (post-reform) do not take effect in schools until after September 2015. The new linear A-Level programme promises to increase the variety and quantity of texts that will be taught for A-Levels, and this is discussed in the next section.

5.1.3 Prescribed texts (2009-2017)

The prescribed texts for the senior secondary AQA English Literature Specification A, lists eight years of prescribed texts for a unit entitled '*Struggle for Identity'* (2009-2014). Post-education reform, the text list for the new *'Modern Times'* (2015-2017) option was released in late 2014, and only available for study from September 2015. Therefore, a comparison of prescribed texts for both options is presented in Table 5.1.1.

Table 5.1.1: Prescribed Texts on the AQA English Curriculum 2009-2017

Text Category	2009-2010 Struggle for Identity	2010-2014 Struggle for Identity	2015-2017 Modern Times
Prose Fiction	• **The Handmaid's Tale 1985** (Margaret Atwood) • **Wise Children 1991** (Angela Carter) • **Hullaballoo in the Guava Orchard 1998** (Kiran Desai) • **The Woman Who Walked Into Doors 1996** (Roddy Doyle) • **Spies 2002** (Michael Frayn) • **Snow Falling on Cedars 1994** (David Guterson) • **Trumpet 1998** (Jackie Kay) • **Beloved 1987** (Toni Morrison) • **Vernon Little God 2003** (D.B.C. Pierre) • **The Color Purple 1982** (Alice Walker)	• **The Handmaid's Tale 1985** (Margaret Atwood) • **Wise Children 1991** (Angela Carter) • **Hullaballoo in the Guava Orchard 1998** (Kiran Desai) • **The Woman Who Walked Into Doors 1996** (Roddy Doyle) • **Spies 2002** (Michael Frayn) • **Snow Falling on Cedars 1994** (David Guterson) • **Trumpet 1998** (Jackie Kay) • **Beloved 1987** (Toni Morrison) • **Vernon Little God 2003** (D.B.C. Pierre) • **The Color Purple 1982** (Alice Walker)	• **The Handmaid's Tale 1985** (Margaret Atwood) • **Waterland 1983** (Graham Swift) • **Spies 2002** (Michael Frayn) • **One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest 1962** (Ken Kesey) • **The God of Small Things 1997** (Arundhati Roy) • **The Help 2009** (Kathryn Stockett) • **The Color Purple 1982** (Alice Walker) • **Oranges are not the Only Fruit 1985** (Jeanette Winterson) • **Revolutionary Road 1961** (Richard Yates)
Poetry	• **And Still I Rise 1978** (Maya Angelou) • **Feminine Gospels 2002** (Carol Ann Duffy) • **Skirrid Hill 2005** (Owen Sheers)	• **And Still I Rise 1978** (Maya Angelou) • **Feminine Gospels 2002** (Carol Ann Duffy) • **Skirrid Hill 2005** (Owen Sheers)	• **Feminine Gospels 2002** (Carol Ann Duffy) • **Skirrid Hill 2005** (Owen Sheers) • **Selected Poems 2013 Edition 2013** (Tony Harrison) • **New Selected Poems 1966-1987**(Seamus Heaney) • **Birthday Letters 1998** (Ted Hughes) • **Ariel 1965** (Sylvia Plath)
Drama	• **Top Girls 1982** (Caryl Churchill) • **Making History1989** (Brian Friel) • **Death and the King's Horsemen 1975** (Wole Soyinka)	• **Top Girls 1982** (Caryl Churchill) • **Making History1989** (Brian Friel) • **Death and the King's Horsemen 1975** (Wole Soyinka)	• **Top Girls 1982** (Caryl Churchill) • **A Streetcar named Desire 1947** (Tennessee Williams) • **Translations 1980** (Brian Friel) • **All My Sons 1947** (Arthur Miller) • **Our Country's Good 1990** (Timberlake Wertenbaker) • **Cat on a Hot Tin Roof 1958** (Tennessee Williams)

Table 5.1.1 illustrates that, for this module, from 2009 to 2014 there were 16 texts listed for study; however, post-education reform the number of texts increased to 21. This confirms that after the reform there was an increase in the number of prescribed texts on the AQA curriculum. However, a closer examination of these texts shows that most of the newer options were published before 2000. For instance, from 2009 to 2014 four texts (25% of the list) and for 2015 to 2017 five texts (24% the list), had been published after 2000. Overall, the majority of texts are published from 1947 to 1998, which suggests that 75% of the reading list is comprised of texts published before the turn of the century.

The focus on prescribed texts in the last year for both GCSE and A-Level programmes was probably due to the overhaul of the examination system through the education reform. Secretary Gove advised in his media release that the Department for Education has set out the new GCSE criteria so that "students must read a wide range of texts [compulsory texts include] … a whole Shakespeare play, poetry from 1789, including the romantics, a 19th-century novel, and some fiction or drama written in the British Isles since 1914."[433] Gove explained that students in England need to be more aware of the literature that has built the nation and this selection will enable them to do so. This report confirms the changes for selecting texts for GCSE English and also disputes the claims that Gove had banned American texts '*To Kill a Mockingbird'* and *'Of Mice and Men'* because he simply did not like them. Gove clarified that the Government has removed these texts from the GCSE curriculum because of the large volume of students across Britain responding to these texts in their final examinations.[434] Although this research focuses on prescribed texts for GCE or A-Levels, it is important to understand the debates

[433] Gove, M. (2014). Michael Gove: Kill a Mockingbird? I'd Never Dream of It. The Daily Telegraph. Great Britain, The Daily Telegraph.

[434] Gove states recent results show that approximately 280,000 students studied only one novel for the AQA GCSE. Approximately 190,000 of those candidates studied *'Of Mice and Men'* and the remainder of students did *'Lord of the Flies'*. Ibid.

about English texts occurring at the Lower Sixth Form GCSE level, because this is the prerequisite programme taken before commencing A-Level studies. Overall, Gove's arguments about changing the text selection process are to encourage Examination Boards to broaden, not narrow, the selection of texts young people study in senior secondary English programmes, though they be more from a British point of view.[435]

Before the education reform specifically for the A-Level program, the Government placed similar conditions on the process for selecting prescribed texts according to specific time periods. For instance, one text must have been "written between 1800 and 1945 and one text must have been written post-1900, and have a link to a Victorian theme or setting" (5).[436] Students were also expected to study six texts at the AS level selected from designated time periods.[437] For the *'Struggle for Identity'* module, it was compulsory that students study a set text each for poetry, drama and prose and an additional text under each category for wider reading. Students were required to read texts, "… between 1800 and the present day across different genres, genders, culture, setting and place" (5), [438] and compare issues raised in texts to those found in contemporary society. For this module, the range of prescribed texts must satisfy both the designated time periods as established by the curriculum criteria, as well as the aims of the module itself.

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[435] Ibid.

[436] Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (2014). GCE AS and A Level Specification English Literature A. For exams from June 2014 onwards, For certification from June 2014 onwards. Great Britain, Assessment and Qualifications Alliance**:** 1-39.

[437] For the new *'Modern Time'* unit "Students will study three texts: one prose, one poetry and one drama text, at least one of which must be written post-2000" (18). Areas of study and discussion for this new unit include "wars and the legacy of wars; personal and social identity; changing morality and social structures; gender, class, race and ethnicity; political upheaval and change; resistance and rebellion; imperialism, post-imperialism and nationalism; engagement with the social, political, personal and literary issues which have helped to shape the latter half of the 20th century and the early decades of the 21st century" (18). Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (2014). A-Level English Literature A: A-Level Draft 7712. Specification for teaching September 2015 onwards; For A-Level exams in June 2017 onwards. Great Britain, Assessment and Qualifications Alliance**:** 5-35.

[438] Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (2014). GCE AS and A Level Specification English Literature A. For exams from June 2014 onwards, For certification from June 2014 onwards. Great Britain, Assessment and Qualifications Alliance**:** 1-39.

Although the list includes a range of texts published during different time periods, the criteria for describing the selection of texts do not match the actual texts selected for the prescribed study. For instance, the *'Struggle for Identity'* criteria for selecting texts by time periods is to ensure students

> … travel across a century whichever option [of study] they choose … The struggle for identity… [option] encompasses writing from the turn of the century in Robert Tressell's novel and provides opportunities for study of all genres from the 1930s as well as a concentration of utterly contemporary and international literature written in English. (6)[439]

While the curriculum provides a range of genres for study, there is a relatively narrow representation of contemporary and international literature listed on both the prescribed and wider reading lists for this option. To understand the distribution of traditional texts to more contemporary options, the list of prescribed texts has been allocated to timeframes in Table 5.1.2.

[439] Although the curriculum specifically references Robert Tressell's novel *'The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists (1914)'*, is not listed under as a prescribed reading text, but is listed as an option for wider reading. Ibid.

Table 5.1.2: *'Struggle for Identity'* and *'Modern Times'* - Texts Categorised by Timeframes

Group A (Pre-1900)	Group B (1901-1999)	Group C (2000- present)
	All my sons (1947) *	The Help (2009) *
	Streetcar named desire (1947) *	Skirrid hill (2005)
	Cat on a hot tin roof (1958) *	Vernon little God (2003)
	Revolutionary road (1961) *	Feminine gospels (2002)
	One flew over the c. nest (1962) *	Spies (2002)
	Ariel (1965) *	Harrison selected poems (2013)
	Heaney sel. poems (1966-87) *	
	Death and King's horseman (1975)	
	And still I rise (1978)	
	Translations (1980) *	
	Color purple (1982)	
	Top girls (1982)	
	Waterland (1983) *	
	Oranges not the only fruit (1985) *	
	Handmaid's Tale (1985)	
	Beloved (1987)	
	Making history (1989)	
	Our country's good (1990) *	
	Wise Children (1991)	
	Snow falling on cedars (1994)	
	Woman who walked doors (1996)	
	God of small things (1997) *	
	Hullaballoo in the Guava (1998)	
	Trumpet (1998)	
	Birthday letters (1998) *	

Table 5.1.2 shows that 81% of the prescribed texts are from Group B (1901-1999), whereas 19% of texts are from Group C (2000 to present) and no texts are included for study that are pre-1900. Texts with an asterisk (*) identify the texts listed for study in the 2015-2017 *'Modern Times'* module. It is interesting to note that from the list only one text *'The Help'* was published post-2000. This suggests that, post-education reform, the AQA curriculum seems to include even more well-known or classical texts rather than a wider range of contemporary and culturally diverse options for study. While the curriculum has increased the number of options available for study, there is a limited number published after the turn of the century. To be certain of this claim, the wider reading list was also checked and, of the 88 total books listed, only 16 from this list were published post-2000, and not many of these options were representative of a range of cultural backgrounds or texts that address

contemporary issues in society.[440]

The '*Struggle for Identity*' module aims to address issues specifically related to some of the challenges associated with identity, as represented by modern literature.[441] Therefore, prescribed texts are pertinent for highlighting issues related to contemporary struggles associated with identity. For example, a majority of the prescribed texts present issues with sexuality, yet only *'The Trumpet'* (published 16 years ago) addresses struggles related to being a transgender in the late 90s. Likewise, *'Oranges are Not the Only Fruit'* discusses the difficulties of gaining acceptance as a lesbian in a religious community. Aside from these two options that were published more than a decade ago, the majority of the other prescribed texts seem to raise themes related to sexual identity, these themes are commonly based on heterosexual relationships, excluding challenges associated with other types of sexual orientation in contemporary society for example, homosexuality or bisexual relationships. It can be argued that, in the last decade, there has been more awareness, acceptance and exposure to education about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) identities in different types of societies. However, more recently published texts raising LGBT issues are not included for consideration in a module examining the 'struggles for identity' in contemporary literature.

Most of the current list of texts for the *'Struggle for Identity'* module is from American and British writers and their works focus on issues and list examples that are relevant but perhaps far removed from contemporary students. For example, three texts focus on issues of war (World War II and the American Civil War), yet there is no literary representation of the recent war in Afghanistan. Though teachers do not necessarily rely on texts to discuss

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[440] For a list of wider reading texts, see Assessment and Qualifications Alliance. (2014). "English Literature A (2740)." AS and A-Level Retrieved October 16, 2014, from http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/as-and-a-level/english-literature-a-2740.

[441] The '*Struggle for Identity*' module was being studied at the time this research was conducted and the '*Modern Times*' unit had only been announced in September 2014 for study commencing in 2015.

particular examples in order to discuss contemporary issues with students. However, raising current events against the backdrop of canonical texts can potentially trivialise contemporary debates about war and identity, particularly when most conversations about these issues are based on discussions of texts with more prominent historical war themes. This research questions the effectiveness of presenting and discussing contemporary issues through the themes of classical texts; do these well-known texts have an influence on how contemporary readers analyse themes related to modern identity? How are these themes received and understood by students from diverse backgrounds? The following summarises the main considerations made when selecting prescribed texts for the AQA curriculum.

5.1.4 Rationale for text selection

As mentioned earlier, in England Exam Boards must follow the subject criteria set by Ofqual before choosing prescribed texts for their respective curricula. In the recent reform, the Government noted that English texts should be more prescriptive, meaning that Exam Boards should increase the number of prescribed texts on school reading lists. For English, the Government identified that Exam Boards were not providing enough challenge with their selection of texts, and this was evidenced by the number of students responding to the same texts each year in their GCSE and GCE examinations.[442] For example, the AQA was found to be repeating prescribed texts listed on the GCSE curriculum also in the A-Level programme. This means that students who progressed from GCSE to A-Levels were required to study the same texts for two separate types of examinations, or study the same

[442] As mentioned earlier, Gove states recent results show that approximately 280,000 students studied only one novel for the AQA GCSE. Approximately 190,000 of those candidates studied *'Of Mice and Men'* and the remainder of students did *'Lord of the Flies'*. Gove, M. (2014). Michael Gove: Kill a Mockingbird? I'd Never Dream of It. The Daily Telegraph. Great Britain, The Daily Telegraph.

text for four years. The AQA Curriculum Officer argues that their reason for doubling up on prescribed texts was quite acceptable because "there's a good argument you can put forward to saying there is no reason why [students doing GCSE] shouldn't study the same text to A-Level because [they're] going to study it in a different way." [443] However, questions can be asked about the extent to which students enhance their critical and analytical skills by studying the same texts for four years? Under the new regime, Examination Boards are no longer allowed to list the same prescribed texts for GCSE and A-Levels.

The AQA does not have published criteria for selecting texts to be on the English curriculum. Instead, the AQA English Department has a Principal Examiner who guides the administrative process for selecting texts. Prescribed texts are selected on the basis that they can sustain the life of a specification (five to six years) in terms of being challenging enough to sustain multiple examination questions across the years. Texts need to be short enough to be covered during a school term and be of interest to both teachers and students. The process for re-selecting texts already listed on the curriculum is based on collating examination data on the most popular texts selected by teachers for their senior students. For the AQA, this is the first act of determining which *old favourites* are likely to stay, and usually the less popular options are removed from the list. Post-education reform, the AQA notes that for the '*Modern Times'* module there is no intention to

> … change texts within the first five years of the specification. However, texts will be reviewed each year starting in September 2017 and we will give at least nine months notice of any changes prior to first teaching of a two-year course. The criteria for changing texts will be where a text becomes unavailable or where we can no longer use it in a question paper."[444]

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[443] AQA, Curriculum Officer Interview, Guildford, September 2014.

[444] Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (2014). A-Level English Literature A: A-Level Draft 7712. Specification for teaching September 2015 onwards; For A-Level exams in June 2017 onwards. Great Britain, Assessment and Qualifications Alliance: 5-35.

This confirms the AQA will be reviewing texts annually rather than once every four or five years. However, it seems the reasons for changing texts are limited, as options need to be either unavailable for study, or become exhausted, such that new examination questions can no longer be set on those texts. This rationale does not seem to consider the content of texts and how this might become dated or less engaging for students in contemporary classrooms.

Based on the interview with the AQA Curriculum Officer, it was established earlier in this chapter that selected texts are heavily influenced by teacher's choice rather, than students' interest. As a competing Exam Board, there is a customer satisfaction element to the AQA's text selection process. The texts listed in the curriculum are options preferred by schools and teachers, and these are often well-known favourites or traditional texts. This effort to appeal to teachers' interests can often make it challenging for the AQA to remove or replace some of the more popular texts with newer or more contemporary publications although one might argue that teachers are best equipped to choose appropriate and suitable texts to meet the needs of culturally diverse students in their classrooms. Nevertheless, the module '*Struggle for Identity*' does not seem to include, or be representative of, a broad variety of literature about the many cultural or ethnic groups that comprise contemporary England.[445] When questioned about the cultural considerations taken into account when selecting prescribed texts, the AQA Curriculum Officer commented that

> I suppose the fact that you've got [texts] like *'The Color Purple'*, and things like that … must be an attempt to [appeal to culturally diverse students] … If I think about the way we have chosen texts for [*Struggle for Identity*] I can actually say that there has been no discussion about ensuring that we are addressing ideas of cultural diversity.[446]

[445] For a list of Prescribed Texts for the *'Struggle for Identity'* module, refer to Table 5.1.2, on pg., 187.
[446] AQA, Curriculum Officer Interview, Guildford, September 2014.

The large selection of texts published pre-2000 seems to indicate this module is more about studying struggles of identity in times that have passed, rather than focusing on the current struggles of identity for contemporary students. The examination criteria for this module assist in clarifying the extent to which students are expected to reflect on their 'struggles with identity' when responding to texts.

The criteria for marking identifies four main areas students are expected to demonstrate by reading and responding to texts.[447] Students are expected to; (i) articulate creative, informed and relevant responses to literary texts, using appropriate terminology and concepts, and coherent, accurate written expressions; (ii) demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in literary texts; (iii) explore connections and comparisons between different literary texts, informed by interpretations of other readers, and; (iv) demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received. One of these focuses on the technical ability for students to use appropriate jargon in their written responses, while the other three areas place more emphasis on the ability of students to critically analyse and interpret responses to texts. Since the marking criteria do not explicitly award marks for how texts assist them to *shape* meaning in their lives, culture or community. It seems unlikely that students are encouraged to engage with texts beyond the learning goals tested in the curriculum, especially if the issues in prescribed texts are far removed or difficult for students to relate to, and does not explicitly award marks for personal reflections. So how are examples being drawn out of these texts to help students make connections to issues in contemporary society? The

[447] Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (2014). GCE AS and A Level Specification English Literature A. For exams from June 2014 onwards, For certification from June 2014 onwards. Great Britain, Assessment and Qualifications Alliance: 1-39.

following section examines some of the pedagogical issues encountered when mediating these prescribed texts in contemporary British classrooms.

5.2 Pedagogy

5.2.1 Profile of participating English teachers from London, England

Table 5.2.1 is an overview of the English teachers who participated in this research from the British sample.

Table 5.2.1: Profile of Participating English Teachers from London, England

School	Type of School	Teacher ID	Sex	Years of Experience
5	Higher-performing	13	Male	16
		14	Female	7
		15	Female	37
6	Higher-performing	16	Male	10
		17	Male	3
		18	Male	4
7	Lower-performing	19	Female	28
		20	Male	10
		21	Male	18
8	Lower-performing	22	Female	9
		23	Male	3
		24	Female	2

Table 5.2.1 shows that close to 60% of the sample are male teachers, and they comprised the majority at higher-performing (HPS) schools. Of the total number of female teachers, 40% have approximately three decades of experience in the industry.[448] The subsections that follow relate to the relevant themes that have been found from the thematic analysis of interview transcripts.

[448] In Schools 5 and 7, teachers insisted on being interviewed altogether in a group rather than individually due to time constraints in their timetables. As this research intended to conduct one-on-one interviews, to cope with this in the field, teachers (in groups) were asked to give individual responses to questions, so their responses have been transcribed and coded as single/individual contributions where applicable.

5.2.2 *Issues related to planning and preparing to teach prescribed texts*

Overall, teachers identify that the AQA curriculum combined with the A-Level examinations did not accurately reflect the abilities of their students. Teachers explain that, at senior secondary level, most of their teaching format is geared towards preparing students to pass examinations. Because of this, they often teach the same module for years because the texts do not often change on the prescribed list. Of most interest is the variety of opinions from teachers about the balance of texts currently available on the reading list. Considering the recent education reform, Teacher 13 identifies that changes to the AQA curriculum mean there is less emphasis on what is important or necessary to teach

> … looking at the new National Curriculum they've either taken the shackles off or put them on harder, I'm yet to work it out. The thing is there are fewer named texts, it's less prescriptive but looked at another way it no longer specifies that you have to study a text from other cultures. It says a broad range of texts should be studied including texts from other cultures. So it's gone from you must do this, to see if you can fit that in a month, and actually it might be a green light to say well we won't bother doing that at all.[449]

If there is a movement away from teaching a wider range of culturally diverse texts, a higher number of texts from the literary canon will continue to be studied.[450] Teacher 13, with 16 years of experience in the industry, says he and his colleagues are still processing their opinions on how these proposed changes are to affect the they discuss cultural issues in classrooms through texts.

As well, he believes that in many schools in London there are increasing numbers of culturally diverse students populating schools. As many of these students are not familiar with British culture they should be encouraged to

[449] School 5, HPS, Teacher 13 Interview, London, September 2013.

[450] The changes post-reform are still in the process of being implemented, with the first set of examinations under the new system occurring in September 2017.

read more canonical texts. In other words, students from diverse cultures might be more familiar with literary works from their culture, but not familiar with canonical authors who present issues related to British heritage. Teacher 13 advises that

> … this diversity thing, well it's absolutely irrelevant to our students, but the same battle remains where we only had *white* literature, well it's important that we are teaching *black* literature to white students so that there is an understanding all the same now … But we must not forget that now diversity for the students in this school means Jane Austen because they have no idea about nineteenth century Bath. Beyond their culture, they're not part of an English heritage, and they don't identify with it, that's why it's important to study these texts … so I would make the case for allowing changes to be made with everything else, keeping in mind that for everything you put on the curriculum you have to make space for something to come off.[451]

He suggests a better balance of texts means that he would have a wider range to choose from when selecting texts that will be most appropriate to engage their students in discussions of cultural differences. He emphasises that he thinks discussions of cultural differences in British classrooms do not only mean teaching cultures other than those in the United Kingdom but also extends to educating students about British culture and heritage through canonical texts. This is perhaps a sound argument for why there should be a better balance of culturally diverse and canonical texts on the prescribed reading lists for senior secondary schools.

Nine teachers interviewed indicate that perhaps, as mentioned above, balancing the exposure of a range of cultural texts, in addition to canonical classics, might be a better option for building language skills. One of these is Teacher 22, and she comments

> I mean I'm a huge believer in the classics, and we have to study the classics … because they [students] need the language for

[451] School 5, HPS, Teacher 13 Interview, London, September 2013.

> their exams, which modern texts don't have … I think I would just like to find a contemporary novel that's written by someone from the students' culture, where they could experience that literature and benefit from this exposure in their exams.[452]

She believes that canonical texts help build language skills while modern texts do not.

Despite the wide range of texts currently available for study on the AQA prescribed list, teachers generally remark there are not enough culturally diverse options. Teacher 18 argues that we need

> … more options and more culturally diverse options that might appeal to our students. We [teachers] realised that you go through the entire GCSE to the A-Level, studying the American Dream. You do *'Of Mice and Men'*, and then you do '*Great Gatsby'* and I find this slightly strange in an English school, particularly with the [diverse] kids we have. I think perhaps there should be a little more choice or certainly some different texts on offer and not simple texts about other cultures you know … kids do better on stuff that relates to their cultural background. If you're studying a text that's full of Christian imagery but going for an A* [grade] are you going to definitely get it? No! I'm not saying don't study it [canonical texts], like definitely study it. But even from a passing exams perspective, have stuff that will play to different people's strengths. But at the moment, like when I was completing my undergrad, it was a massive advantage doing English Literature and being a Christian.[453]

He highlights that in his experience, in England many of the prescribed options are canonical in the sense they are focused on American classics and/or comprised of Christian iconography. Though he is supportive of teaching canonical texts, he finds that having an awareness of British history and culture seems to be more advantageous to students, but for contemporary England more culturally diverse texts might be beneficial so that teachers can

[452] School 8, LPS, Teacher 22 Interview, London, September 2013.
[453] School 6, HPS, Teacher 18 Interview, London, September 2013.

choose options that might be more accessible to their students. He believes a better strategy for engaging students in reading and perhaps improving their examination marks would be to select texts that discuss familiar cultures and related issues. While well-known or canonical texts should be an essential part of literary studies, a wider range of selections would help educators choose texts that both appeal to students from different cultures and help them engage in discussions of cultural differences in contemporary Britain.

While maintaining the view that the canon must be taught, teachers generally seem open to changing some of the canonical texts that have been repeated on the English curricula for decades, like Teacher 7 who suggests that "canonical texts are the backbone of British society, people come from all over the world to sample our British history, it seems ridiculous to think our curriculum would give precedence to anything else. That being said though, the point is we have so *many* options, it won't hurt to change and mix it up every now and then; yes we have Shakespeare and Dickens but we have many others as well."[454] Other teachers agree about with him about the importance of canonical texts, despite concerns that the current list of texts are being taught time and time again. Teacher 21 suggests that

> … you still want to maintain aspects of the canon, but then you do want to modify the old ones. We have parent evening, where quite often a parent would come up with a text and say I did that at school 40 years ago, and you do worry about the Specs, that you just get agitated in terms of the texts, but at the same time you have got to respect the canon I think.[455]

There are concerns that more traditional texts and well-loved favourites continue to be taught in the curriculum for decades. Teacher 22 remarks "it would be nice to introduce different texts to students, have students have different experiences, because you can talk to any A-Level student across the country and they will all know the same three novels *'Of Mice and Men'*, *'To*

[454] School 7, LPS, Teacher 19 Interview, London, September 2013.
[455] School 7, LPS, Teacher 21 Interview, London, September 2013.

Kill a Mockingbird' and *'Lord of Flies'*."[456] Teachers might consider if the same texts are repeated on the curriculum for years, then how can they change their pedagogies to mediate the texts available for selection and address the needs of contemporary learners.

However, some teachers do feel there is a need to teach canonical texts to senior students, and this has seemingly reduced the priority for exposing them to a wider range of newer contemporary and diverse texts. It seems the culturally diverse options currently available in the curriculum are dated and have been on the prescribed list for so many years they are no longer relevant or appealing to students. Teacher 17 believes that the AQA's attempts to include more culturally diverse options is unsatisfactory because

> … if they are sort of foreign, like a *black* author or someone aged this time around, it's very much a tick [the] box exercise. What the problem is really, it's the problem with the canon and them [AQA] not recognising everyone else [other authors]. I think that should be changed from the Exam Board up, but unfortunately what we have in Britain at the moment is a conservative government … And there is this horrible, horrible quote by [Education Secretary] Gove, *'we should use literature to teach our island story.'* Yes, it's just horrific so I can unfortunately, from the impression of the Exam Boards, I currently see it [texts] becoming less diverse.[457]

This teacher offers some interesting perspectives; firstly that one of the issues with the literary canon is that it captures the culture and narrative of a specific time and place. Therefore, using these prescribed texts to engage contemporary students in discussions about modern society can be challenging for teachers. However, of interest are the perceptions of teachers about how the AQA selects culturally diverse texts; choosing texts written by foreign, or black authors for the sake of inclusion. Teacher 17 does not regard that much thought is put into selecting culturally diverse options that would

[456] School 8, LPS, Teacher 22 Interview, London, September 2013.
[457] School 6, HPS, Teacher 17 Interview, London, September 2013.

be appealing to students. Instead, he believes the current political circumstances are influencing how English is framed and taught to contemporary students. Based on the interpretations presented earlier in this chapter, teachers seem to acknowledge that there is some merit, or at least some acceptable level of inertia, with respect to the AQA not giving much consideration to the diversity of students when selecting texts.[458]

Aside from the demands put forward to them by the Government and text selections made by the AQA, some teachers acknowledge difficulties of introducing newer or more culturally diverse texts including staff not being trained, or not having a literary background, to then try to understand deconstructing contemporary texts. Teacher 16 explains,

> we've had our fair share of issues in the UK with teacher skills and training, and I think we've complicated and detangled the issues time and time again, now I think there is hierarchy amongst trainee teachers as to who is "*better trained*" and it gets competitive, maybe it needs to be I don't know? Based on my experience you get some texts that are good books, and you have a new problem that staff don't know *piggies* about the novel itself, so how far we can really get with new texts is yet to be uncovered. I'm not saying it isn't possible, knowing how to teach a new text might be easier once you are certain of supporting resources and access to the tool to teach it.[459]

He emphasised based on his experience how unfamiliarity with texts raises a range of issues both with specialist training and access to resources. This is the other side of the coin to mediating texts – teachers' levels of comfort with and access aids to interpret the texts. There are concerns that staff would not have easy access to external resources to help them or critical material for recently published texts. However, it does not seem likely that these are the only reasons why more contemporary resources are not added to school lists.

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[458] See Section 5.2.2—Rationale for text selection, on pg., 173.
[459] School 6, HPS, Teacher 16 Interview, London, September 2013.

Several teachers comment they are more inclined to select texts and modules they have designed and taught in previous years because of the time restraints and workload to complete the existing A-Level curriculum. Teacher 15 with approximately thirty-seven years of experience – the most number of years of experience in this study - responded that

> … teachers do not want to develop new material for texts, and it's all the fault of league tables and the pressure on us to perform. Well before the league tables I remember as a sort of helicon time of teaching, where you had more free periods, and you had a wide range of resources … But now we choose the things the kids are going to get the marks on [because] we have a million extra things to do [and] we haven't got the time to do it. [460]

She stresses that the time to create new resources is limited and as well, these are to help students achieve better examination passes, so their priority and time is more spent with helping their students get to the end successfully. Teachers are less likely to choose newer texts because of the pressure to get results or a greater number of examination passes. Over time, such views have apparently affected how teachers perceive their role as educators in senior English classrooms. One can question what are some of the effects of these practices?

The pressures to complete the curriculum and prepare students for examinations seem to be of greater importance than the texts selected for teaching. Teacher 19 explains that in their school

> … we repeatedly teach *'Of Mice and Men'* here. The problem we have is that there is so much in the syllabus that, I think *'sacred'* is the right word, that the amount of time to teach *'To Kill A Mockingbird'* would take than to teach *'Of Mice and Men.'* It's not that our students aren't able to access *'To Kill A Mockingbird,'* but the time it would take is longer to teach it … I don't think people will be rearing to take on much larger texts because of time [constraints].[461]

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[460] School 5, HPS, Teacher 15 Interview, London, September 2013.
[461] School 7, LPS, Teacher 19 Interview, London, September 2013.

Based on her statement it can be inferred the selection and teaching well-known or canonical options is influenced by the length of the text. Therefore, the combination of resourcing texts, creating new modules, preparing students for their A-Level exams seems to take precedence over which texts are selected for teaching students. In more recent times educators seem also to be under pressure regarding league tables and the need for their students to perform well in examinations. The following identifies specific pedagogical issues encountered when mediating the current texts in contemporary classrooms of students from diverse cultures and communities.

5.2.3 Teaching prescribed texts to contemporary students

There are seemingly more canonical texts than culturally diverse options listed on the AQA senior English Literature curriculum. As a result, teachers are questioned about some of the challenges they faced using these well-known or canonical texts when discussing issues of cultural differences in contemporary classrooms. Teachers claim that the current texts used to broach issues of cultural differences are very *'safe texts'* because these *'black'* authors or texts that raise contentious issues have been listed in the curriculum for decades. Teacher 17 explains that currently

> … if you look at the anthology of texts they [AQA] got, just looking at the fiction and non-fiction, but look literally there is not a single black author here worth any sort of learning. So you've got Beckett, Dickens, yeah this is all the things of yesteryear [sic] … again some poems here, and there are a few women, oh wait, John Agard, I apologise, John Agard, of course, he's there! It's almost as if the curriculum consistently includes safe and acceptable black fiction. For instance, Agard he is sort of the black author they put everywhere in all the anthologies.[462]

[462] School 6, HPS, Teacher 17 Interview, London, September 2013.

It must be stated though that many of the texts currently on the curriculum, including works by Agard, are generally well-received pieces of literature. He presents here a view that one of the side effects of consecutively listing the same texts for study on any English curricula is that texts can become *'safe'* and *'acceptable'* works of literature.

Teachers commented on the concerns they felt for students' lack of wider reading outside of English classrooms. While discussing some of the pedagogical challenges encountered while showing students how to analyse and write responses to texts, some teachers made mention that inadequate literacy skills in senior classes are predominately because students are not reading widely outside of school. Teacher 15 explains that many of her students

> … can't write in the style they need for A-Levels, and that comes down to the fact they can't read, they don't read outside of lessons. They don't read widely! I did a survey with my old Year 12s, who are now Year 13s [senior students], on what was the last book they read, and I'm getting *'Harry Potter'*, Jacqueline Wilson [texts], and I'm thinking you're 17 years old and the only thing you've read is *'Of Mice and Men'* because we made you last year.[463]

Her concerns were that students are not reading widely, then they are perhaps not becoming exposed to literature outside of the curriculum and this was part of the reasons for her struggles with developing their reading and writing skills. Teacher 19 meanwhile, with twenty-eight years of experience, believes that many of the students in her school choose to study English, not out of a passion for the subject but because pursuing English Literature is based on the fact "…they've been taught well through the school, and they're sort of carrying on and doing A-Level English because they know they'll be well taught [again], but they're not necessarily natural readers."[464] Perhaps many

[463] School 5, HPS, Teacher 15 Interview, London, September 2013.
[464] School 7, LPS, Teacher 19 Interview, London, September 2013.

students are motivated to pursue English Literature because they believe they can perform well in the A-Level exams, rather than being interested in English studies or naturally avid readers.

In this research, HPS teachers generally note at their school there is openness and desire to teach more cultural texts to their group of diverse students. HPS teachers voice concerns about the current list of canonical texts disengaging their senior students from taking an interest in reading. In particular, teachers 16, 17 and 18 comment that, while canonical texts are important because they linguistically challenge their senior students, there is a desperate need for these students to become more involved in discussing challenging global and cultural issues from more contemporary times. Teacher 18 shares a recent story from her previous term;

> I had a student from a very strict Muslim family and when we were teaching *'The Kite Runner'* actually she didn't understand the concept of male rape and so she was quite naïve in that respect. It's vaguely sexual and obviously in that scene it's not that subtle, but it's not explicitly mentioned, but she couldn't understand what went on in the alleyway. When it was explained that he had been raped, she said *'well how can a man rape another man?'* Well then thankfully another student put me out of my misery and shouted [how] across the class very crudely.[465]

This perhaps demonstrates a need for students to be exposed to different interpretations of cultural issues in society (from their culture or others), or the '*not so safe*' literary options (mentioned earlier). His story suggests that if some students are not given exposure to the more difficult or challenging cultural issues through the study of texts then there might not be other avenues (family or community) where they will be given opportunities to gain such an awareness. Teacher 18 advocates "if we don't help them unpack some of these issues in senior English classes then where are they going to get this

[465] School 6, HPS, Teacher 18 Interview, London, September 2013.

exposure? English lessons are the best, because we talk about cultural discomforts through context, and as adults I feel, *we,* teachers need to set the example."[466] This example highlights how a wider range of cultural texts might better engage students to unpack some examples of contentious issues in contemporary society, perhaps even examples that are closely associated with students' culture, religion and community.

In contrast, teachers at LPS schools tended to express concerns about using texts that might upset students because of seemingly offensive cultural issues raised in these more contemporary texts. For example, this research found there is a completely different approach to teaching *'The Kite Runner'* in senior classes at LPS schools compared to HPS schools (above). LPS teachers seem to actively avoid more contemporary texts that engage in contentious cultural issues. Teacher 22 explains that as English educators in a senior education department

> … we are encouraged to stay away from religion in this school, that's one reason why we don't teach *'The Kite Runner'* because we have a lot of Muslim students and so religious themes and current events like Sept 11th, people don't speak about because they don't want people to feel offended or that we are in any way saying that Muslims are bad people, and again because there is the tension between the Turks and the Greeks. We actually have flags banned in this school because of that, because there have been altercations. So people stay away from that as well.[467]

This seems to be a blanketed school response not to teach texts that raise contentious issues or engage in any cultural discussions that might provoke or offend students. She seems to believe that there is protocol around addressing delicate or contentious issues in classrooms, which perhaps shows a lack of connection to the potential value of texts in helping to address such themes. However, one can question the merits or advantages associated with

[466] Ibid.
[467] School 8, LPS, Teacher 22 Interview, London, September 2013.

making attempts to avoid deliberately raising contentious cultural issues. By not engaging students in these discussions they seem to lose an opportunity to consider these issues in the safe environment of the classroom. Teacher 23 mentions, "I think we say it's important to raise these issues and it might be, but in a school like ours there are more setbacks than step-ups for challenging our students."[468] Consideration and mediation of contentious issues could include teachers discussing their interpretations and reinforcing that students engage in conversations with their peers. It is difficult to comprehend, for instance how avoiding teaching texts like *'The Kite Runner'* would protect (Muslim) students from wider societal discussions about their religion or current events. If there is an effort to avoid teaching contemporary texts, then how are these students broadening their views on cultural and community values? It is difficult to know if a wider range of contemporary texts will help teachers choose options that enable students to discuss some of these issues without provoking or causing offense to students. The following section examines students' responses to the prescribed texts studied at schools to understand the extent to which students engage and enjoy the texts they study in senior English classes. This is useful to determine whether students objectively share some of the same views as their teachers.

[468] School 8, LPS, Teacher 23 Interview, London, September 2013.

5.3 Student questionnaire responses to prescribed texts

5.3.1 Description of the sample

The 111 senior secondary students surveyed for the United Kingdom sample represent a sample of the views of English pupils preparing for their English A-Level examinations at four participating schools in the Greater London region. HPS schools were academies while LPS were community schools.[469] Figures 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 present the composition of the student respondents by perceived family ancestry split by gender, for each of HPS and LPS types.

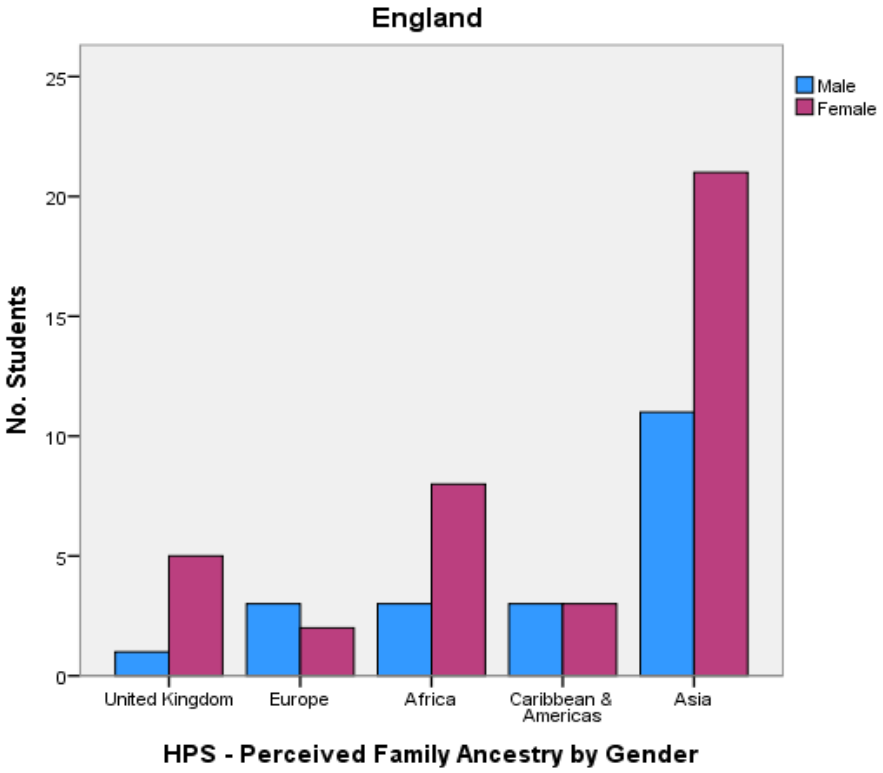

Figure 5.3.1: HPS – Perceived Family Ancestry by Gender

[469] For information on Types of Schools in the United Kingdom, see Section 5.1—Curriculum on pg., 158.

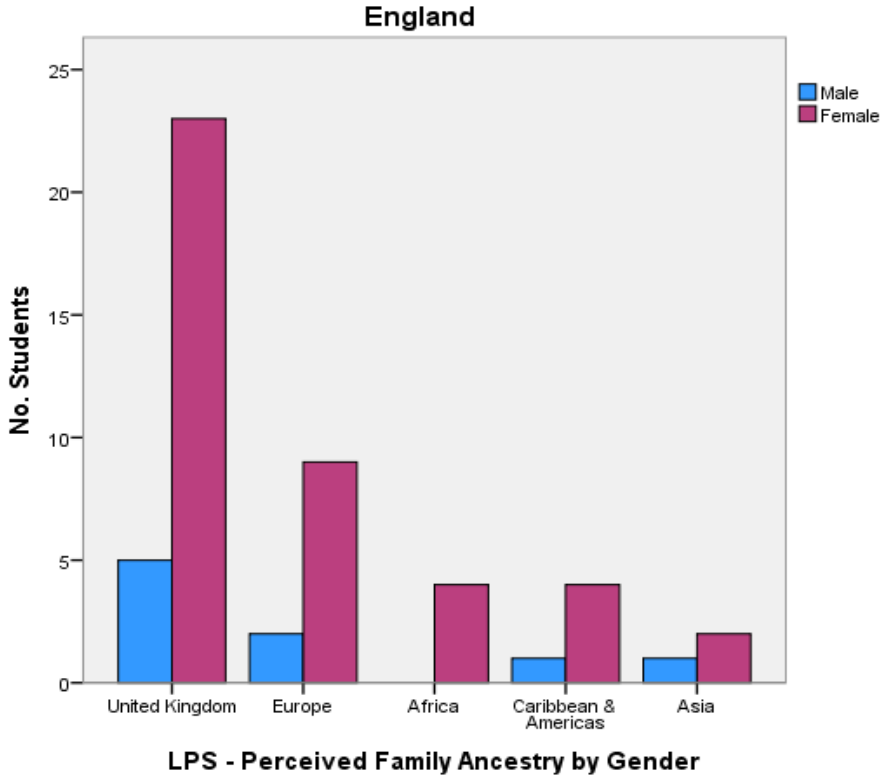

Figure 5.3.2: LPS – Perceived Family Ancestry by Gender

Females outnumber males in the sample of schools by almost 2 to 1 for HPS and nearly 5 to 1 for LPS. Most HPS students identify with an Asian ancestry (53%) while in LPS, most students identify as British (55%). Overall approximately 70% of the total number of students surveyed considered a country other than the United Kingdom to be their place of family ancestry.

Figures 5.3.3 and 5.3.4 show perceived ancestry by country of birth to try to understand whether students had stronger connections of identity to their birthplace.

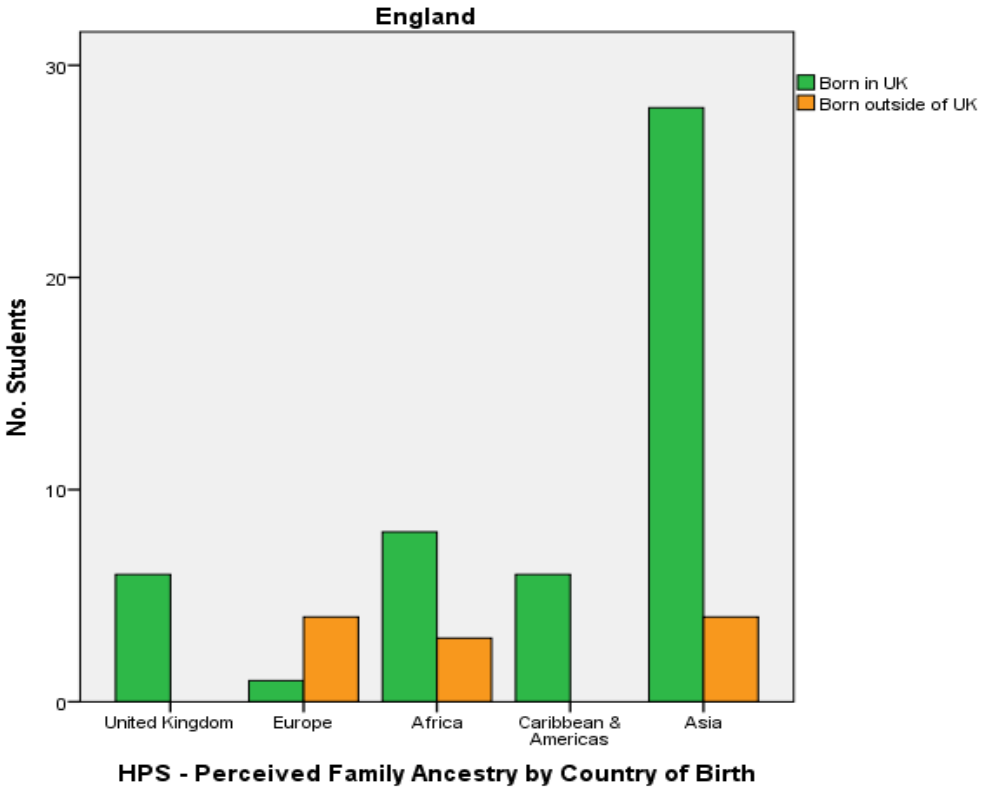

Figure 5.3.3: HPS – Perceived Family Ancestry by Country of Birth

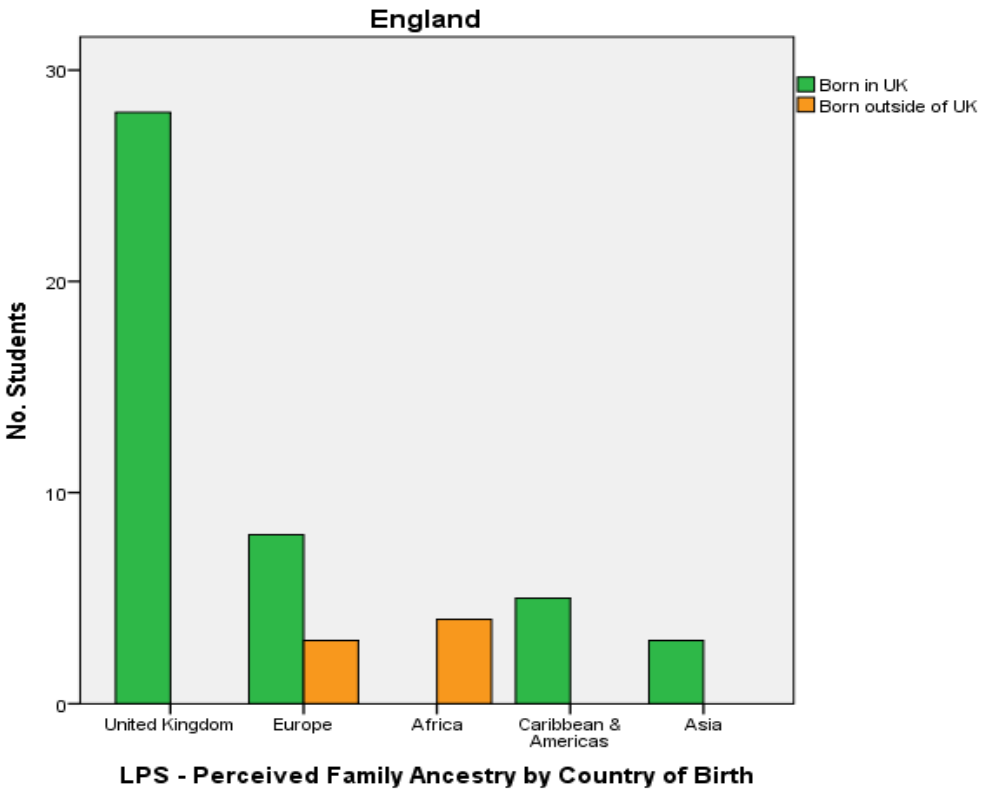

Figure 5.3.4: LPS – Perceived Family Ancestry by Country of Birth

The figures show that although 84% of all students (HPS and LPS combined) were born in the United Kingdom, most of them identify with countries other than the United Kingdom (63%) as their place of ancestry.

Figure 5.3.5 shows the number of languages they spoke in addition to English.

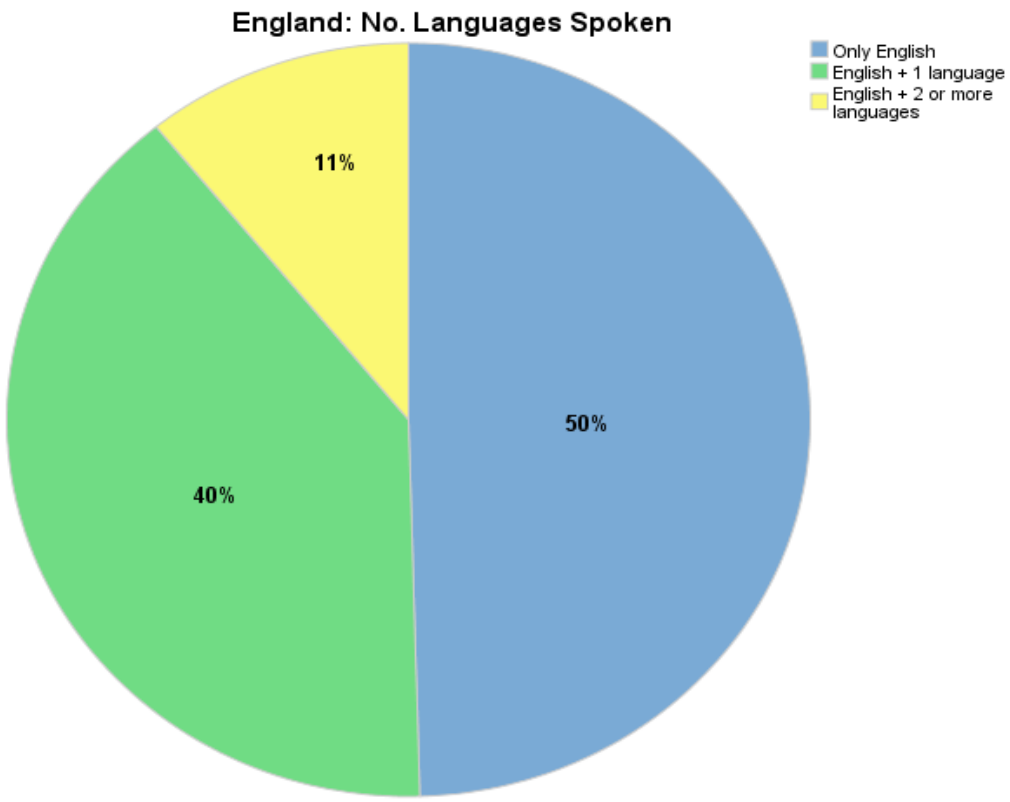

Figure 5.3.5: No. Languages Spoken in addition to English

Just over half of the students are at least multilingual, but this means they are equally balanced by a substantial proportion who speak English only. However, this still represents a fair level of linguistic diversity as 84% of the students were born in the United Kingdom; meaning that at least half of the bilingual sample were born there.

Figures 5.3.6 and 5.3.7 shows the composition of students based on their religion and gender.

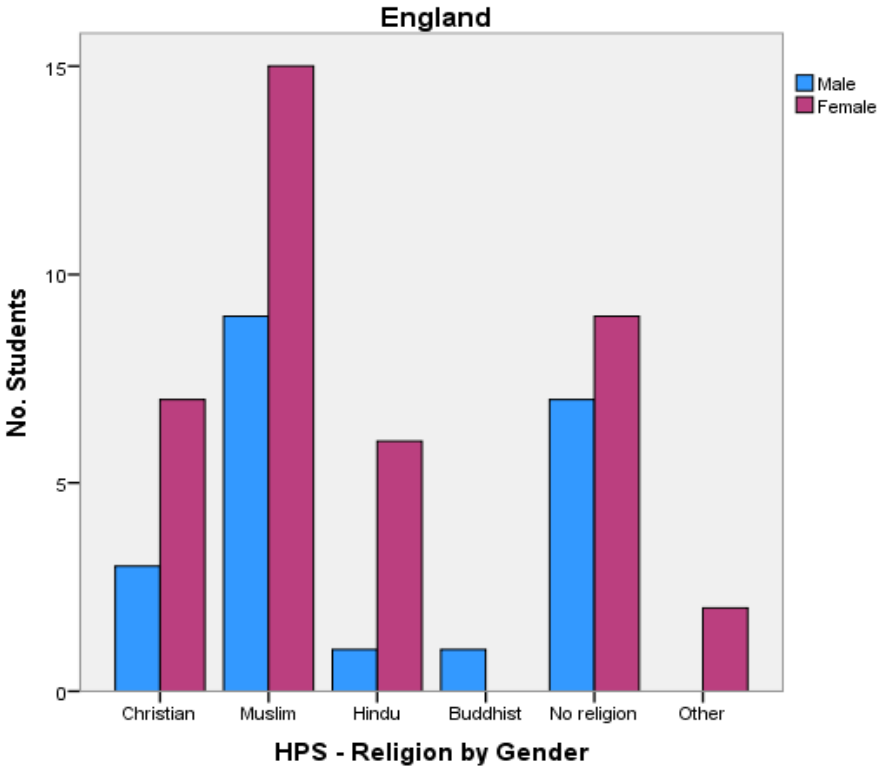

Figure 5.3.6: HPS – Religion by Gender

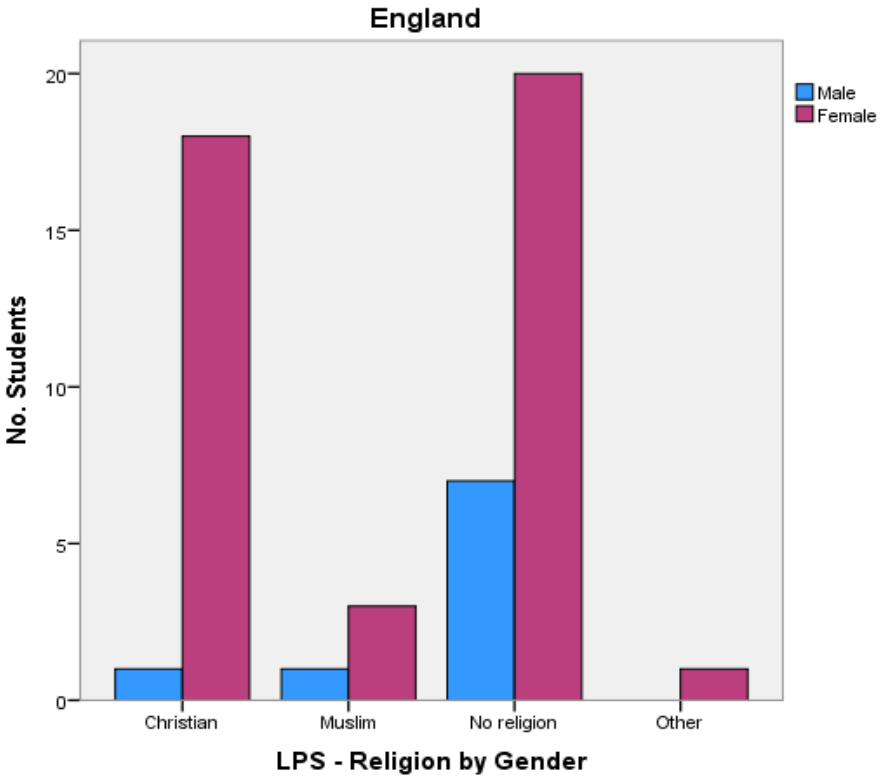

Figure 5.3.7: LPS – Religion by Gender

The main religions identified by students were 'No religion' (39%), 'Christian' (26%) and 'Muslim' (25%). However, the distribution varied greatly by school type; nearly two-thirds of the students identifying as 'Christian' or having 'No religion' were from LPS, while 86% of 'Muslim' students sampled attended HPS.

Figure 5.3.8 shows the relation between students' perceived ancestry and their religion as a biplot.[470]

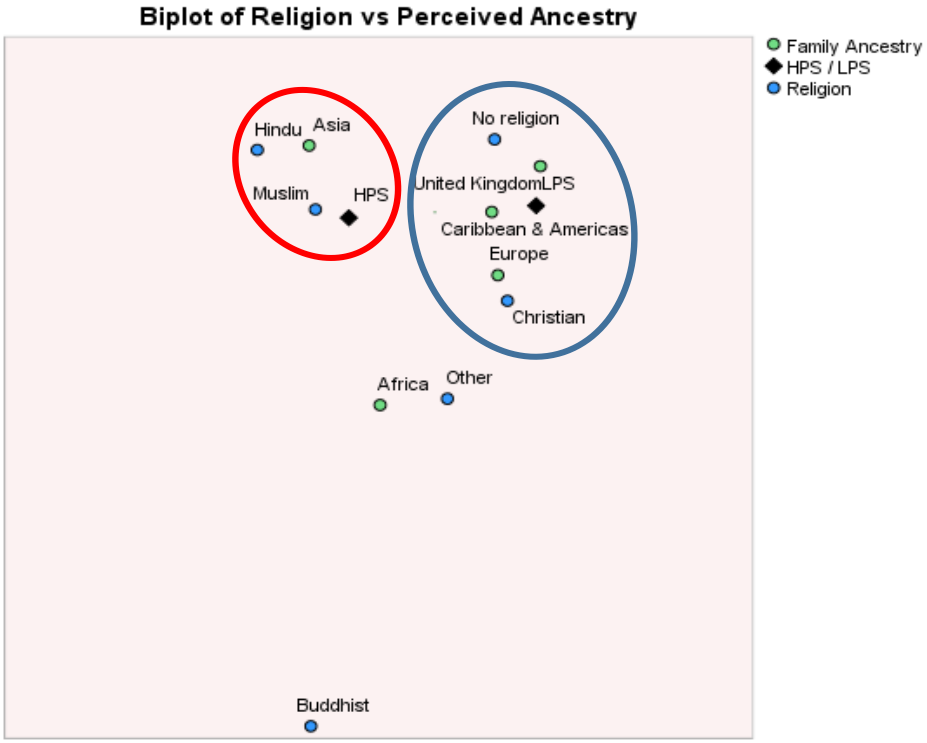

Figure 5.3.8: Biplot of Religion vs Perceived Ancestry

The red circle in the biplot above shows the strong association between students of 'Muslim' and 'Hindu' faiths, their Asian ancestry, and HPS. Alternatively, the grouping under the blue circle demonstrates the wider diversity of faiths and regions of ancestry associated with LPS.

[470] For more information on reading biplots, refer to Chapter Four, pg., 147.

5.3.2 *Students' engagement with texts*[471]

Figures 5.3.9 and 5.3.10 show the relationship between students' enjoyment of English Literature according to their gender for HPS and LPS.

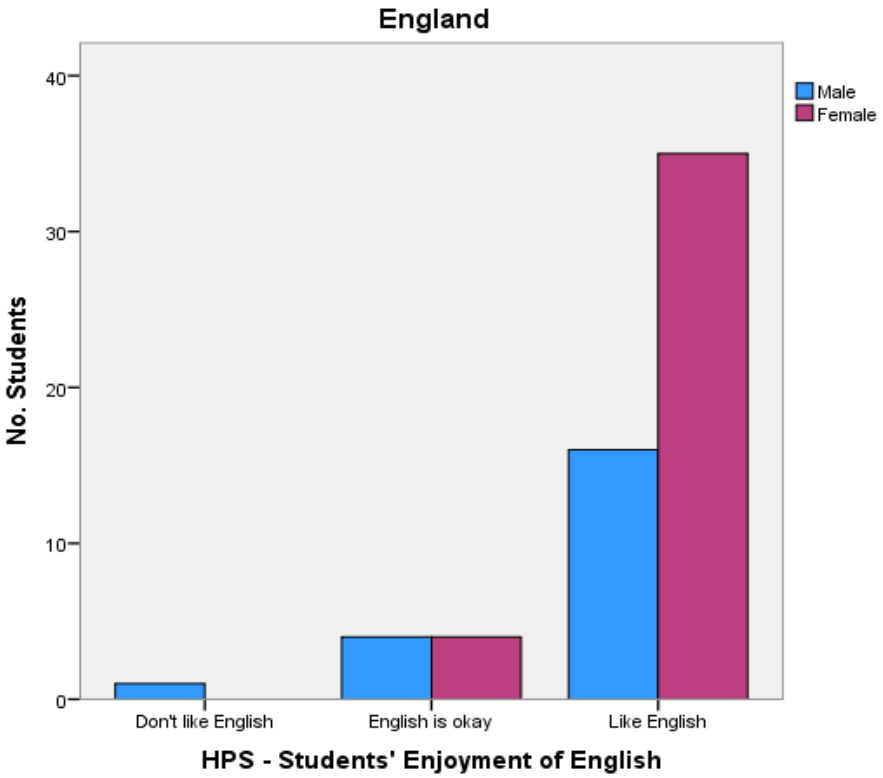

Figure 5.3.9: HPS - Students' Enjoyment of English

[471] As mentioned in the Methodology and Chapter 4, students' response to their level of enjoyment of English was originally measured on a five-point Likert scale. Due to potential bias, and to maintain consistency, we continue with the approach of replacing this with a three-point scale in the discussions which follow, unless otherwise specified.

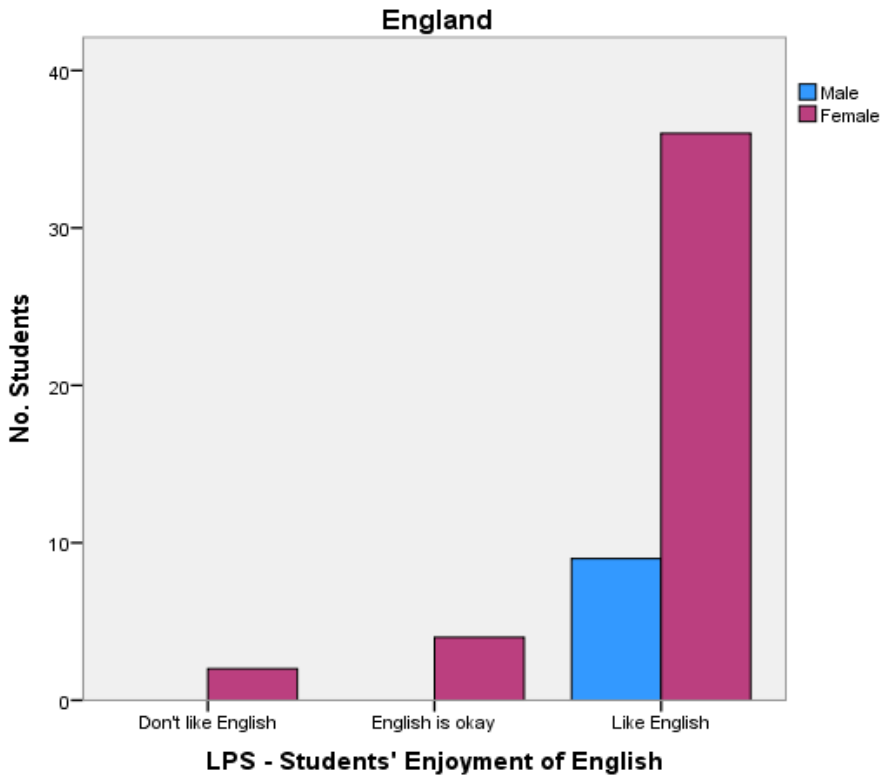

Figure 5.3.10: LPS - Students' Enjoyment of English

Overall students indicate favourably towards English irrespective of their enrolments in HPS and LPS institutions.

Figures 5.3.11 and 5.3.12 show the relationship between students' perceptions of whether texts refer to their culture or religion, according to their gender for HPS and LPS.

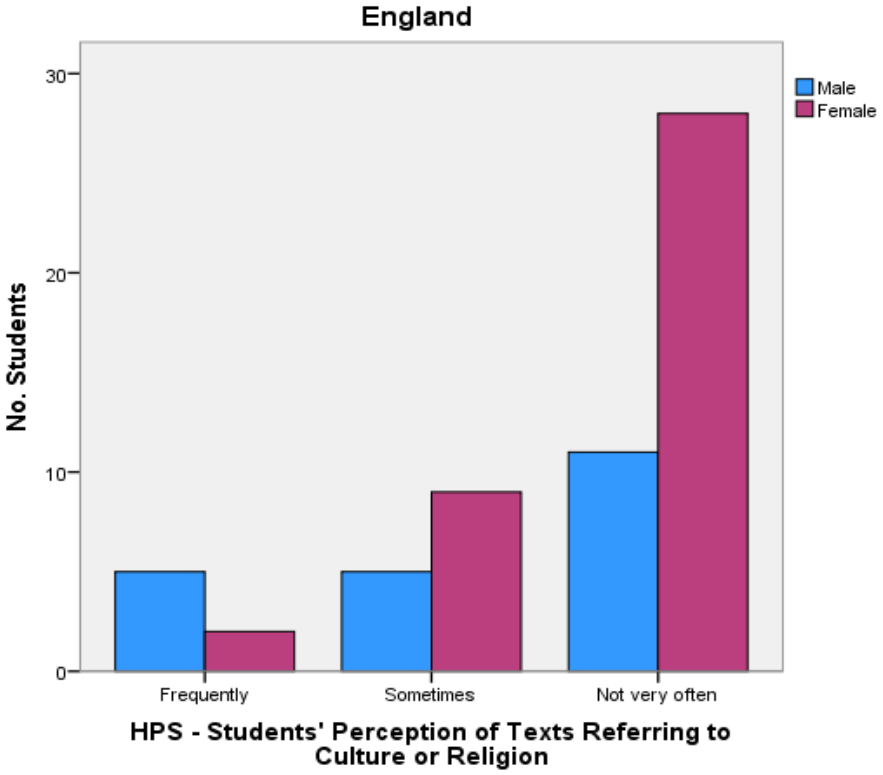

Figure 5.3.11: HPS - Students' Perception of Texts Referring to Culture or Religion

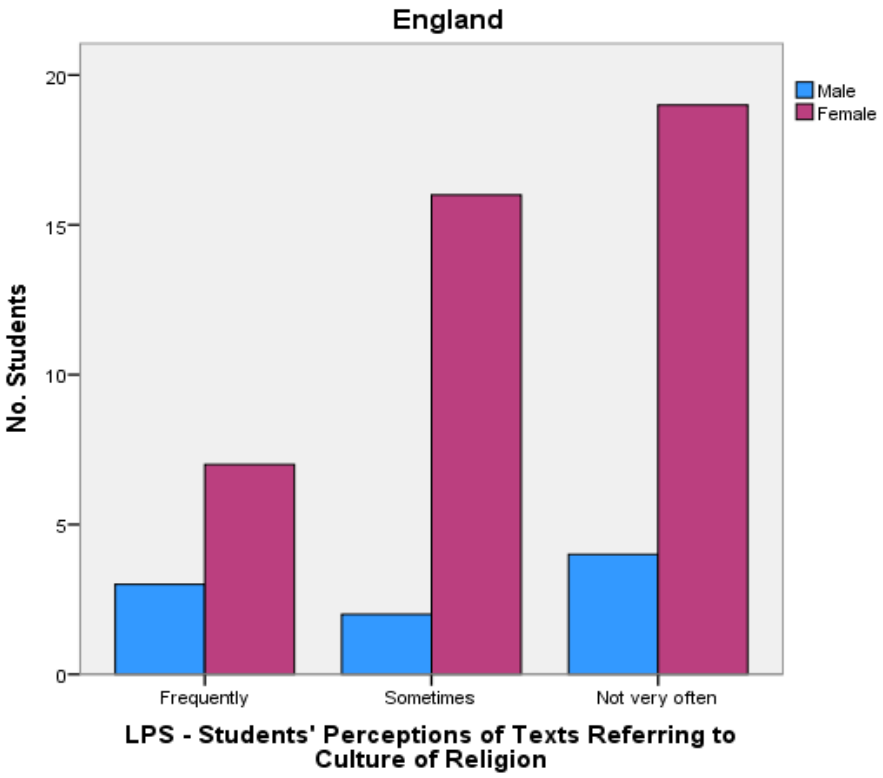

Figure 5.3.12: LPS - Students' Perception of Texts Referring to Culture or Religion

The figures above demonstrate that a much higher proportion of HPS students (65%) claim that texts do not refer to their religion or culture, compared to the equivalent for LPS students (45%). This difference is statistically significant at the 5% confidence level.

Figure 5.3.13 shows the relation between students' perceptions of texts referring to their culture or religion, versus their religion as a biplot.

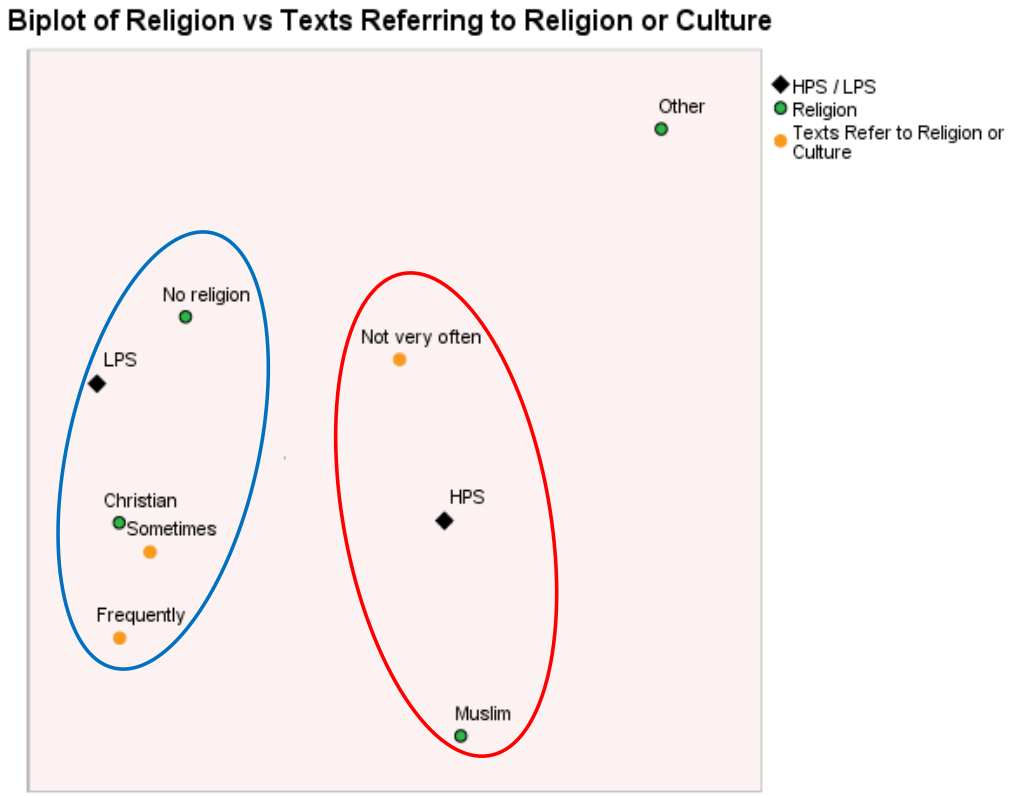

Figure 5.3.13: Biplot of Religion vs Texts Referring to Religion or Culture

The red circle grouping indicates that of those students who responded that texts do not refer to their religion or culture very often, they tended to be from HPS (which also contained the highest proportion of students of 'Muslim' faith). Additionally, the blue circle group represents that LPS predominantly had students who identified as having 'No religion' or of 'Christian' faith; and

those of 'Christian' faith claimed that texts refer to their religion or culture at least 'Sometimes' or more 'Frequently'.

Figure 5.3.14 shows the relation between students' perceptions of texts referring to their culture or religion, versus their perceived family ancestry as a biplot.

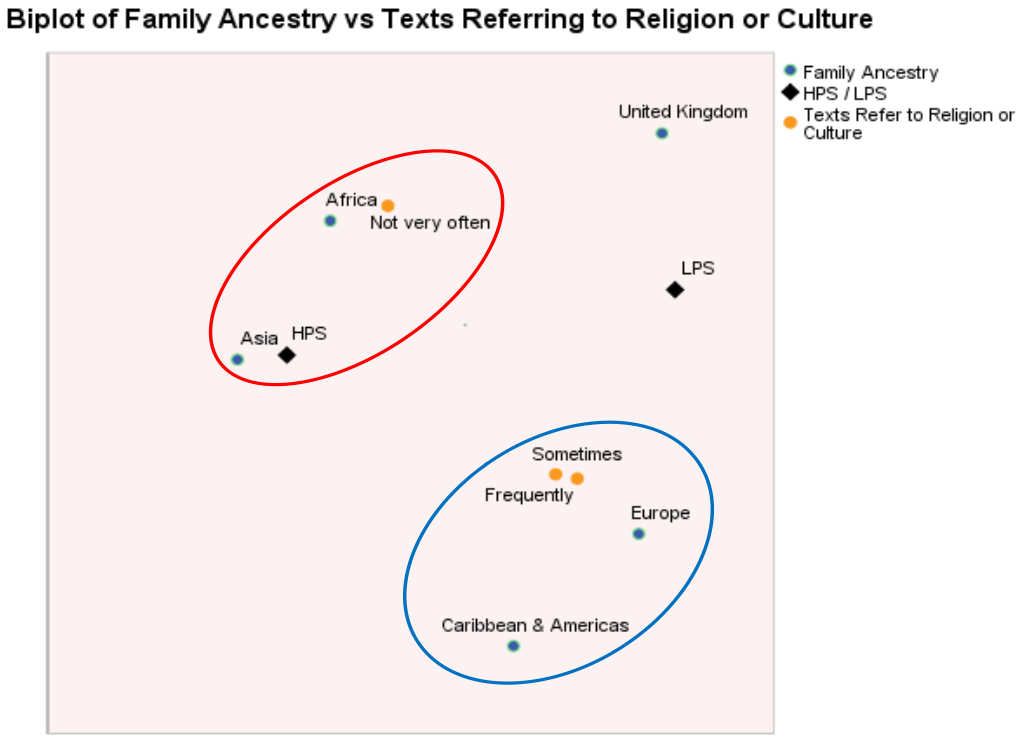

Figure 5.3.14: Biplot of Family Ancestry vs Texts Referring to Religion or Culture

This biplot reinforces the message of Figure 5.3.13; the red circle group shows the association among students of Asian and African ancestry, and their claims that texts do not refer to their religion or culture very often. On the other hand, the blue circle group shows the stronger association between students of European, Caribbean and American backgrounds, who suggest that texts refer to their cultures or religion 'Sometimes' or 'Fequently'.

Figures 5.3.15 and 5.3.16 show the relationship between students' perceptions of whether texts refer to societal issues, according to their gender for HPS and LPS.

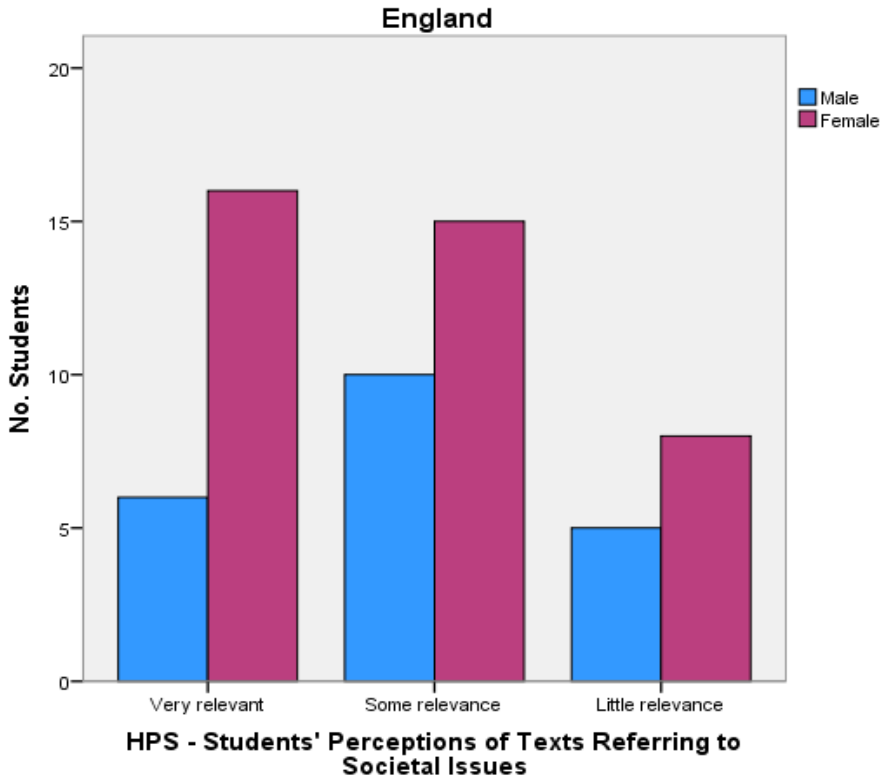

Figure 5.3.15: HPS – Students' Perceptions of Texts Referring to Societal Issues

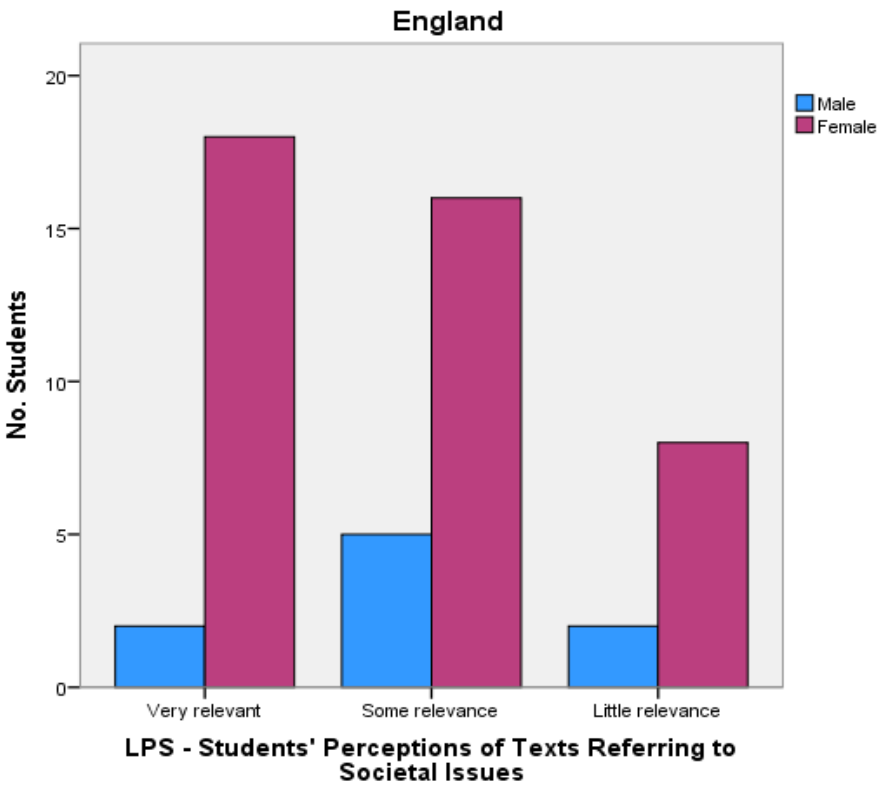

Figure 5.3.16: LPS – Students' Perceptions of Texts Referring to Societal Issues

The figures above show broadly similar characteristics for HPS and LPS overall; 37% of HPS and 39% of LPS claim that texts are 'Very relevant' to discussing societal issues. There appears to be some evidence of differences in response by gender; for example, 50% of males responded that there was 'some relevance' of the texts they study to societal issues, compared with 38% of females. However, for this sample, the difference is not statistically significant at the 5% confidence level.

Table 5.3.1 below reveals a different profile when students are asked to indicate the level at which they related personally to these texts.

Table 5.3.1: Students' Personal Relatedness to Texts

Schools	Very well		Related well		Somewhat related		Not very well		Not at all	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	f	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*
HPS	4	2	3	7	9	12	5	9	2	7
LPS	2	2	2	8	6	11	0	13	0	7
Total	***6***	***4***	***5***	***15***	***15***	***23***	***5***	***22***	***2***	***14***

The five-point Likert scale did not seem to introduce any bias to the responses given to this question of personal relatedness. The distribution across categories was very similar between HPS and LPS, with nearly 40% of students indicating that they did not relate much or not at all to the texts they study. The distribution across genders was more difficult to ascertain, as differences were not significant with such a small relative population of males in the sample. Table 5.3.2 illustrates students' understanding of their teachers' interpretations of prescribed texts.

Table 5.3.2: Students' Understanding of Teachers' Interpretations of Texts

Schools	Very clear		Clear		Somewhat clear		Not very clear		Not clear at all	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	f	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*
HPS	8	12	10	17	4	6	0	3	0	0
LPS	5	12	4	18	2	10	0	0	0	0
Total	***13***	***24***	***14***	***35***	***6***	***16***	***0***	***3***	***0***	***0***

The responses given to this question of how students understand their teachers' interpretations of texts may have had some bias introduced in the setting of the instrument for this particular cohort. 95% of HPS students as well as all LPS students indicated that their teachers' interpretations of texts were at least 'somewhat clear' to them; with only a handful of responses on the negative end of the scale.

5.3.3 Ethnicity, social class and gender referents in discussions of prescribed texts

The following collates how often students refer to the texts they study at school when having discussions about cultural issues such as ethnicity, social class and gender with their teachers, parents/guardians or friends.

(i) Ethnicity

Table 5.3.3 shows students' perceptions of how frequently prescribed texts are referred to when discussing issues related to ethnicity with their teachers, parents/guardians or friends.

Table 5.3.3: Students' Regularity of Referring to Texts when Discussing Ethnicity with Teachers, Parents/Guardians and Friends

Ethnicity	HPS						LPS					
	Teachers		Parents/Guardians		Friends		Teachers		Parents/Guardians		Friends	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	f	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*
All the time	0	2	3	2	2	2	0	6	2	2	3	3
Frequently	6	8	4	11	6	12	3	8	4	9	0	7
Sometimes	2	12	5	9	5	14	2	9	2	5	5	8
Not often	6	4	4	8	5	5	2	9	1	15	1	14
Not at all	6	14	7	7	4	5	4	8	2	9	2	8

HPS students in this sample seem to be less inclined to or able to refer to texts to discuss issues of ethnicity with teachers than with parents or friends; 50% responded that do not do this often or at all, compared to 43% when considering discussions with parents, or 32% with friends. In contrast, LPS students exhibit the inverse characteristics in this sample; 43% do not refer to texts when discussing issues of ethnicity with teachers, but this proportion increases to 49% against friends, and 53% against parents.

(ii) Social class

Table 5.3.4 shows students' perceptions of how frequently prescribed texts are referred to when discussing issues related to social class with their teachers, parents/guardians or friends.

Table 5.3.4: Students' Regularity of Referring to Texts when Discussing Social Class with Teachers, Parents/Guardians and Friends

Social class	HPS						LPS					
	Teachers		Parents/Guardians		Friends		Teachers		Parents/Guardians		Friends	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	f	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*
All the time	8	7	3	0	3	3	4	14	0	4	2	3
Frequently	5	13	3	9	4	5	4	8	2	6	3	8
Sometimes	4	6	3	7	4	11	2	13	5	7	1	6
Not often	2	6	6	6	5	7	0	4	0	11	2	12
Not at all	4	5	9	14	6	12	0	2	4	12	3	11

In contrast to the issue of referring to texts when discussing issues of ethnicity, HPS students from this sample responded relatively more positively to teachers than to parents or friends; 72% refer to texts at least 'sometimes' when discussing with teachers, with the corresponding proportions for parents and friends being only 42% and 50% respectively. The relationship seems even stronger with LPS students, where the proportions referring to texts at least 'sometimes' in discussions of social class are 88%, 47% and 45%, when discussing with teachers, parents, and students respectively.

(iii) Gender

Table 5.3.5 shows students' perceptions of how frequently prescribed texts are referred to when discussing issues related to gender with their teachers, parents/guardians or friends.

Table 5.3.5: Students' Regularity of Referring to Texts when Discussing Gender with Teachers, Parents/Guardians and Friends

Gender	HPS						LPS					
	Teachers		Parents/Guardians		Friends		Teachers		Parents/Guardians		Friends	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	f	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*
All the time	0	6	3	2	0	3	3	7	0	3	3	5
Frequently	11	15	0	9	4	12	4	6	0	8	2	15
Sometimes	5	7	4	8	7	5	1	17	4	6	3	3
Not often	5	5	9	8	5	11	2	5	1	13	1	8
Not at all	2	4	6	11	6	7	1	5	4	12	3	8

The distribution of responses for this question were relatively equal by proportion according to gender. However, the key finding here is that across both HPS and LPS, students refer to texts when discussing issues of gender with their parents much less than they do with teachers or friends. Only about 20% of HPS and LPS students indicated that they refer to texts at least 'Frequently' in discussions of gender with parents, compared to 47% for teachers and 40% for friends.

5.3.4 Qualitative student responses to texts and cultural diversity

As part of the questionnaire, students were invited to give short responses to questions asking them to (i) briefly describe what they liked most about the texts they studied at school, (ii) to identify and explain how these texts helped them engage and understand issues related to cultural diversity and, (iii) to what extent and how did they believe cultural issues raised in these texts are relevant to contemporary society. Similar to the analysis of student questionnaires in Chapter Four, these short answer responses are analysed using Kellogg Hunt's[472] method of dividing thought units into referents,

[472] Hunt, K. W. (1965). "Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels. NCTE Research Report No. 3."

which then provide the basis for data-driven categorisation. For example, the following student response contains two referents, "I love the way this novel was written quite ambiguous/ and I love the way there is a lot to analyse", which are placed under the categories of style/structure and analysis, respectively. [473] The following responses to questions are presented and discussed to map qualitative patterns of how HPS and LPS students personally related and responded to texts studied at schools.

(i) Students' responses to liking or disliking texts

Students' qualitative responses to the three short response questions formed the basis, as described (see Methodology Chapter) for the development of data-driven categories. Each referent was coded based on its dominant content. Ten overarching categories sufficed to encompass the content of the total student corpus of 263 referents from 107 pertinent student responses. Referents are grouped into under ten categories: Narration, the Experience of Text, Style/Structure, Relevance, History, Characters, Themes, Analysis, Empathy and Language. Table 5.3.6 presents exemplar referents for each category.

Table 5.3.6: Category System Derived from Students' Reflections about Liking/ Disliking Texts

Category	Exemplars	
	Positive	***Negative***
Narration	• 'I enjoyed that most books would tell the story either through protagonist or third narrator' (S5, HPS, M, 1). • 'Liked the confusing voice in the story' (S7, LPS, M, 66).	• 'Disliked third person narrator' (S7, LPS, M, 63). • 'Disliked the author's voice telling me what I had to think' (S7, LPS, M, 66). • 'The narration could have been less repetitive' (S6, HPS, M, 44).
Experience of text	• 'The novel allowed me to distance myself' (S8, LPS, F, 107). • 'First novel I read and I fully understood my interpretations' (S8, LPS, F, 92).	• 'I disliked the novel not conclusive' (S7, LPS, F, 80). • 'I disliked the novel, and it was not relatable to and no significance' (S7, LPS, M, 79).

[473] Survey, School 1, (Female), Student #15.

	• 'I liked this novel wasn't related to my life in anyway because it allowed me to broaden my periphery' (S5, HPS, M, 27).	• 'I disliked that I felt like I had to figure things out myself' (S6, HPS, M, 51).
Style/structure	• 'I enjoyed the writing style of the book' (S5, HPS, M, 1). • 'It was set in the post-apocalyptic world, and so it was very unique' (S5, HPS, M, 4). • 'I liked the way the author structured and wrote the novel' (S5, HPS, M, 6).	• 'The slow pace I disliked' (S6, HPS, M, 54). • 'I didn't like the writing style' (S5, HPS, F, 26). • 'The story was lost in the structure, which was difficult to understand' (S8, LPS, F, 109).
Relevance	• 'The novel was relatable in terms of modern ideas and debates of religion and science' (S8, LPS, F, 107). • 'I enjoyed finding out how people response to people with learning or physical disabilities' (S8, LPS, F, 43).	• 'Parts of this story are not relevant to me or my peers or our culture' (S5, HPS, M, 3). • 'The culture in the book is quite hard to relate to' (S8, LPS, F, 108). • 'Hard to relate to cannibalism if I'm not going to become one' (S6, HPS, M, 47).
History	• 'I particularly endorsed the historical reflection within the novel' (S6, HPS, F, 41). • 'The insight into what it was like in the 1920s' (S5, HPS, F, 13).	• 'The story was about history and hard to understand' (S5, HPS, M, 10). • 'I disliked that history was so misrepresented' (S6, HPS, M, 40). • 'The historical parts of the novel took a long time to get through' (S7, LPS, F, 76).
Characters	• 'I like many of the characters' (S8, LPS, F, 107). • 'The characters designed depth made it incredibly engaging' (S5, HPS, M, 6). • 'Characters were reliable and interesting' (S7, LPS, F, 84).	• 'I disliked the lack of characters' (S5, HPS, M, 32). • 'I found the majority of characters dull' (S5, HPS, F, 26). • 'The characters in the film were horrible compared to those in the book' (S7, HPS, F, 69).
Themes	• 'I liked the different themes that were involved in the storyline e.g. love and tragedy' (S5, HPS, F, 7). • 'Liked the themes and how judgements of race could be wrong' (S8, LPS, F, 104).	• 'I did not like the main themes if the novel as it was tedious and complex' (S6, HPS, M, 12). • 'The running themes make it difficult to read' (S7, LPS, F, 71). • 'I disliked the protagonist giving into peer pressure' (S5, HPS, F, 24).
Analysis	• 'I particularly endorse the analysis of texts' (S6, HPS, F, 41). • 'Liked the analysis of social class' (S6, HPS, F, 34).	• 'Breaking down the analysis was really tough' (S7, LPS, F, 74). • 'I disliked that it was so simple to analyse made it harder to talk about the text in essays' (S5, HPS, M, 21).
Empathy	• 'The storyline was captivating with a tragic ending' (S5, HPS, F, 5). • 'I liked the emotions in the text' (S8, LPS, F, 101).	• 'Disliked the story when he dies' (S6, HPS, F, 67). • 'Speaking about discrimination made it uncomfortable to read' (S7, LPS, F, 71). • 'I disliked it being sad' (S5, HPS, F, 33).
Language	• 'Loved it not written normally' (S6, HPS, F, 23).	• 'Language was difficult' (S6, HPS, F, 56).

	• 'The language was really beautifully written' (S7, LPS, F, 70). • 'The language brought the ideas across easily' (S5, HPS, F, 8).	• 'The language was very simple and made the book boring' (S5, HPS, M, 32). • 'The language was quite difficult to understand' (S5, HPS, M, 10).

Figure 5.3.17 below shows the distribution of the 263 referents by category and school type.

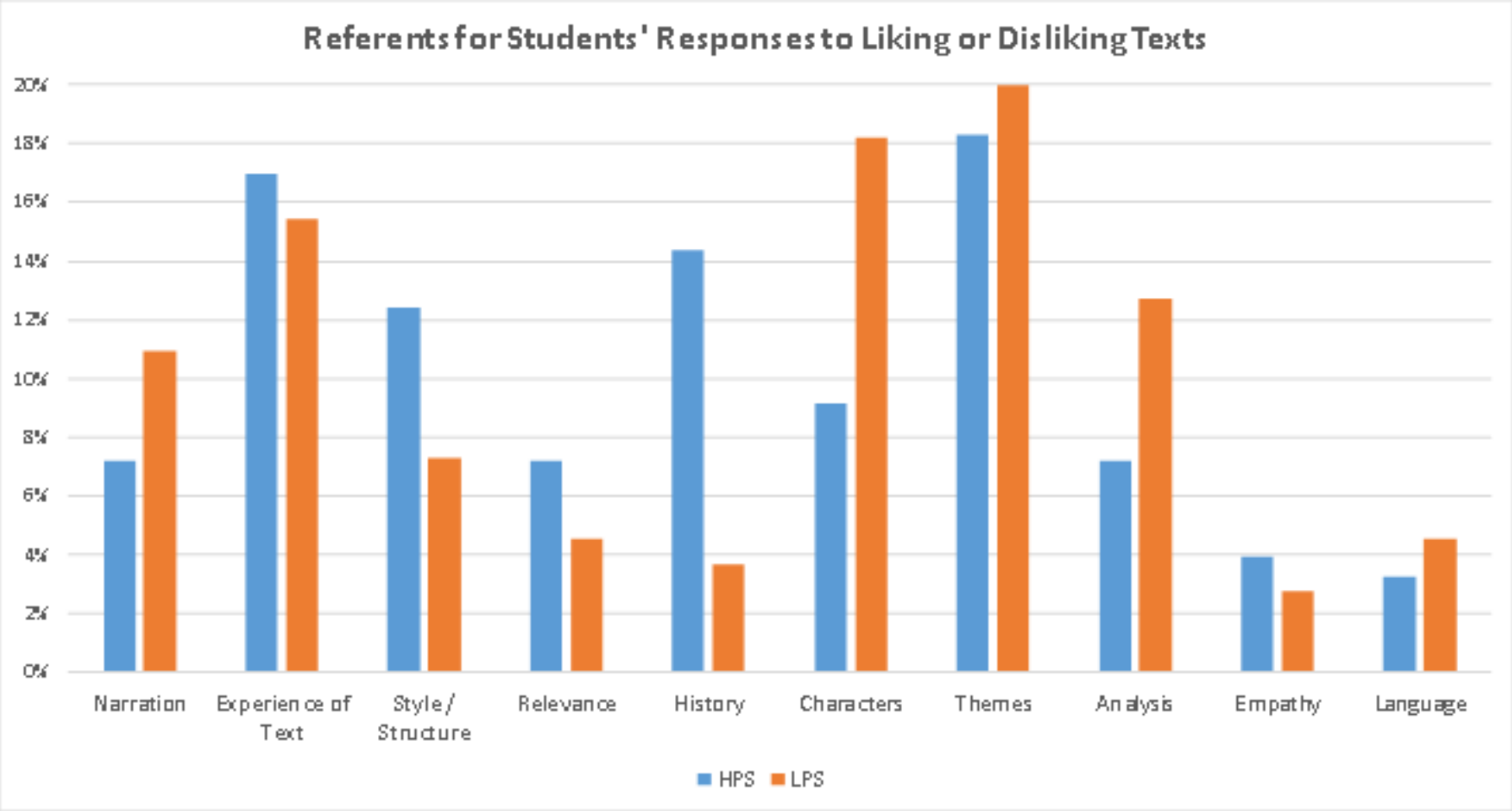

Figure 5.3.17: Referents for Students' Responses to Liking or Disliking Texts

Overall Themes was the category focussed on the most by both HPS (18%) and LPS (20%) students. Additionally, HPS students seemed to focus more on Experience of Texts (17%) while LPS students focussed on Characters (18%). Figure 5.3.18 shows a biplot representing both students' responses and non-responses to each of the nine referent categories.

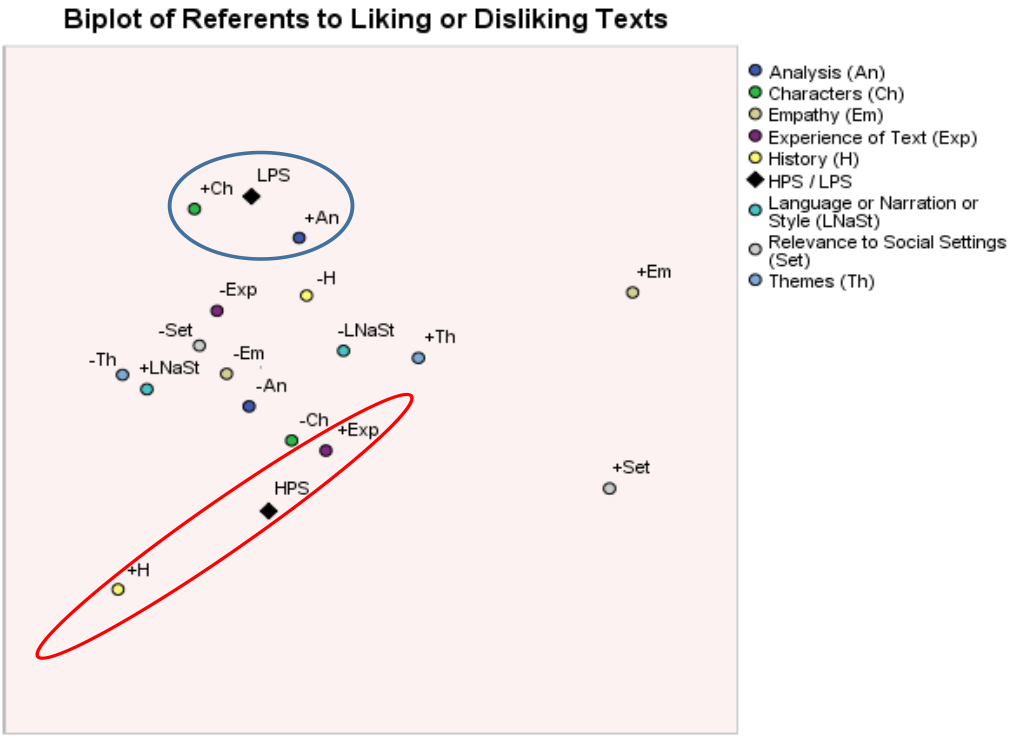

Figure 5.3.18: Biplot of Referents to Liking or Disliking Texts

The categories of 'Language', 'Narration', and 'Style/Structure' have been combined to simplify the representation, where the common association between these categories were already pre-determined from the data. As in Chapter Four, non-responses for a given category of referent are denoted with a '-' prefix; where a pertinent answer was provided these are denoted with a '+'. The blue circle grouping indicates that where 'Characters' are referred to by LPS students as a referent, the students generally also refer to some aspect of 'Analysis' as well. This is interesting, as the majority of references to 'Analysis' tended to be negative, as exhibited in the right column of Table 5.3.6

above. The red grouping indicates a similar property for HPS students; where they refer to 'History' they also tend to refer to 'Experience of Texts' within the same comment.

(ii) Students' responses to how texts helped engage an understanding of issues related to cultural diversity

In this section of the questionnaire, students were invited to describe how texts helped them engage with an understanding of issues related to cultural diversity. Students were invited to comment specifically on texts in relation to understanding 'cultural diversity', since the AQA English Literature B module, known as 'The Struggle for Identity' aims for students' to be able to make personal connections through literature to their identity. In particular, the question of how texts help them make personal connections to culture and identity in contemporary society.

Students were invited to provide a short response describing aspects of texts they identified as discussing issues related to cultural diversity. In other words, which aspects of cultural diversity did students believe prescribed texts referred to, or was frequently discussed in classrooms. For this section of the questionnaire, referents were coded on the basis of the dominant content, and the 187 total referents (after Kellogg Hunt) from 78 pertinent student responses have been grouped into (i) providing cultural information, (ii) Referencing Relevant Cultural Issues, (iii) Referencing Current Events and, (iv) Referencing History/Culture. Referents were classified under these headings on the basis of the comments students made about aspects of diversity. Table 5.3.7 lists examples of students' responses for referents for the above categories.

Table 5.3.7: Category System Derived from Students' Reflections on Texts Discussing Issues Related to Cultural Diversity

Category	Exemplars	
	Positive	***Negative***
Cultural information	• 'Yes it allowed me to understand inequality in different cultures' (S6, HPS, F, 38). • 'Indeed there was segregation between the Pakistan and Hazāras' (S6, HPS, M, 58). • 'Yes, cultural contrast between USA and Afghanistan between Pakistanis and Hazāras' (S6, HPS, F, 60).	• 'No, this book was about people in England' (S8, LPS, F, 99). • 'No, because it didn't have cultural diversity' (S5, HPS, F, 2). • 'No not really, the cultures discussed were mainly white and not diverse' (S6, HPS, F, 45).
Relevant cultural issues	• 'It helped me understand cultural diversity shall always be a part of our everyday lives, and that is not a problem' (S8, LPS, F, 110). • 'Yes, it helped me to understand why people still have the same ideas today as in the play' (S5, HPS, F, 9).	• 'The problem is how each individual deals with cultural issues today and that is not really discussed in texts' (S8, LPS, F, 110). • 'The novel raised issues not diverse and not relevant' (S5, HPS, M, 21).
Referencing current events	• 'This novel enabled me to understand the ongoing problems within people around the world' (S8, LPS, F, 111). • 'Yes in some ways as it improved my understanding about present American society' (S5, HPS, F, 12). • 'Yes, I got a further understanding of how some of my friends felt when they moved countries' (S5, HPS, F, 33).	• 'Not really, the issues in the novel are not current problems' (S6, HPS, M, 50). • 'The information is not about America today' (S5, HPS, F, 36). • 'I don't think the cultures in texts are diverse enough to discuss our present problems in England' (S8, LPS, F, 100).
Referencing history/culture	• 'Easier to have a better concept of the historical context at the time of mid-1900s' (S8, LPS, F, 104). • 'Yes, 100% as it discussed the lifestyle of people of a different time and place' (S8, LPS, M, 103).	• 'We focused a lot on slavery in America, and this is not diverse' (S6, HPS, M, 48). • 'The history of money is not about cultural diversity' (S7, LPS, F, 68). • 'The culture of long ago is not diverse, so it didn't talk of cultural diversity' (S8, LPS, F, 94).

Figure 5.3.19 presents the frequency and nature of students' qualitative references to issues of cultural diversity arising in discussions of texts.

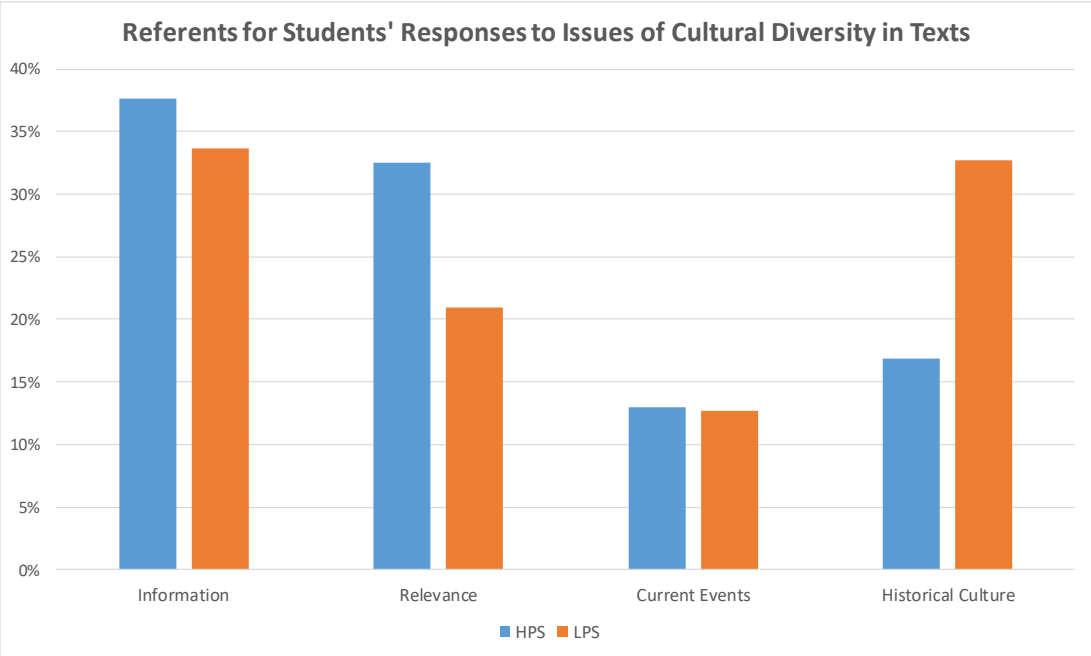

Figure 5.3.19: Referents for Students' Responses to Issues of Cultural Diversity in Texts

Figure 5.3.19 above shows there was generally the same distribution of referents within the comments made by both HPS and LPS students, except that HPS students tended to focus more on issues of 'Relevance' (32%) while LPS students commented more on 'Historical Culture' (33%).

(iii) Students' responses to cultural issues in texts being relevant to current society

The last section of the questionnaire invited students' responses as to whether they found the current list of prescribed texts to be relevant to cultural issues within contemporary society. Students were invited to give examples or describe how texts were relevant to issues in current society. For this section student responses were coded into 122 referents from 88 pertinent student responses. These referents were grouped into five main categories describing texts as being relevant for discussing contemporary issues related to (i) Understanding History, (ii) Social Class, (iii) Women, (iv) Ethnicity, and (v)

Projecting into the Future. Table 5.3.8 gives examples of students' responses for each referent.

Table 5.3.8: Category System Derived from Students' Reflections on Texts Being Relevant for Discussing Issues in Current Society

Category	Exemplars	
	Positive	***Negative***
Relevant for understanding history	• 'Yes, I did I felt it taught me a lot about culture in the time the play was set and helped me understand today's culture' (S7, LPS, M, 79). • 'Well America is very different now than when the novel was set but it still allows me to understand the background of it and why America is what it is like now' (S7, LPS, F, 84). • 'I do because some people are stull treated disrespectfully because of their cultural background, but not to an extreme that they were in the 1930s' (S8, LPS, F, 92).	• 'These issues are no longer relevant as their problems from the past have been sorted, and people now know how to deal with such matters' (S8, LPS, F, 110). • 'Not as much as the time it was written' (S8, LPS, F, 102). • 'No, these issues no longer apply to society' (S8, LPS, F, 99). • 'Things now are not as bad as they used to be so only to an extent because times have changed' (S7, LPS, M, 78).
Relevance to social class	• 'Yes there are is still class divide and stereotypes in society' (S8, LPS, F, 108). • 'Yes, social issues are still relevant now i.e. upper class people generally don't help the lower class and still treat them badly' (S8, LPS, F, 98). • 'They're very relevant because they allow the viewer to understand that social classes are still existent but not as obvious' (S7, LPS, F, 69).	• 'No people are treated far equally now' (S7, LPS, F, 81). • 'No, because I don't think that there is a distinct class system in Liverpool today' (S7, LPS, F, 83). • 'Class seems to be a bigger issue than it is because this is England and we are always divided by wealth' (S5, HPS, F, 14).
Relevance to women	• 'Yes as it was about women's roles and some people today still hold the same views' (S5, HPS, F, 9). • 'Yes much so, even though genders are believed to be equal women are still stereotyped' (S6, HPS, F, 60). • 'Yes to a certain extent as there as still distinct issues with women as a whole and how they are presented and thought of' (S7, LPS, F, 86).	• 'I believe that the cultural issues discussed in this novel are not relevant to current society because the circumstances changed and they got better e.g. Women's' rights' (S8, LPS, F, 90). • 'Depiction of women from long ago is different to issues women have now' (S5, HPS, M, 23). • 'Our texts don't present current issues that women face' (S5, HPS, F, 20).
Relevance to ethnicity	• 'Yes as in some parts of the world people still aren't treated as they should be because of their race' (S7, LPS, F, 82). • 'The novel was based on racism and these events do happen in today's society' (S8, LPS, F, 92). • 'I slightly agree because different races are being more welcome to join foreign societies' (S7, LPS, F, 87).	• 'No they are not too relevant to current society because all ethnicities are welcome' (S8, LPS, F, 96). • 'The novel was based on racism, but it's not that much of a big problem since people know how to deal with these issues better' (S8, LPS, F, 92).

		• 'No, because racism isn't a big problem in today's society, certainly for me living in multicultural London' (S8, LPS, M. 89).
Projecting towards future	• 'Yes, a lot of people are so narrow minded that they refuse to want to explore people with cultural differences, and the news is constantly reporting these things to us. But the novel shows how adaptation can also be effected' (S8, LPS, F, 109). • 'They are relevant to show how society is constantly changing over time' (S7, LPS, M, 65).	• 'No, because the book was set nearly 100 years ago and does not apply to current society' (S7, LPS, F, 71). • 'I don't think they are relevant to society I live in anymore [since] I go to a multicultural school with no segregation etc. And living in London shows very little cultural issues since we all live together' (S8, LPS, F, 104).

Figure 5.3.20 shows the distribution of referents from the five categories from HPS and LPS.

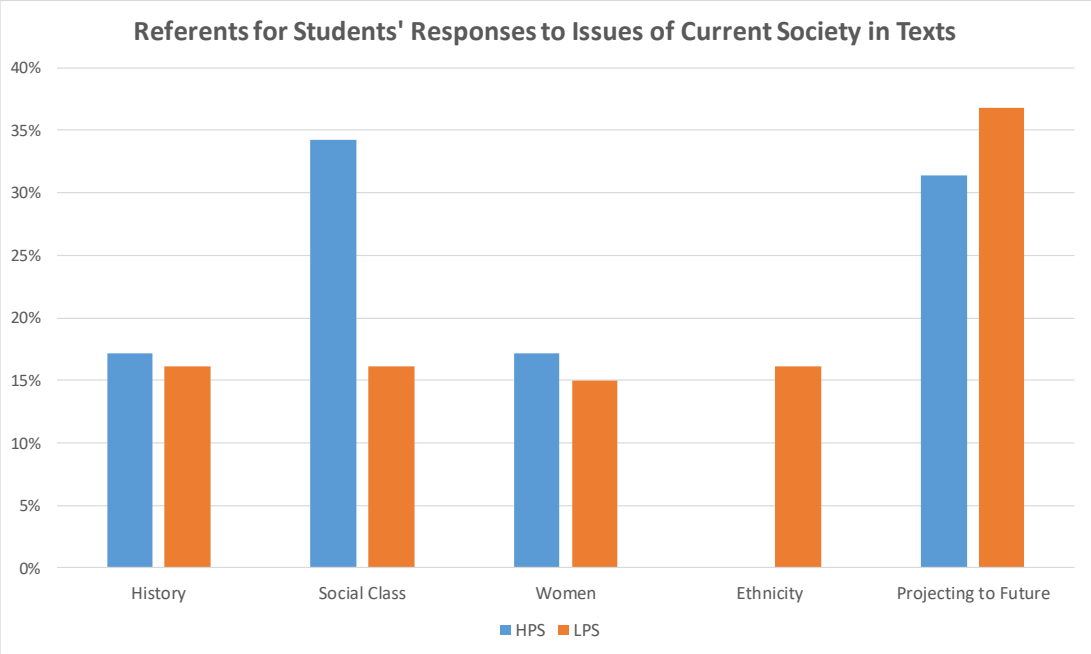

Figure 5.3.20: Referents for Students' Responses to Issues of Current Society in Texts

This figure above demonstrates that the main topics referred to within HPS students' comments were 'Social Class' (34%) and 'Projecting to the Future' (31%); while LPS students overwhelmingly focussed on 'Projecting to the Future' (37%). Another noteworthy finding is that HPS students did not seem to comment on issues of 'Ethnicity' while 16% of LPS students did.

Figure 5.3.21 (below) shows additionally a biplot representing both students' responses and non-responses to each of the five referent categories.

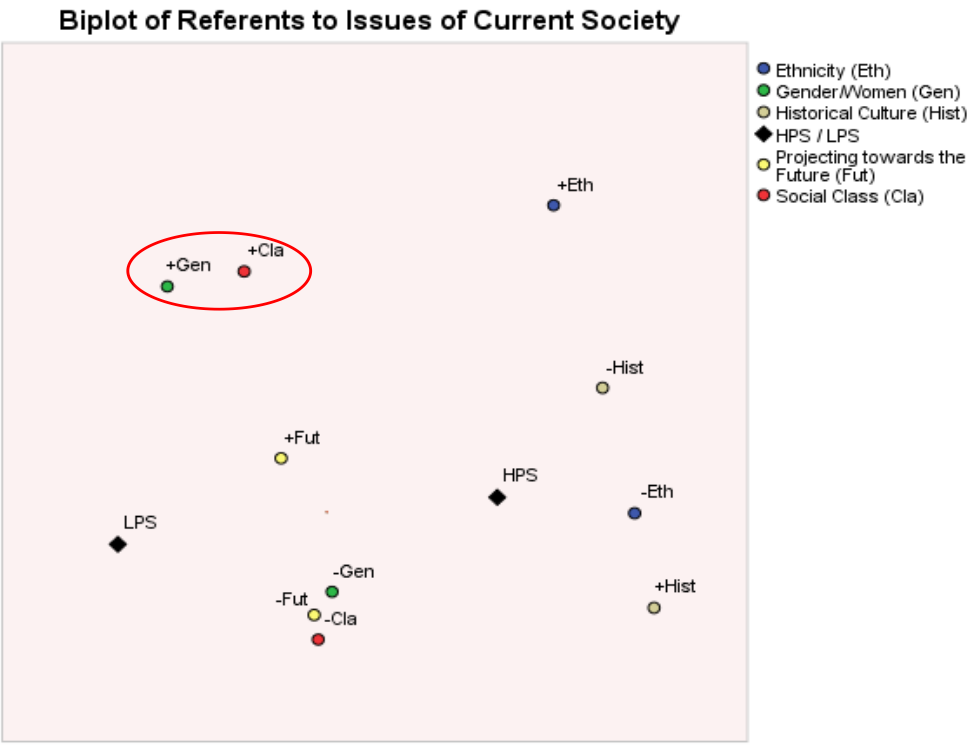

Figure 5.3.21: Biplot of Referents to Issues of Current Society

The biplot above demonstrates that whenever students from either HPS or LPS refer to issues of 'Social Class', they tend to simultaneously refer to issues of gender, more specifically, 'Women' in the same comment.

Chapter Six

Comparative & Postcolonial Analysis of Research Findings

6.1 Curriculum

Senior English curricula are investigated to determine the extent to which curriculum is framed to challenge students to consider cultural differences in society through prescribed text selection. By using abductive reasoning through postcolonial framework, the following compares and analyses the main findings of this thesis.

6.1.1 Politics & curriculum boards

Between 2012 to 2015, while this research was being conducted, education in Australia and England was a popular subject being discussed by governments, teachers and researchers around the world. In Australia, the development of the National Curriculum was underway, while in England, secondary education was undergoing a major curriculum reform. In both countries, these changes were occurring for different reasons, like; international comparative results of students' performance (PISA), national result monitoring like NAPLAN (Australia) and league tables (UK), data on achievement levels of 16 to 18 year old's in final secondary school examinations, as well as changes of government, where new education policies were being implemented. This research does not provide a comprehensive evaluation of these external influences on curriculum design and development, as this would have extended too far from the intended investigation. Though, it is important to acknowledge and compare how some of these changes have had an impact on senior secondary English education

in both countries to better understand the intentions and progressions of curriculum design.

Scholarship on curriculum studies, like Pinar's work on curriculum theory contextualises a significant challenge for educators; how do *structure* and *content* evolve jointly to meet the demands and needs of society?[474] After three and a half years of conducting this research and attempting to answer this question it seems, at least for NSW and the AQA, *structure* and *content* evolve separately . To explain, when I conducted interviews with the Curriculum Officers there was great emphasis on; (i) loading more content into the curriculum, (ii) managing satisfaction levels of politics, policies and participants (i.e. teachers), and (iii) constructing a system for testing. In these interviews, there was little emphasis on *who* was being educated. In fact, NSW believed their curriculum was enough of a catchment to cater for learners of different abilities, and the AQA admitted they do not consider or care much for the diversity of the student body it educates.[475] This finding contributes to a larger body of scholarship, Hargreaves, Baird, O'Neill, Anderson, Yates,[476] to name a few, who argue that curriculum changes have moved out of the *control of educators* and, to coin a phrase, become a *business beast of education*. The curriculum is '*beastly*' because it is powerful and it is tiring to tame and difficult to challenge. Change in the curriculum, as demonstrated by the recent political education reforms in both countries, is arduous. The Board of Studies NSW put up a significant fight against the standards and quality of ACARA

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[474] Discussed in Chapter 2 – Literature Review Pinar, W. and C. Ebooks (2004). What is Curriculum Theory? Mahwah, N.J, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

[475] See Chapters 4 & 5 for findings, pgs. 112 and 179, respectively.

[476] Shuman, R. B. (1981). "Education in the 80's: English.", Anderson, P. M. (1986). "The Past Is Now: Approaches to the Secondary School Literature Curriculum." The English Journal **75**(8): 19-22, O'Neill, M. (1987). "English Curriculum: A Kind of Anarchy." English Education **19**(1): 6-30, Hargreaves, A. (2003). Teaching in the knowledge society: Education in the age of insecurity, Teachers College Press, Hargreaves, A. and D. Shirley (2008). "Beyond Standardization: Powerful New Principles for Improvement." The Phi Delta Kappan **90**(2): 135-143, Yates, L. (2009). "From Curriculum to Pedagogy and Back Again: Knowledge, the Person and the Changing World." Pedagogy, Culture & Society **17**(1): 17-28, Yates, L. (2013). "Revisiting curriculum, the numbers game and the inequality problem." Journal of Curriculum Studies **45**(1): 39.

and their work on Australia's National Curriculum.[477] In contrast, though the AQA must comply with governmental demands put forward, which are moderated by Ofqual, they maintain their competitive strength against other exam boards and operate under "secrecy to build curricula that is attractive".[478]

There are much larger forces which preside over curriculum boards (politics, economics and globalisation) and they influence how curriculum design shapes the skills and knowledge of students per generation. To borrow from Willinsky, who suggests that the school curricula are endlessly contributing to vital parts of empire building; through curricula, meaning and history are interpreted and transmitted to younger generations.[479] However, other factors like politics (mentioned above), forces in the economy, and globalisation, the movement of people around the world contribute to the *knowledge economies*, which according to Winter, "emphasises the importance of education, training and high-level skills for success in the global market" (298).[480] These external factors, which preside over curriculum boards seem to reinforce Western constructs and ideals of learning; determining and maintaining both *what* and *how* students learn. Willinsky argues that we need to "direct progressive curriculum efforts toward understanding the realities of the new empires, driven by economic globalism, knowledge economies and terrorist resistances" (96).[481] This research found the *who* is being educated, and *why* this knowledge is relevant are seemingly not given equal consideration in curriculum design. He suggests a postcolonial approach to curriculum design will take into consideration the political, global and

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[477] Refer to Chapter 4 for discussions related to this finding, pg., 112.
[478] Refer to Chapter 5 for discussions related to this finding, pg., 179.
[479] Willinsky, J. (2006). High School Postcolonial: As the Students Ran Ahead with the Theory. Curriculum as Cultural Practice Postcolonial Imaginations. Y. Kanu. Toronto, University of Toronto Press**:** 95-115.
[480] Winter, C. (2012). "School curriculum, globalisation and the constitution of policy problems and solutions." Journal of Education Policy **27**(3): 295-220.
[481] Willinsky, J. (2006). High School Postcolonial: As the Students Ran Ahead with the Theory. Curriculum as Cultural Practice Postcolonial Imaginations. Y. Kanu. Toronto, University of Toronto Press**:** 95-115.

economic changes that have resituated the values of empire. Tikly supports such a change stating that a postcolonial consideration of curriculum can be "used to describe a global *'condition'* or shift in the cultural, political and economic arrangements that arise from the experiences of European colonialism both in former colonised and colonising countries" (605).[482] These external influences have a significant impact on how curriculum boards identify and determine the knowledge and skill sets that are necessary for an upcoming generation.[483] A postcolonial approach would help reconceptualise their influence on curriculum design focusing more on empowering other voices that help shape and build knowledge economies in society.

6.1.2 Competition for education power

After determining how the strings of power can externally tug on curriculum boards (section above), it is now important to look more closely at the construct of these boards in Australia and England and tease how these have an influence on contemporary education. In this research, only one examining body per country has been selected to better focus on the stratification of secondary education from curriculum, through to pedagogy and students, as seen in Jogie's model,[484] to determine how these processes deliver a contemporary, engaging and culturally significant English education at the senior secondary level. To briefly recap, in Australia, the Board of Studies NSW was selected because it heralds itself as a worthy model of secondary education in Australia; due to its development of the HSC qualification and system of examination which has international recognition.[485] Similarly, the AQA is the largest examination board for the

[482] Tikly, L. (1999). "Postcolonial and Comparative Education." International Review of Education **45**(5).
[483] These external factors like politics, economy, globalisation are external to the apex 'curriculum' as seen in Jogie's Model (see Introduction). Rather the apex triangle 'Curriculum' is discussed on the next section – 6.1.2 – Monopolising of Education Power.
[484] See Chapter 1 – Introduction, Jogie's model, on pg., 6.
[485] See Chapter 4, for a justification for Board of Studies as a study, see pg.,112.

GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) and GCE (General Certificate of Education) secondary qualifications in the United Kingdom and overseas millions of examinations per year.[486] Both NSW and the AQA are popular curriculum boards used to educate secondary learners, therefore it is important to dissect *how* and *why* these boards maintain a stronghold on secondary education.

Since the Board of Studies NSW has a virtual monopoly over both curriculum and assessment, it focuses on designing curricula to set competitive standards across other Australian states. There is limited competition with the HSC, perhaps from only other private programmes such as the International Baccalaureate (IB). This is in stark contrast to the system in the United Kingdom, where the AQA (though large and popular) is but one examination board, which competes with eight others, offering GCSE, GCE or A-Level and vocational programmes. Examination boards in the United Kingdom are treated as private businesses who are accountable to uphold government policies, which are strictly moderated by the curriculum *watchdog*, Ofqual.[487] These comparisons offer two different systems of curriculum design and dissemination; one where schools do not have much choice but to accept the Board of Studies curriculum (NSW), and the other in England, where educators are given a preference of eight types of curricula on offer. Interestingly enough, this research found that despite having two different curriculum boards, with polarised positions of power (NSW monopolises, AQA competes), neither of these constructs have served in truly empowering teachers.

Empowerment of educators (principals, teachers) is an important issue that has been identified in scholarship; according to Pinar, structure and content in education needs to be continuously adapted in order to be relevant

[486] Refer to Chapter 5, for a justification of AQA as a study, 179.
[487] '*Watchdog*' is the adjective used by the British media to address and summarise the job of Ofqual.

and useful for both learners and wider society.[488] A postcolonial theorist would accept Pinar's concerns and build off the fact that if curriculum is a plan for an *uncertain future*, the best way forward would be to empower teachers who deal with uncertainties (on a daily basis) to be active participants in the curriculum design. However, this research shows there is less evidence of curriculum boards truly empowering teachers. In interviews with Curriculum Officers it was identified that in NSW teachers were part of the stakeholder groups that were consulted in relation to the selection of texts. However, there is no transparency of the extent to which the Board of Studies differentiates where teachers have a voice about text selection in relation to those recommendations of stakeholder groups. Second to this, there is no way of knowing how the Board of Studies takes any recommendations on board or how they filter and incorporate this information in their choices. There is no clear indication of the training and expertise of these stakeholders in the field of English education, or evidence to suggest that they have worked with young students and know what might engage them in English classes. Based on these findings, one can ponder how might a NSW curriculum look if teachers are visibly included in processes of designing curriculum and resources? Part of the reason this process may not be visible lies in the blurred understanding of the boundaries that perhaps exist between designers (curriculum board) and facilitators (teachers).

In England, the AQA claim that teachers are an integral part of their curriculum design, because teachers are not just educators, they are clients. Taking a more business savvy approach to curriculum design has constructed quite an interesting narrative, for example, English specifications are designed with the aim to attract and please teachers and there seems to be little or no emphasis on students.[489] Instead, the AQA justify that teachers are

[488] Pinar, W. and C. Ebooks (2004). What is Curriculum Theory? Mahwah, N.J, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
[489] See Chapter 5, for evidence of AQA Curriculum Officer Statement, pg., 179.

representative of their students; so a teacher's voice is equivalent to a student's voice. In my opinion, such a blanketed approach is risky because students and teachers do not serve the same master. Both are not motivated by the same reasons; a teacher is there to guide and facilitate, while a student is there to absorb and engage in learning. The AQA acknowledges that teachers are motivated by a range of reasons that are not necessarily focused on students, such as; material they are comfortable working with, what engages them, options that might be easier to succeed in exams, resources that are short and easy to cover. Therefore, empowerment of teachers is not necessarily just listening to what teachers want; they are a large cohort, with different skills, abilities, qualifications, interests and it is unreasonable to expect easy negation of power between them and the curriculum. Taking the corporate approach does not seem to be truly motivating educators to build curriculum, as Applebee suggests, that should "reinforces learning in meaningful ways."[490] This leads to the question, how can a curriculum board maintain the robust standards within a competitive market, appease investors, and ensure that consistency and meaning in terms of structure and content is preserved? A postcolonialist might speculate that one needs to actively involve other bodies which interact with curriculum boards (e.g. Ofqual) who help moderate processes not just in terms of achieving outcomes but also to assist with maintaining the balance of power and voice.

6.1.3 Building and balancing curriculum & postcolonial theory

Table 6.1.1 compares the unit of analysis for each of the NSW and AQA curricula, both of which set similar precedence for students to learn about, understand, engage with and interpret cultural differences and others in society.

[490] Applebee, A. N. (1996). Curriculum as conversation: Transforming traditions of teaching and learning, University of Chicago Press.

Table 6.1.1: Comparison of Senior Secondary English Curricula in Australia and England

Curriculum	Australia	England
Senior secondary education 16-18-year-olds	• Board of Studies New South Wales (NSW), Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC)	• Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), A-Levels
English Curriculum	• Divided into **five parts**. Focus on common section of Standard and Advanced curriculum	• Divided into **three parts**. Focus on Specification A
Section of English Curriculum	• Area of Study	• Texts in Shared Contexts
Aim of the section	• "… explore and examine **relationships between language and text**, interrelationships among texts while considering the texts' **relationships to the wider content** of the Area of Study [**theme**]. They **synthesise** ideas to **clarify** meaning and **develop new meanings**. They take into account whether aspects such as context, purpose and register, text structures, stylistic features, grammatical features and vocabulary are appropriate to the particular text" (Board of Studies New South Wales 2013)	• "… to consider how **readers' responses are shaped by the context**, by **writers' choices** and by **other readers' interpretations**" (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance 2014)
Modules under the section	• Area of Study themes: *Changing* (2001-2003), *Journeys* (2004-2008), ***Belonging*** (2009-2014), *Discovery* (2015-2020)	• ***Struggle for Identity in Modern Literature*** (2009-2014); *Modern Times: Literature from 1945 to present day* (2015-2017)
Text types selected for this study	• **Prose fiction, drama, poetry** and non-fiction or film or media or multimedia text. (Only students doing Advanced English will be required also to study Shakespeare)	• **Prose fiction, poetry, drama**

Though this analysis compares only one section of both curricula, it highlights how these have been built differently. It is important to remember this section of curriculum (above) sits under a larger structure (as previously discussed in this chapter). The first difference between both curricula are that, NSW's is compulsory and structurally sub-divided to cater for students with

different levels of English literacy and who have different learning abilities.[491] Whereas, the AQA A-Level is non-compulsory and seems to focus more on developing students' literacy skills by concentrating on finessing the more foundational skills of English. The NSW curriculum has been built to provide more structural guidance for teachers, by pre-determining the necessary skills which learners of different abilities, are meant to achieve. Segregating students by their ability and then building curricula which focuses on challenging them only up to where we think they can learn, seems a sensible approach, but there are potential flaws in this construct. On the other hand, the AQA does not build curriculum according to student ability, however such sorting is already facilitated in schools, where students are placed into classes with peers who demonstrate similar abilities. The British system is both dependent on and reflective of performance levels in leagues tables, in that students commencing secondary school (age 12) are sorted into set levels, where they are either brilliant or less than. It is common in both systems, that students become aware they are being stereotyped by their abilities. In my experience, this process can have more of an impact on students who are categorised as lower performers, which often leads to an unwillingness to engage, a general mentality of personal failure, idleness and poor classroom behaviour. A postcolonial approach to building curriculum would perhaps involve designing curricula that encourages more integration of students with different abilities.

[491] For a discussion of Curriculum design and structure refer to Chapter 4, Section—4.1.1 Board of Studies, NSW English Stage 6: Higher School Certificate, and Chapter 5, Section—5.1.1 Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) A- Levels, on pgs. 112 and 179, respectively.

6.2 Prescribed texts

There were three main areas where issues were identified with the processes of selecting prescribed texts to engage students in both case studies; (i) the types of texts, (ii) balancing of texts, (iii) the number and variety of texts listed and (iii) the criteria and rationale for selecting these texts.[492]

6.2.1 Text types

Table 6.2.1 presents choices within these text genres in terms of three timeframes, Group A (Pre-1900), Group B (1901-1999) and Group C (2000-present) for the '*Area of Study*' (Board of Studies, NSW) and Spec A *'Struggle for Identity'* (AQA).[493]

Table 6.2.1: Prescribed Texts Classified by Text Types and Timeframe

Text Types	Timeframes		
	Group A (Pre-1900)	Group B (1901-1999)	Group C (2000-present)
Prose Fiction	**BOS, NSW:**		
	• Great Expectations (1861) • Huckleberry Finn (1885) • The Awakening (1899)	• Heat and Dust (1975) • Empire of the Sun (1984) • Ender's Game (1985) • Joy Luck Club (1989) • Wrack (1997)	• The Namesake (2003) • Swallow the Air (2006)
	AQA:		
		• Revolutionary Road (1961) • One flew over the cuckoo's nest (1962) • Color Purple (1982) • Waterland (1983) • Oranges not the only fruit (1985) • Handmaid's Tale (1985) • Beloved (1987) • Wise Children (1991) • Snow Falling on Cedars (1994) • Woman who Walked into	• The Help (2009) • Vernon Little God (2003) • Spies (2002)

[492] As mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5; the AQA selects texts only from within the traditional prose fiction, poetry and drama while the Board of Studies NSW hosts more categories of text types to include non-fiction, film and media, see pgs. 122 and 187.

[493] Resources over this time are examined to compare how texts selected for these modules varied over a period; the Area of Study has been on the curriculum for 16 years, whereas the section Texts in Shared Context, which hosts the *'Struggle for Identity'* module in Spec A has been around for nine years.

		Doors (1996) • God of Small Things (1997) • Hullaballoo in the Guava (1998) • Trumpet (1998)	
Non-Fiction	**BOS, NSW:**		
		• My Place (1982) • On Giants' Shoulders (1999) • Romulus, My Father (1998)	• Lionheart (2001) • Short History of Everything (2003) • Motorcycle Diaries (2003)
Poetry	**BOS, NSW:**		
	• R. Gray (1762-1834) • S. Coleridge (1912) • E. Dickinson (1955)	• R. Frost (1874-63) • P. Skrzynecki (1975) • Imagined Corners (1999)	• The Simple Gift (2000) • R. Dobson (1920-12)
	AQA:		
		• Ariel (1965) • Heaney (1966-87) • And Still I Rise (1978) • Birthday Letters (1998)	• Skirrid Hill (2005) • Feminine Gospels (2002) • Harrison (2013)
Drama	**BOS, NSW:**		
		• The Crucible (1953) • Away (1986) • Così (1992)	• Rainbow's End (2005)
	AQA:		
		• All my Sons (1947) • Streetcar Named Desire (1947) • Cat on a hot tin roof (1958) • Death and King's Horsemen (1975) • Translations (1980) • Top Girls (1982) • Making History (1989) • Our Country's Good (1990)	
Shakespeare[494]	**BOS, NSW:**		
	• As you Like it (1598-1600) • The Tempest (1610-1611)		
Film	**BOS, NSW:**		
		• Strictly Ballroom (1992) • Life is Beautiful (1999)	• Contact (2001) • Rabbit-Proof Fence (2002) • Ten Canoes (2006) • Life of Pi (2012)
Media	**BOS, NSW:**		
			• The Man who made History (2005) • Go back to where you came from (2012)

Table 6.2.1 shows that NSW provides a wider spectrum of text types compared

[494] Please note on Table 6.2.2, 'Shakespeare' is not included under the 'Drama' category as these are separate text types for the Board of Studies, NSW English Stage 6 Curriculum, since 'Shakespeare' is only offered in the Advanced course and is separated from the 'Drama' category offered in the Standard course.

to the AQA, which lists only prose fiction, poetry and drama. The challenges with having a range of text types is firstly, considering how these options will present or express issues in texts and secondly, how are newer multimodal resources changing the nature of English education, and if so, what does this digital age of English look like?[495] Though existing research by Hastie, Sharplin, Orman and Lyiscott, Holloway and others, promote multimodal research as a necessary component to help students engage with English, their work does not indicate that multimodal categories would be a good *replacement* for other forms of text.[496] Michael and Golds suggest that different types of texts offer information in various forms, whether it be language styles, formatted structure or content encompassing a range of issues.[497] As this research focuses on how texts help students consider cultural differences in society, the *content* takes precedence in the following discussions. Regarding content, Subedi suggests the battle with traditional texts is that its messages are always imposing Western values onto other cultures through texts (prose, fiction, poetry).[498] While many traditional texts have embodied more Western ideals of culture, it is interesting to consider how new forms of digital texts are presented in terms of perspectives and views of non-Western cultures. A postcolonial theoretical approach would encourage different forms of text types to be incorporated as this is potentially a means for balancing off not just types of texts, but also content on different perspectives of power. However, caution would be exercised to ensure that texts selected to engage students

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[495] In Chapter 2 – Literature Review, Benton's work references how canonical texts serve two purposes (to paraphrase) encourage reading habits and desire to expose learners to new authors. This position is used to ask what does a more digitally advanced (curriculum with more multi-modal texts) aim to do differently?

[496] Holloway, S. M. and C. J. Greig (2011). "Literacy Text Selections in Secondary School Classrooms: Exploring the Practices of English Teachers as Agents of Change." Brock Education **20**(2): 1, Hastie, M. and E. Sharplin (2012). "Why Did you Choose that Text?: Influences on English teachers' Choices of Reading Materials for Students." English in Australia **47**(2): 36-44, Orman, K. V. and J. Lyiscott (2013). "Politely Disregarded: Streetr Fiction, Mass Incarceration, and Critical Praxis." English Journal **102**(4): 59-66.

[497] Michaels, W. and E. Gold (2006). "'As Time Goes By' or Read it Again, Sam." Metaphor(1): 90-99.

[498] The discussion of texts being conduits of Western ideals, values and culture is also discussed in the following section, however for this reference see, Subedi, B. (2013). "Decolonizing the Curriculum for Global Perspectives." Educational Theory **63**(6): 621-638.

and consider how messages of oppression, power and cultural dominance are represented from different points of view. A method of screening for these issues, would be to involve students' and teachers' input when selecting options, if only to generate a blanket understanding of their impressions of these texts and the values that can be extrapolated from them.

It is apparent from Table 6.2.1 there are more traditional or well-renowned options for study, but few that can seemingly address *hybridized identities*, hence the reason Johnston and Richardson have called for more contemporary *prize-winning* literature to be added to lists, which will add new flavours and perspectives of cultural changes that are perhaps more applicable to current students.[499] According to Opuku-Amankwa, Aba and Francis texts are important because these resources go beyond the curricula and are carried throughout a student's life.[500] This consideration of texts, as making a larger contribution to students' lives raises a postcolonial concern; introducing any new form of text for education is primarily how messages of oppression and power are transmitted to students. Here, I put forward that a postcolonial consideration of text selection and students might include, representing and differentiating; (i) the popular views of the *West* to *Other* cultures but also, (ii) voices and perspectives of *non-Western* cultural considerations, and (iii) options that can help make clearer connections to issues of identity (*hybridized*) in contemporary society. However, a balance of these options is not clearly defined in either NSW[501] or AQA[502] prescribed lists,

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[499] Johnston, I. and G. Richardson (2012). "Homi Bhabha and Canadian Curriculum Studies: Beyond the Comforts of the Dialectic." Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies **10**(1): 115.

[500] Opoku-Amankwa, K., A. Brew-Hammond and F. E. Kofigah (2011). "What is in a Textbook? Investigating the Language and Literacy Learning Principles of the 'Gateway to English' Textbook Series." Pedagogy, Culture & Society **19**(2): 291-310.

[501] Despite claims made by the Board of Studies NSW that, for the Area of Study, there is a 10-15% turnover of texts on the prescribed list this is not supported by this research. The Area of Study over the last 16 years shows that, of the 38 prescribed texts, approximately 34% were moved in and out of sections of the curriculum into the prescribed reading list. Basically, the 10-15% turnover does not necessarily mean that newer materials are added to reading lists but, may represent a reshuffling of options from elsewhere on the curriculum.

[502] The AQA acknowledge that they tend to repeat the texts that, the majority of their clients (schools and teachers), consistently select for teaching. The text selections for the AQA show the majority of the options are from Group B (1900-1999), which means that 75% of the reading list is comprised of texts

instead there are seemingly more traditional options listed for study. One potential reason this balance is difficult to achieve is because, in both case studies, the majority of texts were published between 1901-1999 with few newer publications emerging after the turn of the century. Johnston and Mangat state that, usually with well-loved texts, little attention is paid to questions of colonisation, power and marginalization as pertinent to contemporary students.[503] This gap between text and context can be problematic especially if there are fewer *incentives* to create a balance of traditional texts with more recently published options.

6.2.2 Balancing types of texts

The redistribution of texts per category shows that options from prose fiction and poetry were removed to offer selections under the media category.[504] As discussed in the previous section, efforts to include more recently published material should be applauded, as these might have more appeal for contemporary learners. It must be questioned whether removing text choices from *reading* texts to provide more contemporary options for *viewing* texts is an effective strategy for establishing a balance between well-known and newer publications. Based on my experience as a teacher, there are different pedagogies used for teaching *reading* and *viewing* texts; for instance, when teaching *viewing* texts students are asked to comment on technical skills, like cinematography and camera shots, whereas for *reading* texts students

published in the 20th Century. As well, of the total 31 texts listed over nine years from the '*Struggle for Identity*' module, 45% of these were repeated or moved from other sections of the curriculum. As a result, the AQA has a limited range of text types on offer for study and, of those listed, the majority have been moved into the prescribed list from other sections of the curriculum.

[503] Johnston, I. and J. Mangat (2012). Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literature, and Cultural Mediation in the Classroom. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers.

[504] Given the reduction of texts, it is interesting to note, that in 2014, the Board of Studies decided to increase the number of text types by adding a media category while retaining the total number of prescribed texts. The addition of a new category (Media) did not result in an increase of the number of total texts but led to eliminating texts from other categories to accommodate this new text type. Refer to Chapter 4, Table 4.1.3, on pg., 122.

engage more with grammar and language, for example learning to identify metaphors and sarcasm. The majority of *reading* texts are comprised of canonical or traditional selections while the *viewing* texts make up the majority of options produced post-2000. Figure 6.2.1 shows Australian texts, for the Area of Study, categorised by year of publication and type of texts.

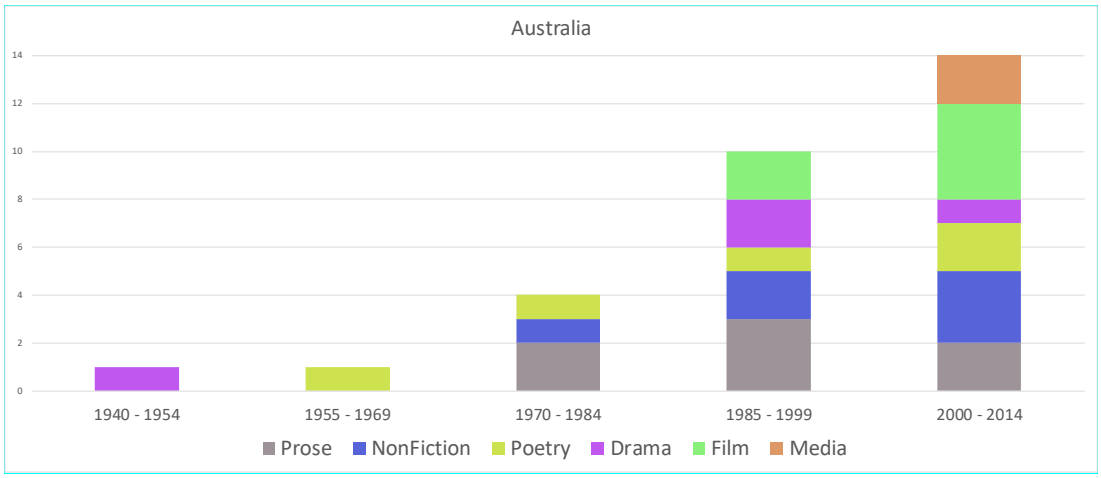

Figure 6.2.1: Board of Studies, NSW - Texts Categorised by Year of Publication and Type

Figure 6.2.1 shows that from 1985 to 2014, the only new texts to be added to the curriculum are film and media; constituting that only multimodal texts have been recently added to the prescribed list. The medium (*reading* versus *viewing*) should also balance the type of content, for example some old classic films can also be listed on the curriculum. NSW has demonstrated more effort than the AQA for building curricula that accesses a range of text types. Figure 6.2.2 represents the categorisation of AQA Spec A texts by years of publication and text types.

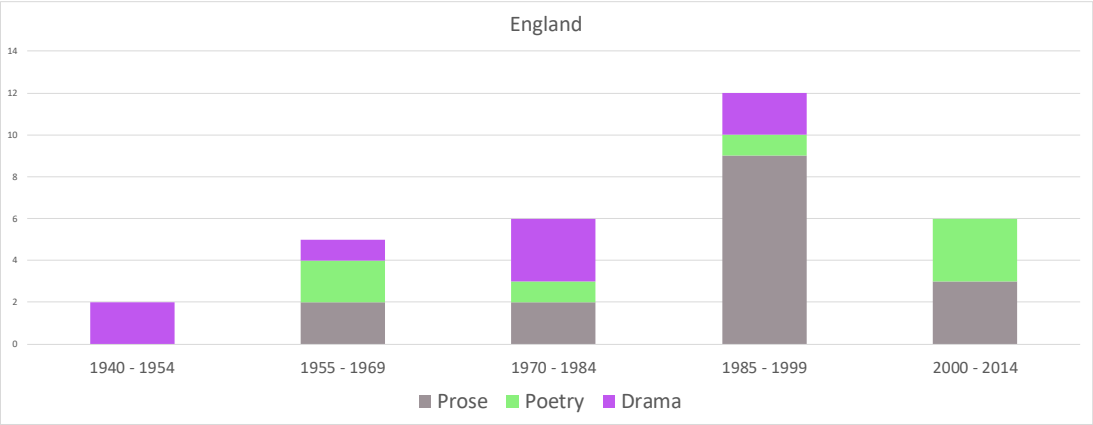

Figure 6.2.2: AQA -Texts Categorised by Year of Publication and Type

The AQA figure shows that while 'drama' texts have been present on the curriculum from 1940 to the end of the last century, they are no longer part of the prescribed list for the 2000-2014 Spec, which focuses on the study of modern identity. It can be speculated the differences exist because of the overarching aim of the curriculum and as well resourcing of technology. The introduction of multimodal texts in curricula expresses a certain level of confidence that the majority of teachers and schools can have access to technology which facilitate this type of learning. Though a power imbalance can occur when teachers are not able to expose students to more innovative options because of limited resources. Furthermore, as suggested by Friese, Alvermann and Parkes, sometimes teachers are limited by their deficiencies in training and professional development to utilise technology in lessons.[505] Researchers like Benton, Sawyer, Davies, Johnson, confirm that canonical texts have an overwhelming presence on school reading lists, and that these texts (as mentioned earlier) are most likely to transmit Western cultural ideals.[506] Their work has not really engaged with the power positions between the types

[505] Friese, E., D. Alvermann, A. Parkes and A. Rezak (2008). "Selecting Texts for English Language Arts Classrooms: When Assessment is Not Enough." English Teaching: Practice and Critique **7**(3): 74.
[506] Benton, M. (2000). "Canons Ancient and Modern: The Texts we Teach." Educational Review **52**(3): 269, Johnston, I. (2006). Engaged Differences: School Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literatures, and Their Discontents. Curriculum as Cultural Practice, Postcolonial Imaginations. Y. Kanu. Toronto, Toronto University Press**:** 116-130, Sawyer, W. (2006). "Masters in Pieces: The English Canon for the Twenty-first Century [Book Review]." English in Australia **41**(2): 75, Davies, L. M. (2012). "Auditing Subject English: A Review of Text Selection Practices Inspired by the National Year of Reading." Ibid. **47**: 11-17.

of texts. Yet building from their example of canonical texts transmitting Western values, one might consider how students associate their entire experience with such a text (form and content) as disengaging relative to newer texts. To explain, more contemporary options are associated with *viewing* texts than *reading* texts, which could result in students regarding reading as less of an enjoyable task compared to experiencing film and media studies. A postcolonialist might suggest the selection of *reading* and *viewing* texts should not be juxtaposed as older, more canonical texts associated with *reading* and newer texts with film/media studies. One solution might be to list more texts under each category, ensuring the range of texts offered for study are a mixture of options (traditional and newer selections).

6.2.3 Issues with the quantity of prescribed texts

Of pertinent interest in this research is fixed number of options listed for study under each category. For instance, NSW reduced the total number of prescribed texts from 16 to 14 for the Area of Study, while the teaching period was extended to five years. This change meant that teachers have fewer texts to choose from over a longer period. Similarly, the AQA (prior to the reform) had selections like '*Of Mice and Men*' and '*To Kill a Mockingbird*' as prescribed options for decades, where students were even allowed to study the same text for two different levels of senior examinations GCSE and GCE, this translates to four years of schooling focusing on the same text.[507] The Curriculum Officers explained the rationale for this reduction is twofold; firstly, so teachers would have fewer options to choose from, and secondly examiners have less preparation by reviewing a shorter list of prescribed texts. In addition to listing a fixed number of prescribed texts; the number of options Figure 6.2.2 (above) shows that most of the texts from the more traditional

[507] Refer to Chapter 5 for more information on text selections in England, pg., 179.

categories (prose fiction, drama, poetry) are comprised of more traditional options which are also repeated on school lists. Therefore, the justification given by Curriculum Officers for the limited number of texts, automatically reduces the amount of preparation examiners have to make since; (i) the majority of texts have already been listed on the curriculum for years, and (ii) texts are taught for a period of five years. So, one year of text preparation essentially covers five years of marking, which seemingly reduces its potency as a rationale for limiting and repeating text selections.[508] A postcolonial concern with the justification of text selection from the curriculum boards, is that it focuses more on teachers and examinations, and pays little or no attention to students.

This rationale gives no explicit consideration to the student population these texts are intended to educate. There would appear to be little consideration of how the reduction in choice will limit the ability of teachers to make selections that are perhaps more beneficial for their students' learning needs and interests. Though, Thompson suggests some teachers prefer to choose the same texts because these are the best options that help their students to successfully achieve learning outcomes.[509] However, it is unclear which issue comes first; if the lack of a variety leads teachers to pick the same texts and make them engaging, or if teachers really do gravitate towards the same often because these are generally successful with their students. There are no studies which answer this difficult question, perhaps because teachers are motivated by either of these options or a combintion of both. A postcolonial reading of this situation might suggest that teachers were never given an alternative to the prescribed texts, so how would we truly know what typoes of options they might consider as most beneficial to their students.

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[508] Speculations can be made that adding more texts to the prescribed lists would not be increasing the work load for examiners as the majority of HSC and the A-Level markers are former English teachers who might be familiar with the majority of texts listed for study, so providing newer options might not severely increase the workload.

[509] Thompson, K. H. (2014). "Beyond the Stacks: Why High School English Teachers Should be Talking about Books." English Journal **103**(6): 38.

Table 6.2.3 is a quantitative representation of texts across different categories into timeframes.

Table 6.2.3: Quantitative Distribution of Texts into Timeframes

Text Types	Timeframes												Total	
	Group A (Pre 1900)				Group B (1901-1999)				Group C (2000-present)					
	NSW		AQA		NSW		AQA		NSW		AQA			
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Prose fiction	3	4	0	0	5	7	13	19	2	3	3	4	26	38
Non-fiction	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	0	3	4	0	0	6	9
Poetry	1	1	0	0	5	7	4	6	2	3	3	4	15	22
Drama	0	0	0	0	3	4	8	12	1	1	0	0	12	17
Shakespeare	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3
Film	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	4	6	0	0	6	8
Media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	2	3
Total	***6***	***9***	***0***	***0***	***18***	***26***	***25***	***36***	***14***	***20***	***6***	***9***	***69***	***100***

Table 6.2.3 indicates that 62% of texts derive from 1901-1999, 29% have been published after the turn of the century (2000 onwards), and only 9% are pre-1900. It can be suggested the numbers for prose fiction, and drama are higher than others because these two categories comprise two-thirds of AQA text options.

Overall, the text types prose fiction, poetry and drama have the highest number of texts listed for study and also comprise the highest number of texts published from Group B (1901-1999) as is illustrated in Table 6.2.4, which shows the distribution of the number of texts across all text types for both Exam Boards.

Table 6.2.4: Distribution of Texts across all Text Types for both Examination Boards

Text Type	NSW Board of Studies		AQA		Total	
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Prose Fiction	10	26	16	52	26	38
Non-Fiction	6	16	0	0	6	9
Poetry	8	22	7	22	15	22
Drama	4	10	8	26	12	16
Shakespeare	2	5	0	0	2	3
Film	6	16	0	0	6	9
Media	2	5	0	0	2	3
Total	***38***	***100***	***31***	***100***	***69***	***100***

Table 6.2.4 shows that the dominant text types are prose fiction (38%), followed by poetry (22%) and drama (16%). It is important to note, in both case studies, these categories are populated with more canonical or traditional texts than culturally diverse or newer options. To illustrate this, Figure 6.2.3 maps the total number of prescribed texts into timeframes.

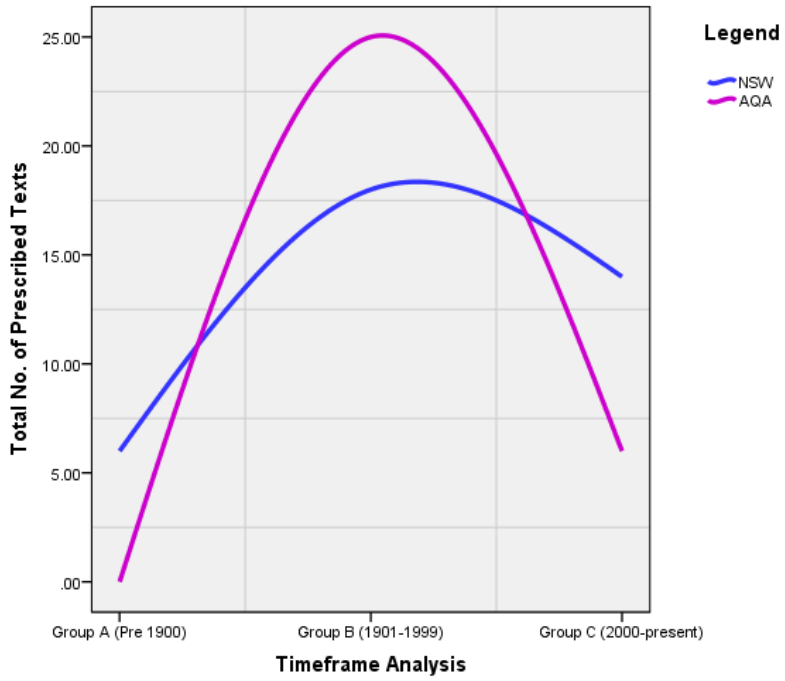

Figure 6.2.3: Representation of all Prescribed Texts into Timeframes

Figure 6.2.3 shows that overall the 20th Century is more dominant for AQA than for Board of Studies NSW, which ranges more broadly over the three periods.

6.2.4 *Criteria and rationale for selecting texts*

Both Curriculum Officers claim that new texts are regularly added to the prescribed lists when module/specification appraisals are conducted at each five-year rotation. Though, as demonstrated above, the current prescribed texts in both curricula, shows that *new* texts, options that have never been listed before, are rarely seen on curricula. Texts were not *new* in the sense of recently published options but, in fact, were existing texts moved from other sections of curricula. Both Examination Boards have structural guidelines around the lifecycle of a module or specification including the number of options listed for study and how often texts are changed. Table 6.2.5 compares the protocols for setting and reviewing texts in both case studies.

Table 6.2.5: Comparison of Protocols for Setting and Reviewing Texts

Case Study	Module/Specification Life Cycle	Number of Prescribed Texts	Frequency of Reviewing Texts
Board of Studies, NSW (Australia)	• Every 4 years, extended in 2014 to every 5 years	• 16 (2004-2008), and reduced to 14 (2008- onwards)	• Every 5 years
AQA (England)	• Every 5 years	• 16 (2009-2014), and extended to 21 (2015 onwards)	• To be annually reviewed from September 2017

Table 6.2.5 shows that while the lifecycle of the module or unit for study is now the same for both curriculum bodies, there are differences in the number of prescribed texts set for each section of study and the frequency of reviewing texts. These protocols can potentially impact on curricula aims and the engagement of in learning about cultural differences.

The Board of Studies NSW consults with a list of 34 different stakeholders comprising reference groups, expert and community groups.[510] The guidelines are structured around the aim that texts must be age

[510] Refer to Chapter 4, Section 4.1.4—Rationale for text selection, on pg., 131.

appropriate and that community and social values are a priority in the selection process. In addition to these expectations, stakeholders are directed that texts should meet curriculum aims in terms of; (i) merits and significance, (ii) needs and interest of students and (iii) opportunities for challenging teaching and learning. Information disclosed at the interview confirms that "it is not compulsory for all of the stakeholder groups or consultants to participate in the text selection process, and we [Board of Studies] don't have a say about who comprise these groups".[511] Further investigations show that, for the 2015 release of the media text type, the Media expert groups had not participated in the text selection process. This questions the transparency of the text selection process; does accountability depend on consistency? As well, if transparency of the process is not available then how can others be certain of the extent to which the final cut of texts meet the criteria (above). Based on this described process it seems the Board of Studies NSW has limited control over the participation of stakeholders in the text selection process, and a lack of consultation with the acknowledged experts seems to make their position as stakeholders redundant.

The AQA is exam-driven and uses more of an in-house approach for selecting texts, in other words, there are no set criteria for text selection, as the process usually starts with a Principal Examiner. This examiner guides the entire selection process and emphasises that; (i) texts should be able to sustain the lifecycle of a specification so that multiple examination questions can be constructed on them and (ii) texts should be short enough to teach in a term. The administrative process includes meetings where educators, particularly teachers, are invited to discuss the proposed options. Teachers play a fundamental role in the nominations and selections of texts although, the Principal Examiner has the authority to make the final decision on selections. From a business point of view, the AQA wants to appeal to and appease their

[511] Board of Studies, NSW, Curriculum Officer Interview, Sydney, March 2013.

clients by listing the text options they prefer. However, in doing so, it can be argued that teachers can be motivated to select texts for a variety of practical or administrative reasons which might not always place the interests of or their students' needs first. For instance, though teachers might want to choose more texts that are engaging for students, one cannot discount the environment which might lead to; selecting options they are familiar with, where there is a range of additional resources and are more accessible.

6.3 Pedagogy

Twenty-four teachers, (12 from HPS and LPS), were interviewed to consider issues encountered when mediating prescribed texts for students in English classrooms. Table 6.3.1 presents the identification number, sex, years of experience of teachers interviewed in Australian and British (HPS and LPS) schools that participated in this research.

Table 6.3.1: Profile of Participating English Teachers from Australia and England by HPS and LPS

Schools	Teacher ID	Sex	Years of Experience	Schools	Teacher ID	Sex	Years of Experience
HPS				**LPS**			
2 Australia	4	Female	30	1 Australia	1	Female	20
	5	Female	5		2	Female	12
	6	Female	30		3	Female	10
3 Australia	7	Male	6	4 Australia	10	Female	13
	8	Female	10		11	Male	8
	9	Male	10		12	Male	5
5 England	13	Male	16	7 England	19	Female	28
	14	Female	7		20	Male	10
	15	Female	37		21	Male	18
6 England	16	Male	10	8 England	22	Female	9
	17	Male	3		23	Male	3
	18	Male	4		24	Female	2

Table 6.3.1 shows there were more female teachers in Australian HPS and LPS, who mostly had over ten years of teaching experience. Exactly half participating teachers, regardless of gender, had less than ten years of teaching experience.

The responses from teachers have been collated into five groups for comparative and postcolonial analysis identifying; (i) issues related to curricula design, (ii) concerns about coaching to senior secondary examinations, (iii) texts that are unsuitable for modules/specifications, (iv) strategies used to address students' learning needs, (v) challenges when using prescribed texts to engage students' interest.[512]

[512] The teachers' comments referred to in Chapters 4, and 5 are collated into tables for discussion under each category.

6.3.1 Issues related to curricula design

An analysis of the challenges teachers encountered when mediating prescribed texts in senior English classrooms suggests there is a widening gap between the curriculum design, nominated texts, and the student population these resources are intended to educate. Teachers from both countries express concerns about the design of senior secondary English curricula, as not necessarily satisfying (meeting and/or challenging) the diverse learning needs of their students. In other words, it seems as if the English curriculum places more emphasis on designing an education system that is more suitable for setting examinations rather than, enhancing student knowledge and development. Table 6.3.2 summarises teachers' concerns about the curriculum and prescribed texts listed for study.

Table 6.3.2: Teacher Statements on Issues with Curriculum Design and Prescribed Texts

Teacher Statements Presented in Participant Findings	
Board of Studies, NSW, Australia	**AQA, England**
1. "English just isn't about—and I hope this isn't where it's heading—techniques and structure … we need to get rid of the HSC. It has to go, it's so old!" (S2, HPS, T5). 2. "… you wonder why kids are bored of English? … because we exhaust texts with themes like '*Belonging.*' Whatever the [Board of Studies] thought they were doing when they set the syllabus—that kids would go out and appreciate texts? … and in fact it's the first thing [you read] on every rubric in the prescriptions document for each text that*, 'students will appreciated and enjoy …'*, which is absolute bullshit! (S3, HPS, T7). 3. "… the Board of Studies make us [teachers] do the same texts year after year and when they do change, it doesn't seem to change by very much" (S2, HPS, T4). 4. "… [Area of Study], it's not intellectually stimulating, it makes my students bored and it really challenges me to find new ways to	5. "… looking at the new National Curriculum they've either taken the shackles off or put them on harder I'm yet to work it out. The thing is there are fewer named texts, it's less prescriptive but looked at another way it no longer specifies that you have to study a text from other cultures, it says a broad range of texts should be studied including texts from other cultures. So it's gone from you must do this to see if you can fit that in a month and actually it might be a green light to say well we won't bother doing that" (S5, HPS, T13). 6. "… [In the curriculum] you still want to maintain aspects of the canon, but then you do want to modify the old ones. We have parent evening, where quite often a parent would come up with a text and say I did that at school forty years ago, and you do worry about the Specs, that you just get agitated in terms of the texts, but at the same time you have got to respect the canon I think" (S7, LPS, T21).

teach them about *Belonging*, they are super intelligent and it just isn't suitable for their level" (S3, HPS, T8).	

Table 6.3.2 shows that, in terms of English curricula, teachers from both country samples were doubtful about the appropriateness of the design and function of the modules/specifications for the diverse learning needs of their students. Applying Peretz and Eilam's account of approaches to pedagogy shows that teachers, in this study, are concerned about the curricula content; both in terms of the learning goals that are to be achieved with the recommended resources.[513] Generally teachers use their discretion when interpreting curriculum, designing strategies and choosing resources for their students. This research found that teachers in both countries from both HPS and LPS institutions are aware and sensitive to the needs and abilities of their diverse students. Their statements (see Table 6.3.2) indicate that despite knowing what is best for their students there is limited power or control over how they can make changes to their current education system to help students achieve better outcomes. Research, by Heble, highlights some of the difficulties teachers encounter when considering what might comprise a better education outcomes by asking,

> … how do we reconcile our responsibility, as teachers, to ensure that teaching and learning are, in Reading's words, … sites of obligation and loci of ethical practices,[514] with a commitment to democratizing the classroom, to creating participatory spaces for shaping the production of knowledge (147).[515]

This statement suggests that although teachers may want to consider students' needs, they do not necessarily know how to do so, or are restricted by their

[513] For a discussion of these pedagogical approaches refer to Chapter 2, pg.,19, or see: Ben-Peretz, M. and B. Eilam (2010). Curriculum Use in the Classroom. International Encyclopedia of Education. P. Peterson, E. Baker and B. McGaw. United Kingdom, Elsevier Science. **1:** 8400.
[514] Readings, B. (1996). The University in Ruins. Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press.
[515] Heble, A. (2002). "Re-Ethicizing the Classroom: Pedagogy, the Public Sphere, and the Postcolonial Condition." College Literature **29**(1): 143-160.

own limitations or that of the system. In NSW (Australia) approximately six educators suggested that a method to improve the Board of Studies NSW system might be to give teachers more control; in terms of choice over the prescribed texts, especially if the Area of Study remains a module taught to Advanced and Standard English courses. More power over some aspects of the English curriculum, particularly English texts and resources, would mean they are given some flexibility to make better choices for their students. Interestingly, this appeal is aligned with what might be categorised as a postcolonial approach to empower teachers to have more involvement, transparency and participation in curricula design. In this sense, then educators might be in a better position to democratise their classrooms and investigate new methods to improve student learning and engagement. However, this research has compared the NSW system to that of the AQA, where teachers do implicitly have more input and impact on the selection of texts. Yet teachers in England (who participated in this research) maintain there still issues with AQA text selection options for secondary students. So what are some of the issues currently recurring for teachers in NSW and AQA and how can empowerment of their roles as educators help facilitate change and improve outcomes for students?

Overall, teachers expressed concerns that the curriculum and English texts are not adequately addressing the diverse needs of their students; the curriculum is not well balanced for learners of different abilities and/or those from different backgrounds. Eight teachers interviewed in the Australian study stated that the Area of Study, as a module, has become repetitive to teach as the Board of Studies NSW does not change the module regularly and, when they do, both module and texts do not change significantly.[516] The repetitive nature of the curriculum does not seem to take into account how the

[516] Fieldwork for the NSW case study was conducted in March 2013 and at these statements were made when the Area of Study was reviewed once every four years, however in September 2014 the announcement was made that the module was now to be reviewed once every five years.

needs and abilities of contemporary students evolve within wider society, and therefore their learning plans might need to be regularly adapted to facilitate these changes; particularly their education in schools. To paraphrase Comber, critical language and literacy development involves recognising learners' abilities, examining critical resources and offer new opportunities and resources for students.[517] However, it does not seem that in NSW the current Area of Study helps facilitate these pedagogical moves. Rather, teachers from academically HPS comment that the Area of Study did not serve a purpose on the curriculum because, "it's not intellectually stimulating it makes my students bored and it really challenges me to find new ways to teach them about *Belonging*, they are super intelligent and it just isn't suitable for their level"[518] particularly for students doing the Advanced English programme.

This contrasts with teachers from LPS, who preferred the concept or themed based structure of the Area of Study as a module for teaching, but were of the opinion that the prescribed texts were often too challenging for their students doing Standard English courses. For LPS teachers, the prescribed texts did not engage their students' interest, especially since most of them were not avid readers while many HPS teachers noted the selection often bores their students and, in some cases, serves only to disengage those who usually enjoy Literature.[519] A postcolonial reading of the responses to the Area of Study from HPS and LPS teachers, suggests there is a power imbalance between higher and lower achievers that might need to be reformed from both the curricula recognising that their design and the HSC helps perpetuate the divide between higher and lower performers in English education. All 12 teachers interviewed in NSW admitted they did not know about how the Board of Studies selects prescribed lists, therefore this suggests

[517]Comber, B. (2003). Critical Literacy: What does it look like in the early years? London, Sage.
[518] Table 6.3.2 #4 (NSW, School 3, HPS, Teacher 8).
[519] Jogie, M. R. (2015). "Desperate shadows of 'Belonging': Revealing pedagogical issues with teaching prescribed English texts in the NSW Higher School Certificate (HSC)." The Australian Educational Researcher **42**(3): 335-352.

that perhaps the extent of teachers' involvement in curriculum design and text selection processes should be more open and transparent to educators.

Participating teachers in England, also express concern that the current AQA curriculum and texts do not cater for the learning needs of their students. Of most concern is the changes post-reform to the education system, including modifications to curriculum learning goals and numbers of prescribed texts. Given these recent changes, it seems difficult for teachers to work out how these alterations will impact on their classes, particularly for the English modules where there has been an increase in the number of texts offered. However, Teacher 13 explains that while the curriculum appears "less prescriptive, looked at from another way, it no longer specifies that you have to study texts from other cultures … it's gone from you must do this to see if you can fit that in … or [don't] bother doing that."[520] This suggests the AQA is perhaps relinquishing more control to teachers, so they can be flexible about the texts they choose for their students. Though it is too early (post reform) to evaluate the merits or difficulties of the new system of providing teachers with more options to study, the fact that more canonical options have been the new additions to prescribed lists is a change worthy of contemplation.[521] A postcolonial concern might be evaluating the balance of well-known, traditional texts versus more contemporary options in terms of the impacts these texts will have on informing and engaging contemporary learners. In other words, are more canonical texts going to create a larger gap between the needs of culturally diverse learners in classroom and perpetuate more of the same; more canonical texts with Western-centric values that might limit the engagement and discussion of more contemporary issues and cultural differences in present society?

[520] Table 6.3.2, #5 (Greater London, School 5, HPS, Teacher 13).
[521] See Chapter 5 – Prescribed texts, for changes to the AQA text lists, post-reform, on pg.,, 179.

6.3.2 *Coaching to senior secondary examinations*

Senior secondary education is driven by the preparation for examinations and this means that all energies of teaching, texts, analysis, responses are prepared so that students can almost rehearse for their final English paper. Table 6.3.3 lists a range of statements from teachers in both country samples commenting on the extent to which the central focus of senior English lessons is to prepare students for final examinations.

Table 6.3.3: Teacher Statements about Coaching to Senior Secondary Examinations

Teacher Statements Presented in Participant Findings	
Board of Studies, NSW, Australia	**AQA, England**
7. "… our kids because they are gifted and talented they get to a point where they just freeze up and they don't want to take risks and don't want to play with creativity and innovation. They get scared about doing anything that isn't necessarily linked to a formula" (S2, HPS, T5). 8. "… the formula teaching is being encouraged perhaps not deliberately and perhaps not intentionally by our system in NSW, but the fact is it's an entire industry and it's being encouraged" (S3, HPS, T9). 9. "… students are only concerned about what they need to know to do well in their HSC, and if we [teachers] actually impart some meaning then that's a bonus" (S3, HPS, T7). 10. "… I get to the end of a ten-week unit, knowing that all the amazing learning and discussion happening in your classroom will be reduced to a 1000-word essay, and to a certain point they can rote learn elements of it" (S2, HPS, T5). 11. "When I teach Year 12, I'm the teacher I never wanted to be, I'm a lecturer and a spoon-feeder" (S2, HPS, T5).	12. "… but now we choose the things the kids are going to get the marks on [because] we have a million extra things to do [and] we haven't got the time to do it" (S5, HPS, T15). 13. "… it would be nice to introduce different texts to students, have students have different experiences, because you can talk to any A-Level student across the country and they will all know the same three novels, *'Of Mice and Men'*, *'To Kill a Mockingbird'* and *'Lord of Flies'*" (S8, LPS, T22).

Table 6.3.3 shows that, in both samples, teachers believe that the HSC and A-Level examinations have a significant impact on how texts are chosen and

taught to senior students and it is at this point that the emphasis on engaging students' interest becomes less important. Examinations seem to encourage poor learning and teaching habits, where students are encouraged to fit through a *one-size-fits-all* system, and their academic success is purely determined by their abilities to rote learn responses to model essays for their final examinations.

All teachers (24) interviewed in this research, either on the record or off, put forward a strong argument that, senior secondary education has been reduced to "formula teaching"[522] and teaching is based on what "gets the marks."[523] Therefore, teachers with the responsibilities of senior English classes are less motivated to engage their students' interests as they know that students have to fulfil a range of criteria beyond enjoying their English texts in order to do well in their final examinations. However, earlier in this chapter, it was argued that curriculum outcomes are seemingly better achieved if students can engage with, and relate to, their texts.[524] Whether this can be transferred into a successful final examination outcome is yet to be determined. It can be suggested that perhaps the AQA is more focused on the outcomes of examinations because they compete with eight other education systems and, consequently in the United Kingdom, high A-Level pass rates suggest a more successful programme for educators. By contrast, NSW does not have direct competition and the HSC being the main standard of examination measurement across the state. Therefore, schools in NSW compete to perform better in the HSC, but it is not the Board of Studies' responsibility to motivate all schools to obtain high HSC passes.

Though this research does not specifically focus on measuring the impact of examinations on senior secondary, it has been an unavoidable issue while conducting this research at the senior secondary level. Examinations

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[522] Table 6.3.3, #35 (NSW, School 3, HPS, Teacher 9).
[523] Table 6.3.3, #39 (Greater London, School 5, HPS, Teacher 15).
[524] Refer to Section 6.1—Curriculum, on pg., 239.

have been treated separately in this research in order to understand how students (as young adults) engaged with texts and issues of cultural differences at this more mature level of their schooling. However, the influence of examinations was anticipated at the beginning of this research, particularly for pedagogy, therefore teachers were asked about the importance for them, or the possibility of challenging student learning so that they can discuss issues of cultural difference in texts that are not pertinent to the skills or knowledge only needed for examinations. Teachers in Australia and especially those in England, said it was not possible to indulge in conversations or teaching beyond those necessary for examinations. A postcolonial concern for *teaching to the test*, might be the empowerment of examinations which sets limitations around the definitions of success. This raises a few challenging questions for educators; how are educators certain that these examination standards are adequate measures of students' abilities, especially if teachers identify that current curricula do not adequately meet the needs of contemporary learners? and, secondly, what are the effects of examinations on students' self-motivations and perceptions? How do both positive and negative examination results affect their approach and understanding of the wider world?

6.3.3 Prescribed texts unsuitable for modules/specifications

Table 6.3.4 presents a commentary by teachers in both samples on how prescribed texts are somewhat unsuitable for the curriculum module/specification.

Table 6.3.4: Teacher Statements on Prescribed Texts as Unsuitable for Module/Specifications

Teacher Statements Presented in Participant Findings	
Board of Studies, NSW, Australia	**AQA, England**
14. "… maybe concepts need to be chosen more carefully … there is a tendency to impose concepts on texts, rather than derive it from	19. "… if you look at the anthology of texts they got, just looking at the fiction and non-fiction, but look literally there is not a single

the text, when it's imposed on the text it's completely useless because it's false and it's artificial and it reads like that. And there is a labour- an absolute labour to be involved in it" (S3, HPS, T9).

15. " … this is because our rubrics are so parochial and it's forcing the way we teach texts … the disadvantage is that we fit texts that were never intended to be about belonging to [the theme] belonging. For instance, Shakespeare's 'As you Like it', which we've been teaching for the last six years … the links between this play and belonging are so tenuous, we are really making superficial inroads here [and] there is really no deep learning occurring. If we see the word 'connection' or 'I love you' we go great that's about belonging to other people. So here we are studying Shakespeare who is meant to be really challenging and we study it at a superficial level because we're being forced to fit it with this concept of belonging that Shakespeare would have never intended 200 years ago. This kind of teaching narrows our focus, because there are such stronger themes in *'As you Like it'*" (S2, HPS, T5).

16. "… the texts [are] primarily pretty old school literary canon types, with no emphasis on cultural diversity, considering the Australian population. I believe it would be nice if there was more of a balance with the canon, Australian Indigenous texts and other culturally diverse texts, but this would mean completely changing the HSC scaling and marking … but [a balance of texts] would certainly equip the kids for life better" (S2, HPS, T4).

17. "The scope of books are very unimaginative. I don't think there is great text diversity out there. It seems the Board of Studies does not take notice of all the prize winning literature that's coming out … I think if I was teaching perhaps you know at a school with many culturally different backgrounds, that was less advantaged, and I was teaching Standard English, oh that would be woeful! You know I did teach a couple of years ago at a disadvantaged school but I have to say the texts did not inspire the students one bit" (S2, HPS, T6).

18. "… very Anglo-centred, yeah they are! And there's like a smattering of text from other backgrounds but not a lot. There's still a fairly black author here worth any sort of learning. So you've got Beckett, Dickens, yeah this is all the things of yesterday … again some poems here, and there are a few women, oh wait John Agard, I apologise, John Agard of course he's there. It's almost as if the curriculum consistently includes safe and acceptable black fiction. For instance, Agard he is sort of the black author they put everywhere in all the anthologies" (S6, HPS, T17).

20. "… the contemporary texts they [AQA] bring in are not for me, just because there aren't many texts, because if they are sort of foreign, like a black author or someone aged this time around, it's very much a tick [the] box exercise. What the problem is really, it's the problem with the canon and them [AQA] not recognising everyone else [other authors]. I think that should be changed from the Exam board up, but unfortunately what we have in Britain at the moment is a conservative government … And there is this horrible, horrible quote by [Education Secretary] Gove, 'we should use literature to teach our island story.' Yes, it's just horrific so I can unfortunately, from the impression of the Exam boards, I currently see it [texts] becoming less diverse" (S6, HPS, T17).

strong focus on what's considered to be important, white texts" (S3, LPS, T8).	

Table 6.3.4 shows that teachers from the Australian study made more comments about the Area of Study and prescribed texts than did teachers in the British study. This is perhaps because HPS and LPS teachers at Australian schools were all required to teach the Area of Study, and had issues with the set of texts listed for study by both Standard and Advanced courses. There were more teachers who expressed concerns with the list of prescribed texts in the AQA, but only those comments made by Teacher 17 (above) describes in detail some of the issues with the selection of culturally diverse texts and how these are perhaps unsuitable for study. Generally, teachers express issues with the range of prescribed texts listed for studying the *'Belonging'* concept in the 'Area of Study' (NSW) and those for the '*Struggle for Identity'* (AQA). These modules/specifications require pupils to read/view and analyse texts to interpret and compare their interpretations with others in order to reflect on how texts assist students with making personal connections to their lives, culture and society. With these aims in mind, teachers explain that the majority of resources are comprised of well-known, traditional or canonical texts and these pose certain challenges when engaging culturally diverse learners.

One crucial finding identified in this research is the unnatural or forced connections teachers make between prescribed texts and the Area of Study concept. Teacher 5 explains that, because concepts and prescribed texts are not always compatible, this results in teachers narrowing how students engage with and unpack reading and interpretations found in prescribed texts.[525] She points out that "we fit texts that were never supposed to be about belonging to [the theme] *Belonging*."[526] As a result of this students risk leaving school

[525] Jogie, M. R. (2015). "Desperate shadows of 'Belonging': Revealing pedagogical issues with teaching prescribed English texts in the NSW Higher School Certificate (HSC)." The Australian Educational Researcher **42**(3): 335-352.
[526] Table 6.3.4, #8 (NSW, School 2, HPS, Teacher 5).

believing that Shakespeare's *'As You Like It'* is a play about *Belonging* because the curriculum requires teachers to make "superficial inroads"[527] and, due to time restraints, perhaps ignore a great deal of meaning that can be extrapolated from the text. This is a noteworthy observation because it identifies how these prescribed texts are not read and taught in a manner to engage students to explore a range of interpretations and issues within texts, which is the ultimate aim of the Area of Study module. A postcolonial view of this issue might begin with unpacking how forcing meanings onto texts can have a negative impact on many students; not only might they leave school with a poor analysis of a text but also carry with them *misrepresentations* of meanings which can include an understanding of culture, values, tradition, ethics, to name a few. Therefore, a better alternative to forcing meaning would be to enable students to approach texts with an understanding of their own interpretation and then help them make connections to many others, rather than narrowing their views to see down the path of a 99% ATAR or A*.

Both HPS and LPS Australian teachers describe the current list of texts as being comprised of "old school literary canon types with no emphasis on diversity"[528] and, "very Anglo-centred … [with] a fairly strong focus on what's considered to be important white texts."[529] The majority of the prescribed list texts currently do not reflect the diversity of the Australian population, yet contemporary students are required to read/view, analyse, interpret and reflect on connections between these texts and their culture and identity although they acknowledge that well-known, traditional or canonical texts are valuable resources on the curriculum and should not be removed. However, texts have not only been criticised and described as being "old" and "Anglo-centred," but also uninspiring for contemporary learners. Teacher 4, with over 30 years of combined experience at HPS and LPS schools explains that "the

[527] Ibid.
[528] Table 6.3.4, #9 (NSW, School 2, HPS, Teacher 4).
[529] Table 6.3.4, #11 (NSW, School 1, LPS, Teacher 3).

scope of books are very unimaginative … it seems the Board of Studies does not take notice of all the prize winning literature that's coming out … I did teach a couple of years ago at a disadvantaged school … [and] texts did not inspire students one bit."[530] If a larger variety of recently published resources are not added to the reading list, then teachers will continue to be tempted to use recycled resources to engage students' participation and interest. Teachers from British schools were quite vocal about the unsuitability of canonical texts for the '*Struggle for Identity*' module. Many teachers identified the importance of "maintaining aspects of the canon"[531] because in contemporary England the cultural diversity of the population also means that "diversity for students is *'Jane Austen'* because they have no idea of nineteenth century Bath."[532] Therefore, canonical texts firmly hold their place in the English curriculum as instruments for transmitting historical information written using unique styles of language and narrative.

Though canonical texts are kept on reading lists because of their structure of content, richness of language and legacy in literature, these options, though effective for achieving curriculum outcomes, there is concern (identified by at least three teachers in this research) that canonical texts are often difficult to many students to access and these options require extensive support for learning goals to be achieved; these take time and effort which are not easily facilitated at the senior secondary level. More options in terms of choice might prove to be accessible for students in terms of engaging their interests as well as cover a range of pertinent issues which are seemingly relevant and important for young students. However, there have been concerns about the cultural diverse options that are available, have also become well-known, traditional texts discussing culturally differences from a distant time. Teacher 17 notes that the few culturally diverse options on the

[530] Table 6.3.4, #10 (NSW, School 2, HPS, Teacher 6).
[531] Table 6.3.4, #6 (Greater London, School 7, LPS, Teacher 21).
[532] Table 6.3.4, #19 (Greater London, School 5, HPS, Teacher 13).

list seem to be those that have been around for so many years, "it's almost as if the curriculum includes safe and acceptable black fiction."[533] This suggests that the selection of texts listed as diverse and cultural options are repeated on the list because they are "safe acceptable black fiction" and, while diverse, these are also perhaps not the best for achieving curriculum outcomes. For example, using the text *'Of Mice and Men'* to discuss ethnic issues like the cultural and social impact of the word *'nigger'* in the text, does not encompass how the word *'nigger'* has been transformed by more recent generations to mean 'friendship' or the 'bonds of brotherhood'. The current list of texts does not seem to consider the diversity of the student population in contemporary British classrooms in terms of how these texts help them discuss culture and identity in modern society.

Presently the scope and range of culturally diverse texts prescribed on both lists are comprised of selections that are often repeated and described by educators as "safe acceptable black fiction".[534] These texts, while diverse, are also perhaps not the best for achieving curriculum outcomes and engaging students. Scholars argue that many culturally different texts are the offspring that mirror the values and identities of parental/canonicals publications. Thieme's research explores several avenues where

> … the postcolonial con-texts invariably seemed to induce a reconsideration of the supposedly hegemonic status of their canonicals departure points, opening up fissures in their supposedly solid foundations that undermined the simplism involved in seeing the relationship between 'source' and con-text in terms of an oppositional model (2).[535]

These 'fissures in solid foundations' seem to be those selections of non-canonical, cultural or other texts that have been frequently repeated on the curriculum they now seem to be the standard or approved versions of cultural

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[533] Table 6.3.4, #12 (Greater London, School 6, HPS, Teacher 17).
[534] Table 6.3.4, #12 (Greater London, School 6, HPS, Teacher 17).
[535] Thieme, J. (2002). Postcolonial Con-Texts: Writing Back to the Canon, Bloomsbury Publishing.

texts. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin state that, "such texts [portray]–the representations of Europe to itself, and the representation of others to Europe–were not accounts or illustrations of different peoples and societies, but a projection of European fears and desires masquerading as scientific 'objective' knowledges" (85).[536] For example, in the British curriculum, even the modern American texts seem to present "a peculiarly acute imperial cast, even though paradoxically its ferocious anti-colonialism directed at the Old World, is central to it" (74).[537] Following from Said's statement, it can be suggested that certain American classical texts (listed on the curriculum) share similarities to other well-known canonical British texts. In other words, these works of literature have been regurgitated and analysed over time to the point that these texts become somewhat *'safe literature'* that is socially acceptable and easily referred to when discussing contentious cultural issues related to race, social class and gender.

Suggestions for improving the current system include either redefining the concepts/specifications and keeping the list of texts or providing teachers with a greater number and wider variety of text options, including more options published after the turn of the century. As identified thus far the number of well-known or canonical prescribed texts are not frequently changed on reading lists and this poses challenges for teachers when engaging contemporary learners. Tikly and Bond[538] build on Mangan's arguments that text books often contain racialized stereotypes of the colonised, arguing that curricula often sustains the assumption of European cultural and racial superiority.[539] These cultural values are retained largely because schooling within European countries, such as England, was often used to support the

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[536] Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin (1995). The Post-Colonial Studies Reader. New York; London, Routledge.

[537] Said, E. W. (1994). Culture and Imperialism. New York, Vintage Books.

[538] Tikly, L. and T. Bond (2013). "Towards a Postcolonial Research Ethics in Comparative and International Education." Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education **43**(4): 422-442.

[539] Mangan, J. A. (1988). Benefits Bestowed: Education and British Imperialism. Manchester [Greater Manchester]; New York, Manchester University Press.

imperial project.[540] Therefore, some teachers find it difficult to engage contemporary learners, because patterns of repeating canonical or traditional texts on reading lists also means transmitting colonial values through texts.[541] This can have an impact on educators because they are not given the flexibility to seek out newer resources; hence they repeat modules, which further compounds some of cultural values of the past. It can thus be argued that, if teachers are provided with a range of resources and professional development to teach texts considering cultural differences and contemporary issues, they might be able to make better text choices for their students.

6.3.4 Strategies used to address students' learning needs

When comparing, the limitations encountered, different strategies are applied by teachers when selecting texts to address students' learning needs. Table 6.3.5 presents a range of statements about current strategies employed to address students' learning needs.

Table 6.3.5: Teacher Statements about Strategies used to address Students' Learning Needs

Teacher Statements Presented in Participant Findings	
Board of Studies, NSW, Australia	**AQA, England**
21. "… you have to choose so that each unit has a different text and there are only about two or three [texts] for each unit, so for belonging there is about two or three novels you can do, even one or two [texts] for some units. So when you've put in all of your preferences, there's always one unit where you say to yourself, *'I don't want to study this text, it doesn't suit my kids at all, it doesn't suit my preferred teaching style but I have to do it because if I don't do it in Module A, I'm going to have to change all of the texts that I teach'* … we need more texts for study so there is a variety for teachers to choose from" (S4, LPS, T12).	26. "… this diversity thing well it's absolutely irrelevant to our students but the same battle remains where we only had white literature, well it's important that we are teaching black literature to white students so that there is an understanding all the same now … But we must not forget that now diversity for the students in this school means Jane Austen because they have no idea about nineteenth century Bath. Beyond their culture, they're not part of an English heritage and they don't identify with it, that's why it's important to study these texts … so I would make the case for allowing changes to be made with everything else, keeping in mind that for everything you put on the curriculum you have to make space for
22. "… forced to do texts that your kids might not	

[540] Mangan, J. A. (1993). The Imperial Curriculum: Racial Images and Education in British Colonial Experience. New York; London, Routledge.
[541] Subedi, B. (2013). "Decolonizing the Curriculum for Global Perspectives." Educational Theory **63**(6): 621-638.

do well [in], and that you don't like but you have to do it" (S1, LPS, T3).

23. "… teachers make choices on some bizarre grounds, for instance *'there're not many kids doing this text, so I think there will be less competition for them getting higher marks'*, or *'I'm at a selective school therefore I need to choose very academic texts for my kids to do'* … so priority lies mostly in these choices, not choosing texts that are interesting for their students" (S1, LPS, T1).

24. "I would be tempted to take some of the easier texts off the Advanced course. I really don't see *'Romulus, My Father'* as a text that would challenge Advanced students" (S3, HPS, T9).

25. "… you can't assume that kids today [in Year 12 English] would have come across certain, let's say Christian iconography … [for instance] when you've got a text that might allude to classic religious themes— I don't know the fall- Adam and Eve, the Serpent, [or the] Garden of Eden— you look across the room and there's a sea blank faces, they don't know what you're talking about. So you have to do all of that" (S3, HPS, T9).

something to come off" (S5, HPS, T13).

27. "… we repeatedly teach *'Of Mice and Men'* here. The problem we have is that there is so much in the syllabus that, I think *'sacred'* is the right word, the amount of time to teach *'To Kill a Mockingbird'* would take, than to teach *'Of Mice and Men.'* It's not that our students aren't able to access *'To Kill a Mockingbird,'* but the time it would take is longer to teach it … I don't think people will be rearing to take on much larger texts because of time [constraints]" (S7, LPS, T19).

28. "… more options and more culturally diverse options that might appeal to our students, we [teachers] realised that you go through the entire GCSE to the A-Level, studying the American Dream. You do *'Of Mice and Men'* and then you do *'Great Gatsby'* and I find this slightly strange in an English school, particularly with the [diverse] kids we have. I think perhaps there should be a little more choice or certainly some different texts on offer and not simply texts about other cultures you know … kids do better on stuff that relates to their cultural background. If you're studying a text that's full of Christian imagery but going for an A* [grade] are you going to definitely get it? No! I'm not saying don't study it [canonical texts], like definitely study it. But even from a passing exams perspective, have stuff that will play to different people's strengths. But at the moment, like when I was completing my undergrad, it was a massive advantage doing English Literature and being a Christian" (S6, HPS, T18).

29. "I had a student from a very strict Muslim family and when we were teaching *'The Kite Runner'* actually she didn't understand the concept of male rape and so she was quite naïve in that respect. It's vaguely sexual and obviously in that scene it's not that subtle, but it's not explicitly mentioned, but she couldn't understand what went on in the alleyway. When it was explained that he had been raped, she said 'well how can a man rape another man', well then thankfully another student put me out of my misery and shouted [how] across the class very crudely" (S6, HPS, T18).

30. "… we are encouraged to stay away from religion in this school, that's one reason why we don't teach *'The Kite Runner'* because we have a lot of Muslim students and so religious themes and current events like Sept 11th,

	people don't speak about because they don't want people to feel offended or that we are in any way saying that Muslims are bad people, and again because there is the tension between the Turks and the Greeks. We actually have flags banned in this school because of that, because there have been altercations. So people stay away from that as well" (S8, LPS, T22).

Table 6.3.5 shows that teachers in the Australian study seem to use more strategies for selecting texts, whereas those in the British samples focused on the limitations they encountered when making selections. In other words, Australian teachers tend to focus on selecting texts that might improve their students' performances in the HSC exam while in England strategies are apparently used to decrease the teaching workload and to some extent avoid texts that might raise culturally offensive issues. These strategies are usually applied in both samples, but are mostly present when considering and attending to the needs of learners in HPS and LPS and exam preparation.

Both HPS and LPS teachers at Australian schools explained that the Area of Study sets 14 texts over seven text types, and the structure of this design poses a limitation when making selections for students. Teacher 12 summarised how choices are made so that

> … each unit has a different text and there are only about two or three for each unit, so for Belonging there is about two or three novels you can do … when you've put in all your preferences, there's always one unit where you say to yourself, *'I don't want to study this text, it doesn't suit my kids at all'*. [542]

In other words, choice of text is further constrained by the rules of selecting texts. Teachers explain that often you are "forced to do texts that your kids might not do well [in], and you don't like it but have to do it."[543] These limitations seem to have had a greater impact on LPS teachers because the

[542] Table 6.3.5, #14 (NSW, School 4, LPS, Teacher 12).
[543] Table 6.3.5, #15 (NSW, School 1, LPS, Teacher 3).

range of choices meant that some of the selections were perhaps too challenging for their students. However, for HPS teachers it meant that most of their students were not engaged with the material. This research found that LPS Australian teachers (in this study) strategically select texts or options they believe HPS teachers will not choose for their students. Teacher 1 explains that "[some] teachers make choices on bizarre grounds, for instance, *'there're not many kids doing this text, so I think there will be less competition for them getting higher marks'* … so priority lies mostly in these choices , not [what's] interesting for their students."[544] These decisions seem to be motivated by the assumption that not many HPS students will be writing essays on the more challenging or difficult texts set for the HSC examinations. Therefore, teaching the more unpopular texts to LPS students seems to be better for their exam outcomes especially if they do not compete with HPS students.

It is significant to note that teachers at HPS Australian schools seem to face different challenges when selecting texts to address students' learning needs. These teachers support the teaching of canonical texts because often their HPS students need additional challenges, especially with the Area of Study, so HPS teachers usually encourage their students to engage with more canonical resources. However, some HPS teachers explain this was not the best choice for addressing the learning needs of their higher-performing or gifted students. Teacher 9 explains that more challenging material does not necessarily mean more historical or canonical texts because, despite being HPS students, most often they do not have the conceptual understanding to bridge the connections or deduce meanings from canonical texts. For example, quite frequently HPS students are not exposed to the history or iconography referenced in some canonical texts.[545] It can be suggested that perhaps a wider range of contemporary resources to complement canonical texts will enrich students' understanding and analysis of both types of texts. The postcolonial

[544] Table 6.3.5, #16 (NSW, School 1, LPS, Teacher 1).
[545] Table 6.3.5, #18, (NSW, School 3, HPS, Teacher 9).

concern about the strategies teachers use to choose texts for HPS and LPS students is the prioritising of needs to do well in examinations at the expense of considering if these texts are the best options to facilitate the learning needs of their students and engage their interest.

Approximately 33% of teachers in the British study challenge the notion that contemporary or recently published texts would better address students' learning needs. British HPS teachers suggested that many modern texts lacked the complexity of language that students needed for senior secondary English.[546] As mentioned earlier, some teachers argue that, because of such high populations of culturally diverse students, it is necessary to teach canonical texts because a majority of students "are not part of an English heritage and they don't identify with it, that's why it's important to study these texts."[547] Yet it can be argued that most of the traditional or canonical texts listed for study are predominately based on American culture rather than British heritage. One teacher commented on the selection of texts being inadequate for the fusion of cultures currently present in British classrooms. He comments that "…we [teachers] realised that you go through the entire GCSE to the A-Level studying the American Dream. You do *'Of Mice and Men'*, and then you do *'Great Gatsby'* and I find this slightly strange in an English school, particularly with the kids we have"[548]. Based on this information it can be asked why is it that, canonical or well-known texts that are often repeated on prescribed lists (from GCSE to GCE) comprise more American Literature than options from other cultures? Former British Education Secretary Michael Gove announced in May 2014 (post-education reform) that, many of the well-known American texts listed on the English curriculum for years such as *'Of Mice and Men'*, *'To Kill a Mockingbird'* and *'The Crucible'*, would now be

[546] Table 6.3.5, #31, (Greater London, School 8, LPS, Teacher 22).
[547] Table 6.3.5, #19, (Greater London, School 5, HPS, Teacher 13).
[548] Table 6.3.5, #21, (Greater London, School6, HPS, Teacher 18).

replaced by English Literature that is, the writings by British authors.[549] It is not clear whether this movement away from American classics towards more literature by British authors refers to canonical texts or encompasses more recently published selections written by contemporary migrants who are now British?

It can be argued that providing a wider range of culturally diverse texts does not necessarily result in British teachers necessarily making selections that might better address the learning needs of their students. While conducting this research, I could investigate how HPS and LPS teachers approach the teaching of the seemingly contentious text *'The Kite Runner'* to their senior students who came from different cultural and religious backgrounds in particular, Muslim students. As mentioned one HPS teacher found *'The Kite Runner'* to be an exceptionally important text because it helped his students discuss issues related to Islamic culture. This text helped some of his students from sheltered Muslim backgrounds engage in discussions about broader issues in society. He explained that "I had a student from a very strict Muslim family and when we were teaching *'The Kite Runner'* she didn't understand the concept of male rape … when it was explained that he had been raped, she said *'well how can a man rape another man?'*."[550] This was still a sensitive issue for the teacher as he admits that, despite his years of experience, this female student made him blush. However, he recognises as an educator that, if certain social issues are not raised through texts in classrooms then students, like this female, may have no other natural avenues (family or community) for understanding or discussing confronting issues. This contrasts with an LPS teacher who explained that contentious religious texts like *'The Kite Runner'* are deliberately avoided because as teachers

> … we are encouraged to stay away from religion in this school
> … because we have a lot of Muslim students and so religious

[549] BBC News Education & Family (2014). Exam board 'drops' Mockingbird and Steinbeck after Gove reforms. BBC News Education & Family. BBC, BBC.
[550] Table 6.3.5, #22 (Greater London, School 6, HPS, Teacher 18).

> themes and current events like Sept 11th, people don't speak about because they don't want people to feel offended or that we are in any way saying that Muslims are bad people.[551]

While English classes are not places of religious instruction and guidance, from an educator's point of view, one can question the potential merits of avoiding discussing cultural and religious issues in classrooms.

The dominance of traditional or canonical texts makes it even more difficult to appeal to young students, particularly those who are disengaged readers. Therefore, it seems that when offering more culturally diverse texts a range of considerations need to be accommodated in order to be inclusive of not just texts from other cultures but texts written by different authors that discuss issues from non-Western parts of the world. In the Australian sample, it seems that meanings were forced into texts because of the concept approach, whereas in Britain it seems that teachers clung to the texts that deliver results, are easier to teach and resource and do not stir contentious issues. One comparison noted in this research are the two different approaches taken by the HPS and LPS teacher about selecting *'The Kite Runner'* as a text to discuss Muslim cultural issues. Subedi and Daza explain that postcolonial theory is an excellent tool in education systems because it raises challenging questions and "calls for the unlearning of white privilege and deficit thinking, as well as the need to recognize the discussion of race and other differences both national and global contexts" (4).[552] Perhaps a postcolonial approach for mediating *'The Kite Runner'* in classrooms might be a successful platform to engage diverse learners in discussions of cultural and religious differences in contemporary society. Hence one might ask how can culturally diverse texts be read in ways not to be seen as reinforcing European fears and desires? Raja suggests a process called inundation, which results in transforming texts from a site of

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[551] Table 6.3.5, #23 (Greater London, School 8, LPS, Teacher 22).

[552] Subedi, B. and S. L. Daza (2008). "The Possibilities of Postcolonial Praxis in Education." Race Ethnicity and Education **11**(1): 1-10.

arrival to a point of departure. To elaborate, such a postcolonial technique of reading texts allows the critic to add silenced knowledge—historical and theoretical—hence complicating any reductive readings of texts.[553] This suggests that cultural texts, particularly those that can be repeated on the curriculum for decades, are perhaps acceptable for educators because they are safe in the sense that the meanings transmitted through them have been critically evaluated and accepted by mainstream society, regardless of culture. However, scholars argue that, most often, these texts are written to imitate the values and history of Empires and in this sense be reinforcing a representation of European fears or desires. However, postcolonial techniques can perhaps be used to help individual readers evaluate texts and question the interpretations offered by others.

6.3.5 Challenges when using prescribed texts to engage students' interest

Table 6.3.6 presents statements made by teachers about some of the main challenges they encounter when attempting to engage students' interests with the current list of prescribed texts in both samples.

Table 6.3.6: Teacher Statements about Challenges when using Prescribed Texts to Engage Students' Interests

Teacher Statements Presented in Participant Findings	
Board of Studies, NSW, Australia	**AQA, England**
31. "Students are losing their creative thinking skills, they're losing their ability to take risks, they just want to be spoon-fed and they know that is exactly what the HSC is about" (S2, HPS, T5).	35. "… the breath is often what they are reading at school. I don't think it's just this school, but generally they have a real struggle to keep that academic distance between themselves and the text" (S6, HPS, T16).
32. "[the text list] does not change often enough, but there are practicalities involved, teachers have to read them and be able to teach them and you need skill and time to do that. You need training, resources, strategies, approaches" (S3, HPS, T9).	36. "I think you try and offer a diverse range of texts not only about race but also a gender balance of texts … I think we still play down this mind of a kind of Westernitis [sic], but that's something I would like to change but it's hard. You also have the limited choice given to you by AQA itself. But you get some texts that are good books and you have a
33. "… sometimes it's really hard for our kids to	

[553] Raja, M. A. (2009). "Salman Rushdie: Reading the Postcolonial Texts in Era of Empire." Postcolonial Text **5**(2): 1-14.

engage with these texts and while we want to give them the opportunity to experience them, more focus on texts that are more culturally relevant to them might be more useful and help us reach them" (S1, LPS, T1).

34. "… there is always a place for the traditional text. I just think depending on the group you're targeting, if you're looking at Advanced or Extension students, yeah you certainly need to have a focus on the traditional texts, but I think when it comes to the lower levels of English, like I teach the Standard groups, they don't even want to know Shakespeare" (S4, LPS, T11).

new problem that staff don't [sic] know piggies about the novel itself, so this is also another factor to be considered" (S6, HPS, T16).

37. "… teachers do not want to develop new material for texts and it's all the fault of league tables and the pressure on us to perform. Well before the league tables I remember as a sort of helicon time of teaching, where you had more free periods and you had a wide range of resources" (S5, HPS, T15).

38. "… some texts that stayed [on the prescribed list] have always been part of the canon but kids just don't access [all of them]. I mean I'm a huge believer in the classics and we have to study the classics … because they [students] need the language for their exams, which modern texts don't have … I think I would just like to find a contemporary novel that's written by someone from the students' culture, where they could experience that literature and benefit from this exposure in their exams" (S8, LPS, T22).

39. "… they [students] can't write in the style they need for A-Levels and that comes down to the fact they can't read, they don't read outside of lessons. They don't read widely. I did a survey with my old Year 12s, who are now Year 13s, on what was the last book they read, and I'm getting '*Harry Potter*', Jacqueline Wilson [texts], and I'm thinking you're 17 years old and the only thing you've read is *'Of Mice and Men'* because we made you last year" (S5, HPS, T15).

40. "… students are coming through [to A-Levels] because they've been taught well through the school and they're sort of carrying on and doing A-Level English because they know they'll be well taught, but they're not necessarily natural readers" (S7, LPS, T19).

Table 6.3.6 shows that in both samples the main issue encountered when selecting texts to engage students' interest were that; (i) resources do not suitably match the capabilities of students, (ii) there is little or no emphasis on encouraging students to read widely at senior secondary levels and, (iii) teachers are not adequately trained, or given sufficient time and resources to prepare material for new texts.

As argued earlier in this section, HPS and LPS teachers have identified that, in Australian and British schools, there is limited balance between the numbers of traditional texts compared to recently published options. This results in a greater number of texts presenting cultural issues from the 19th and 20th century than those that might be more accessible to contemporary students. In Australian schools, teachers agree "there is always a place for the traditional text",[554] but these are viewed as more challenging to engage students doing Advanced courses and not necessarily a means of engaging their interests. However, for the majority of students across NSW who annually sit the Standard course, it seems more important to have access to a range of texts that could engage students to respond to texts to learn about the changes to cultures in present society. Similarly, teachers in the British sample argue for more diversity on the curriculum and specified that diversity needs to target certain aspects of culture in terms of "offer[ing] a diverse range of texts not only about race but also a gender balance of texts … we still play down this mind of a kind of Westernitis, but that's something I would like to change, but it's hard."[555] Therefore, it seems that, when proposing more culturally diverse texts, a range of considerations need to be taken into account for example, to be inclusive of not just texts from other cultures, but texts written by different genders, that highlight issues from non-Western parts of the world.

In both samples, teachers note that one persistent challenge encountered when engaging senior English students' interests in texts is related to the fact that they are not reading widely enough. Though, Freebody, Luke and Gilbert place emphasis on engagement also being an act of the teacher facilitating learning, not just through resources but through their approach towards students, this research found that despite the efforts to engage students, teachers noted that students are predominately motivated to

[554] Table 6.3.6, #27 (NSW, School 4, LPS, Teacher 11).
[555] Table 6.3.6, #29 (Greater London, School 6, HPS, Teacher 16).

know what is essential for their examinations.[556] Teachers at Australian schools stated at the senior level students were not interested in engaging with texts beyond what was necessary for the exam. The general encouragement for students to read widely is voiced at the younger age groups in Australian schools. This is also a problem in England, although teachers note that encouraging students to read widely is a pressing challenge, and often students do not read texts beyond those they are required to study at school. A British HPS teacher conducted a survey with her Year 12 students (lower sixth form) asking what was the last book they read and she found that, "they don't read widely, … I [got] *'Harry Potter'*, Jacqueline Wilson [texts], and I'm thinking *'… you're 17 years old, and the only thing you've read is 'Of Mice and Men' because we made you last year'*."[557] It can be concluded, from both samples, that encouraging students to engage with, and read a wide range of resources, seems to diminish as they near their final examination. This seems disadvantageous to students because exposure to Literature narrows as they try to develop their analytical skills for interpreting and responding to texts. In other words, after several years of secondary schooling, it seems disadvantageous for students to be assessed on the basis of one final examination.

Across both samples, teachers raise concerns that not all their colleagues have the skills required to understand, interpret and prepare resources to teach newly published and culturally diverse texts to senior students. Strickland's research shows that many teachers lack experience with extensive use of literature in the curriculum and as a result are limited by their knowledge and lack of resources.[558] This research found that in Australia, all participating English teachers seem to face similar challenges when

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[556] Freebody, P., A. Luke and P. Gilbert (1991). "Reading Positions and Practices in the Classroom." Curriculum Inquiry **21**(4): 435-457.
[557] Table 6.3.6, #32 (Greater London, School 5, HPS, Teacher 15).
[558] Strickland, D. S. (1994). "Reinventing Our Literacy Programs: Books, Basics, Balance." The Reading Teacher **48**(4): 294-302.

questioned about resources; one teacher observed that, "… [Teachers] need training, resources, strategies and approaches,"[559] to be able to teach new texts at a senior level appropriate for examinations. As a result of these challenges it is easier for Australian teachers to repeat modules for senior students. Similarly, British teachers comment that, being under the pressure of examinations, they find it difficult as educators to do anything more than what is required for their students to do well. Teacher 15 comments that, "teachers do not want to develop new material for texts and it's all the fault of league tables and the pressure on us to perform."[560] Due to the performance pressures placed on schools and educators, teachers felt it was easier to compromise students' engagement with texts, in order for them to cover comprehensively the material needed to perform well in the final examinations. There has been extensive scholarship, as discussed in Chapter on teacher training; work by Duesterberg, George references the importance of modelling good teaching practices,[561] Heble discusses re-visiting the purpose of teachers and reframing the role,[562] while Smith defends the powerlessness teachers have to face from not having a say about their role and responsibilities.[563] To add to this existing body of scholarship, a postcolonial approach might contribute to this ongoing discussion by trying to untangle the specific instances where teachers begin to feel disempowered; is it a lack of voice in curriculum design accompanied by an inability to choose more appropriate resources, if so, is this at the curriculum level, or the school level or both? Addressing where disempowerment begins might help unravel a new pathway opening options for reconsidering how teachers' voice can be used to better design to facilitate the essential skills learners need to access in English classrooms.

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[559] Table 6.3.6, #25 (NSW, School 3, HPS, Teacher 9).
[560] Table 6.3.6, #30 (Greater London, School 5, HPS, Teacher 15).
[561] Duesterberg, L. M. (1998). "Rethinking Culture in the Pedagogy and Practices of Preservice Teachers." Teaching and Teacher Education **14**(5): 497-512.
[562] Heble, A. (2002). "Re-Ethicizing the Classroom: Pedagogy, the Public Sphere, and the Postcolonial Condition." College Literature **29**(1): 143-160.
[563] Cochran-Smith, M. (2003). "Learning and unlearning: the education of teacher educators." Teaching and Teacher Education **19**(1): 5-28.

6.4 Student responses

The questionnaire instrument samples students' perceptions of, and responses to, issues of cultural difference in prescribed texts within the English curriculum.[564] A comparative data set of 310 questionnaires from NSW (N=199) and Greater London (N=111) was collected from senior secondary students at academically high and lower performing schools (HPS and LPS). The data collected through questionnaires indicate that the composition of the sample is representative of students from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds. However, despite their cultural, socio-economic, ancestral and language differences an analysis of students' responses from both HPS and LPS raises issues based on their perceptions of and responses to issues of cultural difference that are presented and discussed through prescribed texts. The following is a comparison of the most pertinent findings and postcolonial analysis is categorised under three sections; (i) overview of students' cultural composition, (ii) students' reflections of issues raised in texts and, (iii) student engagement.

6.4.1 Overview of students' cultural composition

Students in each comparative sample come from a range of cultural backgrounds, yet it seems that English programmes in both Australia and England do not necessarily accommodate discussions of theirs and other cultural differences. For instance, students identified with several different countries as places of ancestry; more than 50% of students born in Australia and England, identified their ancestry as being other than their birthplace. Figure 6.4.1 shows this proportion of students who identify with an ancestry outside their country of birth.

[564] For questionnaire instrument, refer to Appendix E, on pg., 334.

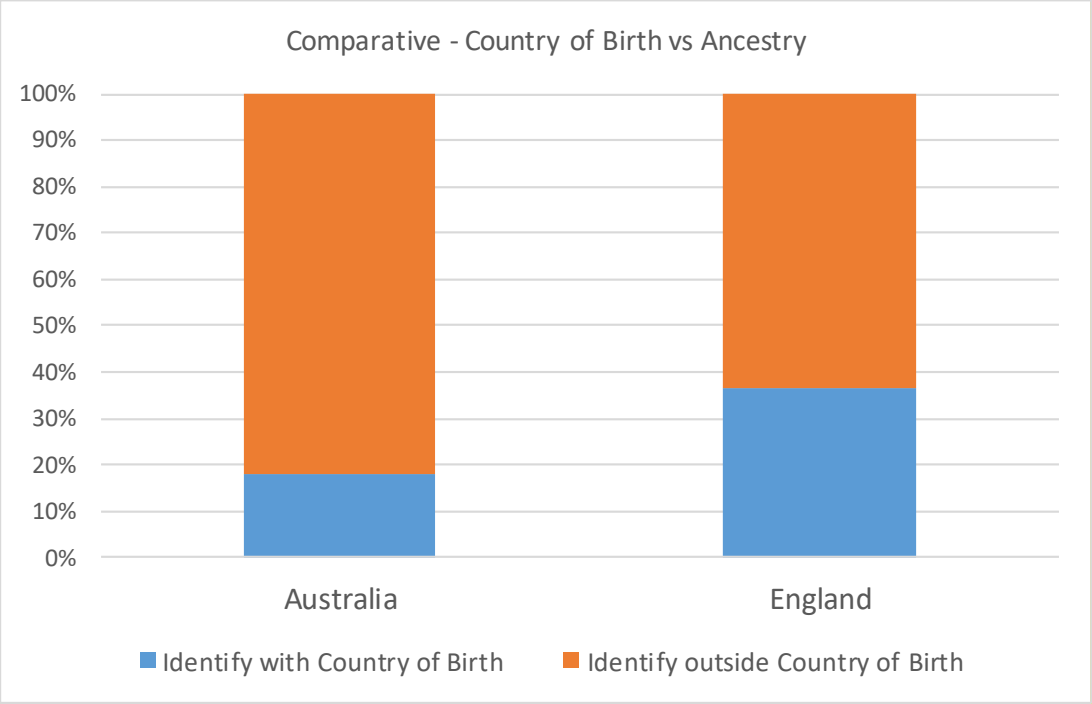

Figure 6.4.1: Comparative – Country of Birth vs Ancestry

The figure above shows that 82% of students who were born in Australia, and 63% of students born in England identified having stronger cultural assocations of ancestry with other countries. In Australia, the majority of students indicated they were from Chinese ancestry, whereas in England many students selected South Asian heritage.

Norton argues that students gain personally from an exposure to a range of cultural texts because they are able to learn about different values beliefs and value systems and these are effective for increasing cultural awareness "through carefully selected and shared literature, students learn to understand and to appreciate a literary heritage that comes from many diverse backgrounds … students learn to identify with people who created stories, whether from the past or present" (28).[565] Scholars like Piper and Tway share beliefs that a variety of cultural texts enables students to develop an awareness of different cultures through language,[566] and that diverse literature enables

[565] Norton, D. E. (1990). "Teaching Multicultural Literature in the Reading Curriculum." The Reading Teacher **44**(1): 28-40.
[566] Piper, D. (1986). "Language Growth in the Multiethnic Classroom." Language Arts **63**(1): 23-36.

students' growth and understanding of themselves and cultural others.[567] Through these suggestions it seems that diversity in literary texts encourages students to learn about cultures, albeit not necessarily the ones present in classrooms. Yet, as presented earlier in this chapter, the current prescribed texts listed for the modules examined in this research have few or no texts that are representative of Chinese heritage in the Board of Studies NSW, or South Asian ancestry in AQA. A postcolonial point of view, may question whether the large proportion of students (Chinese and South Asians), sampled in this research, are represented through texts in English classrooms. This information raises two questions; (i) what are the means of learning about cultural others? and, (ii) are there any exclusions of culture in English classrooms?

Research conducted in 2012 by Johnston and Mangat identified an overall reluctance from teachers, particularly in North American schools to select literary texts that address contentious issues through discussions of ethnicity, social class and gender.[568] Given their analysis, this research suggests that other potentially contentious areas for discussion are culture and religion. Therefore, students were asked to give insights into their religious identities and if these are reflected on or regularly included in English lessons. Figures 6.4.2 and 6.4.3 represent the categorisation of LPS and HPS broadly by their religious identities.

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[567] Tway, E. (1989). Dimensions of Multicultural Literature for Children. Children's Literature: Resource for the Classroom. M. K. Rudman. Urbana, National Council of Teachers of English Conference on College Composition and Communication. **66:** 109-138.

[568] Johnston, I. and J. Mangat (2012). Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literature, and Cultural Mediation in the Classroom. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers.

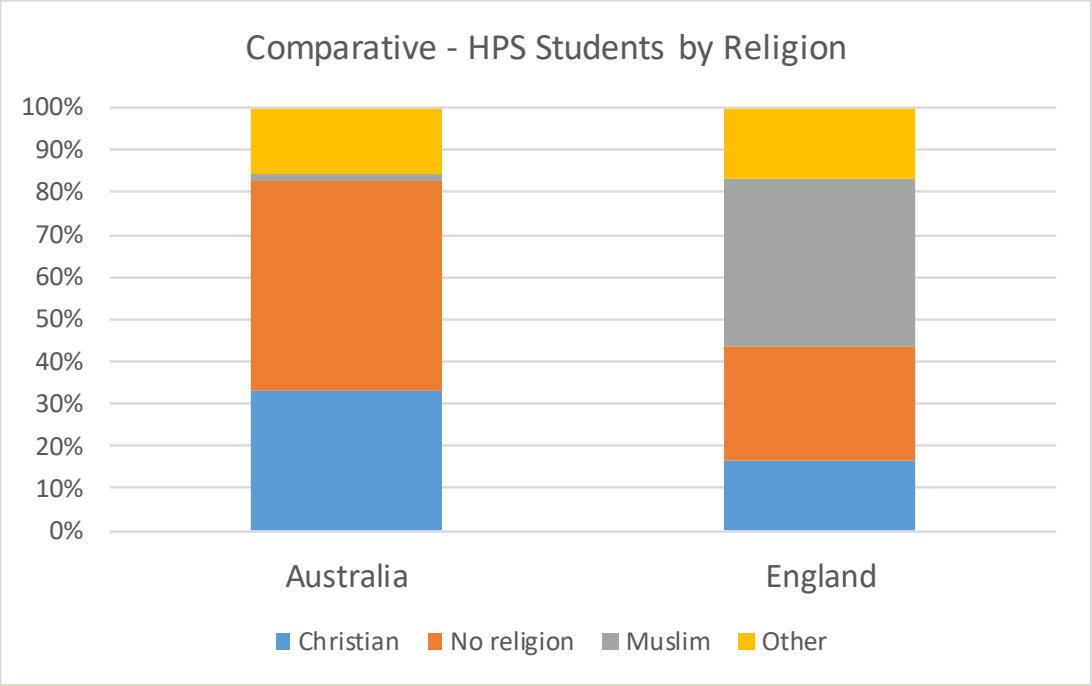

Figure 6.4.2: Comparative – HPS Students by Religion

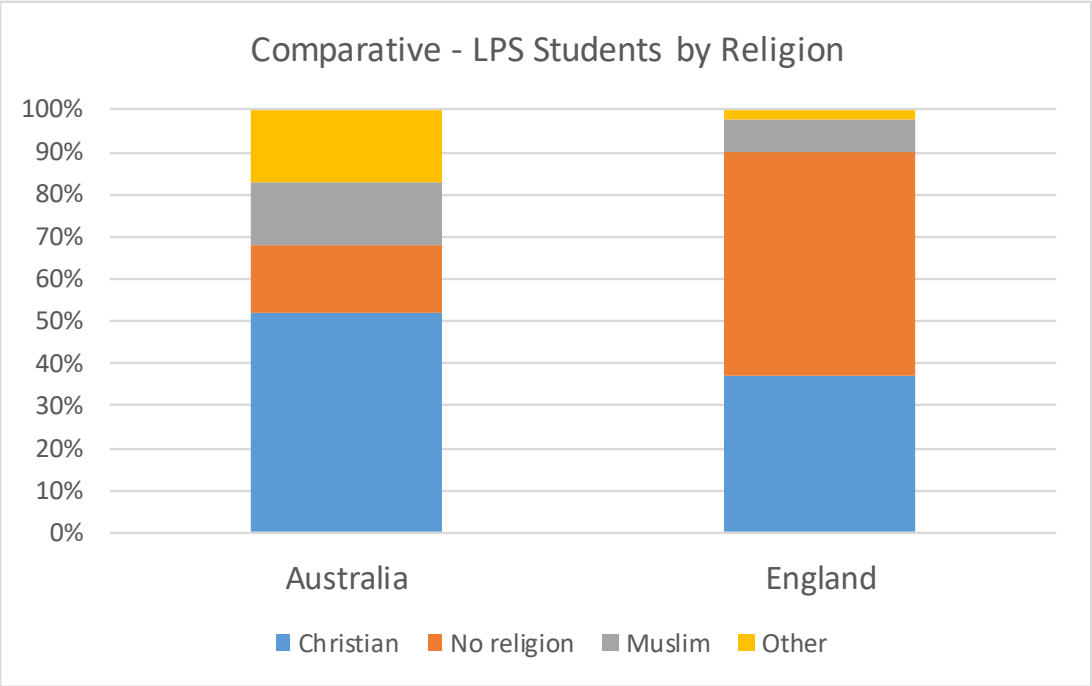

Figure 6.4.3: Comparative – LPS Students by Religion

The figures above show that the representative range of students' faith is diverse, but in both countries most students identified as being 'Christian' or as having no religious beliefs. These figures also show that 7% of students sampled in Australia were of 'Muslim' faith, but the equivalent for England was much larger at 25%.

While teachers in the Australian study showed slightly more hesitation to address issues related to gender and sexuality with their students, teachers in the British sample voiced more concerns about issues related to religion, ethnicity and gender. This is interesting because, as discussed earlier in this chapter, hesitation was expressed by British teachers about including texts related to Islamic identity on school reading lists. Teachers found these texts were perhaps too contentious and could spur on rivalry amongst 'Muslim' and *Other* students. Aside from teachers' perspectives on discussing Islamic issues, it seems neither prescribed texts, nor other potential discussions of these texts enabled students to reflect on issues of Islamic cultural identity in contemporary society. Though Bracher claims that students can feel "threatened when confronted by identity-bearing beliefs and worldviews" (26)[569] in classrooms, one can question the potential benefits of avoiding texts that raise contentious issues? To speculate, for teachers, it might be easier to move through the curriculum without crossing personal boundaries (theirs or students), whereas for students avoiding contentious cultural issues might be a method of preserving their personal beliefs and identity and not having to engage in commentary from their peers. Though, there must be a middle ground, where both teachers and students can learn and engage in a non-threatening space. A postcolonial reading of this situation might suggest that attempting to ignore or work around the presence of contentious issues will only spur on greater fears of addressing concerns; and instead put forward that a better situation would be to address students' perspectives of Islamic beliefs in conjunction with a range of other religious groups; empowering students' views and voices.

Figures 6.4.4 and 6.4.5 compare Muslim and Christian responses to how frequently text discuss or reference their religious faith in texts.

[569] Bracher, M. (2006). Radical Pedagogy: Identity, Generativity, and Social Transformation. New York; Houndmills, Balsingstoke, Hampshire, Palgrave. **1st**.

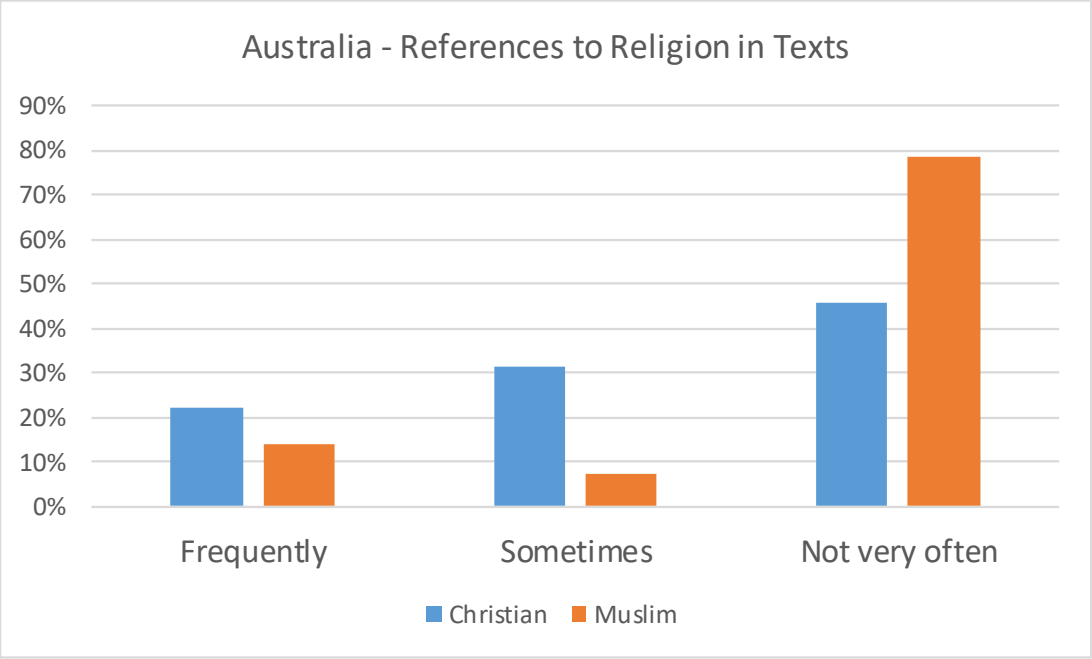

Figure 6.4.4: Australia – References to Religion in Texts

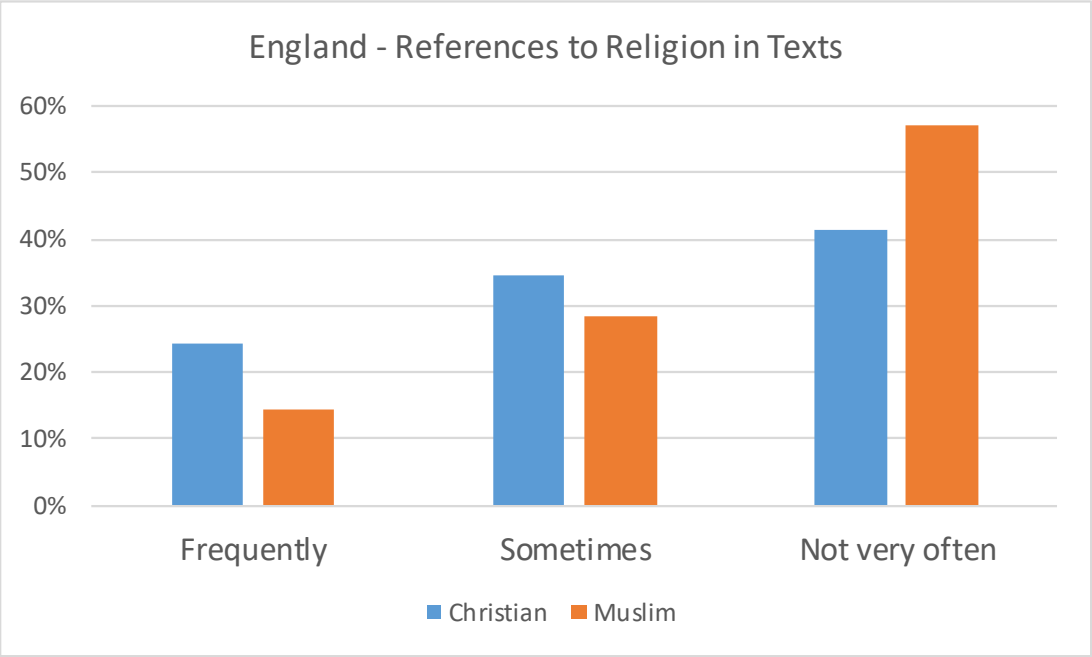

Figure 6.4.5: England – References to Religion in Texts

These figures show that in both countries, over 50% of 'Muslim' students found that texts did not refer to issues of their religion or culture very often. Johnston, Mangat and Masood's research identifies a greater need to include students' opinions in education, though their case studies concentrate more

on the improvement of curriculum and pedagogy, rather than direct engagement with students.[570] To explain, none specifically collates feedback from students about responses to texts, or how these assisted with engaging them in conversations about cultural differences. However, drawing from their work, Johnston suggests "there are few opportunities for these students to connect with texts that may resonate with their own cross-cultural histories and traditions and even fewer opportunities for them to engage critically in deconstructing texts that misrepresent or exoticize the experiences of non-Western people" (1).[571] These few opportunities are inclusive of the fact that not every student in a class will be able to engage with texts that are explicitly focused on raising issues directly connected to their culture. Of concern though, is the fact that students are perhaps not given many opportunities to address misrepresentations of their culture in texts. To emphasise these concerns Masood argues that teachers ought to

> … encourage an ethic of global solidarity, by which I simply mean encouraging a mode of identification with the plight of others who may be different but still share the same planet. Such an ethic aims to encourage our students to look at their own everyday practices in a critical manner and, if needed, change their practices to facilitate a greater degree of good for the rest of humanity (33).[572]

The call for global solidarity, is perhaps more of a common practice in contemporary classrooms which assists with aiding students to discuss cultures, that are not their own, and be able to share and relate to different situations. However, of seemingly greater importance is the need for students to be able to contribute critically and add new meanings to the interpretations of culture within texts and subsequent discussions of these in classrooms. This

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[570] Raja, M. A. (2008). "The Postcolonial Student: Learning the Ethics of Global Solidarity in an English Classroom." The Radical Teacher(82): 32-37, Johnston, I. and J. Mangat (2012). Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literature, and Cultural Mediation in the Classroom. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers.

[571] Johnston, I. (2003). Re-Mapping Literary Worlds Postcolonial Pegagogy in Practice. New York, Peter Lang.

[572] Raja, M. A. (2008). "The Postcolonial Student: Learning the Ethics of Global Solidarity in an English Classroom." The Radical Teacher(82): 32-37.

leads to questioning what thoughts contemporary students have about the current list of prescribed texts selected for their English classes?

6.4.2 *Students' reflections of cultural issues discussed in texts*

If we consider that texts are selected by the curriculum and structured by teachers for students then, in regards to my research aim, how and what issues of cultural difference are discussed through prescribed texts? In both countries, there were mixed responses regarding how often texts discuss students' cultures as there were a range of cultures. For instance, Australian students identified more with cultural issues in text than any other group. Table 6.4.1 demonstrates this as a crosstabulation of family ancestry categorised across students' response3s to how often texts discuss their religion or culture.

Table 6.4.1: Australia - Family Ancestry vs References to Religion or Culture - Crosstabulation

		Texts discuss your religion and culture			
		Frequently	Sometimes	Not very often	
Family Ancestry	Australia	9	5	12	26
	Europe	6	7	5	18
	China	9	15	50	74
	India	2	3	9	14
	Malaysia	4	10	19	33
	Other	7	5	11	23
Total		**37**	**45**	**106**	**188**[573]

A Chi-squared test of the relationships shown in the table above reveals a significant relationship at the 6% confidence level. One can speculate on a few reasons for this response; perhaps the curriculum theme '*Belonging*' helped frame a sense of being Australian? Perhaps texts were taught by Australian

[573] The total here is not the full 199 students as the statistical analysis performed removes samples with missing data points.

teachers who made more connections to Australian culture? Or texts themselves were related to more Australian themes? Or students could make connections to surroundings and culture?

Whereas, in England this relationship was not statistically significant at a 10% confidence level, Figure 5.3.14 in Chapter Five indicated some degree of association between ancestry and how often texts referred to culture. For this sample, 51% of students who claimed that texts did not often refer to their culture were of Asian or African ancestry, while 63% of students who claimed texts referred to their culture at least 'Sometimes' or 'Frequently', were of British, European, or American ancestry. Again, this could be because the AQA have a focus on historical and canonical texts? Or teachers choose these more well-known, well -resourced options? Maybe British students do need to learn more about the heritage of England? The possibilities are endless, and the concern coming out of this in both countries is the lack of balance of students' representation or a sense of belonging in classrooms. The work of Butler and others suggests that educators must "build from prior experiences, [which] students bring to bear knowledge, beliefs, perceptions" (76);[574] in other words educators should consider the knowledge which students bring from their prior experiences. The postcolonial argument can be to include a wider spectrum of voices to be sure that students can utilise this prior knowledge and experience by associating their place of belonging amongst other cultures in the classroom, as opposed to *learning*, or *unlearning* only those cultural groups that are perhaps perceived to be more relevant, appropriate or important for understanding.

Figure 6.4.6 below shows the proportion of sampled students who refer to texts at least 'Sometimes' in discussions of social class with teachers, parents and friends.

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[574] Butler, D. L., S. C. Cartier, L. Schnellert, F. Gagnon and M. Giammarino (2011). "Secondary students' self-regulated engagement in reading: researching self-regulation as situated in context." Psychological Test and Assessment Modeling **53**(1): 73-105.

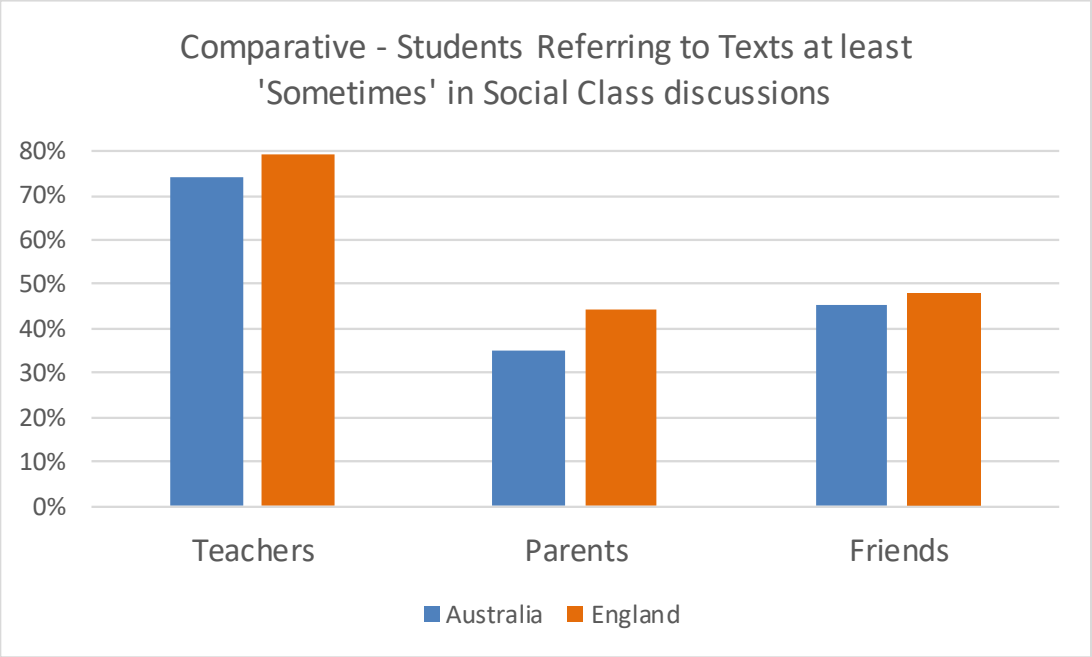

Figure 6.4.6: Comparative – Students Referring to Texts at least 'Sometimes' in Social Class discussions

The figure above shows that in Australia and England students mostly discussed social class issues in texts with their teachers, rather than parents or friends. One possible explanation is that issues of class are predominant in texts and/or a potential issue often raised in examinations. Another interesting fact is that students in Australia indicated that social class was most frequently referenced when discussing gender; whereas in parallel, England students suggested that when social class was discussed in texts it was mostly associated with themes about '*Women*'. In both countries, only about 20% or fewer of HPS and LPS students seem to talk to parents regularly about issues of gender, and/or if they did, not through issues in texts being discussed in schools. Meanwhile, Figure 6.4.7 shows the number of students from Australia and England for whom gender or social class are issues which were relevant to them in discussions of texts, as well as the correlation between the two referents.

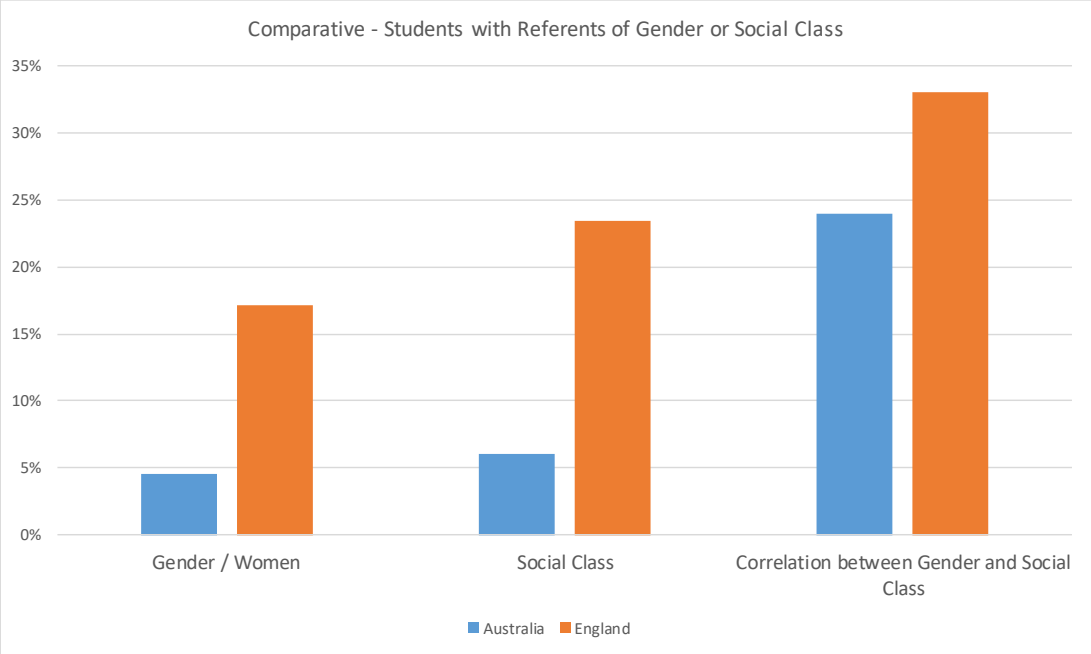

Figure 6.4.7: Comparative – Students with Referents of Gender or Social Class

This figure shows that less than 10% of Australian students can identify issues of either gender or social class, while the equivalent figure for the England sample was only approximately 20%. The correlations between the two referents, in terms of how often students commented simultaneously on both issues in their responses, were relatively high (24% for Australia, and 33% for England); these are both statistically significant at the 10% confidence level. Overall, these findings suggest that issues of social class and gender may not be discussed frequently through texts in English classrooms, and if where they are, they may be presented in a way that they are taken to be either interchangeable or otherwise confounded. Additionally, whenever they *do* discuss these themes, there is little evidence to suggest how students utilise these texts to help facilitate discussions more broadly in other aspects of their lives (with friends and parents) rather than solely in the classroom (with teachers).

It must be noted that, a postcolonial approach for inclusion of students' opinions does not mean that students exclusively drive the process for selecting texts they will like to study. As Mayes suggested, earlier in this

research, "there was some discussion of student roles in the relationships in student voice, however, despite articles raising issues of power relations, very rarely have students been included in discussions of how they perceive power relationships" (62).[575] Inclusion of their opinions, is perhaps equivalent to empowering them or giving them voice, and offers a means for assessing which cultural texts are perhaps less relevant or appealing to students. Such texts can perhaps be exchanged for other more contemporary options, which might inspire students to engage in more discussions at schools. Furthermore, a postcolonial approach would seek to distinguish between aspects of power struggles and identity through social class and gender as being separate. This would be an attempt to seek greater balance of voice not just *within* cultural groups but also *between* them; thus avoiding further marginalization and inclusion of voice of one group at the expense of the *Other*. Although Heble questions "how do we negotiate between, on the one hand, a genuine insistence on and valuing of student expression (itself an ethical move?) and on the other, our ethical responsibility to promote forms of inquiry and models of knowledge production which challenge oppression suffering and injustice?" (147).[576] This is a difficult balance to obtain as it raises other issues like who decides which texts and cultures should be included and within these, what are the challenging issues being discussed?

6.4.3 Student engagement

In education scholarship, particularly the works of Alvermann and Manuel, engagement has often been directed towards encouraging, developing or directing '*struggling*' learners.[577] As discussed in Chapter Two,

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[575] Mayes, E. (2014). "Negotiating the hidden curriculum: Power and affect in negotiated classrooms." English in Australia **48**(3): 62.

[576] Heble, A. (2002). "Re-Ethicizing the Classroom: Pedagogy, the Public Sphere, and the Postcolonial Condition." College Literature **29**(1): 143-160.

[577] Alvermann, D. E. (2001). "Reading Adolescents' Reading Identities: Looking Back to See Ahead." Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy **44**(8): 676-690, Manuel, J. (2012). "Teenagers and reading: Factors that shape the quality of teenagers' reading lives." English in Australia **47**(2): 45.

this leads to an interesting assumption (in research) that engagement is only a concern with those students who are disengaged; we do not seem to be interested in challenging or improving outcomes for those students who are engaged. This research has endeavoured to collect responses from higher and lower-performing schools (HPS and LPS), to better understand how students from these polarised institutions respond to issues of cultural differences in English texts.

Though coming from a wide range of fields and interests, the term 'engagement', for this research, has often been discussed as stimulating a desire to read (Manuel and Brindley), usually by using a variety of methods to hook learners' interest (Daisey, Schultz, Jones-Walker, Chikkatur).[578] Building off this scholarship, for both HPS and LPS, this research compares students' responses to 'liking English as a subject' with their 'understanding of their teachers' interpretation of texts'. The responses from these questions are compared to gauge an appreciation of student engagement (both introspective and outwardly reflective) in HPS and LPS institutions. Figure 6.4.8 below shows the correlations between students' responses of how well they like English versus their understanding of teachers' interpretations of texts.

[578] Schultz, K., C. E. Jones-Walker and A. P. Chikkatur (2008). "Listening to Students, Negotiating Beliefs: Preparing Teachers for Urban Classrooms." Curriculum Inquiry **38**(2): 155-187, Daisey, P. (2010). "Secondary preservice teachers remember their favorite reading experiences: insights and implications for content area instruction: this researcher's goal is to improve reading instruction by examining secondary preservice teacher's favorite reading experiences." Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy **53**(8): 678, Manuel, J., J. Manuel and S. Brindley (2012). Teenagers and reading: Literary heritages, cultural contexts and contemporary reading practices, Wakefield Press.

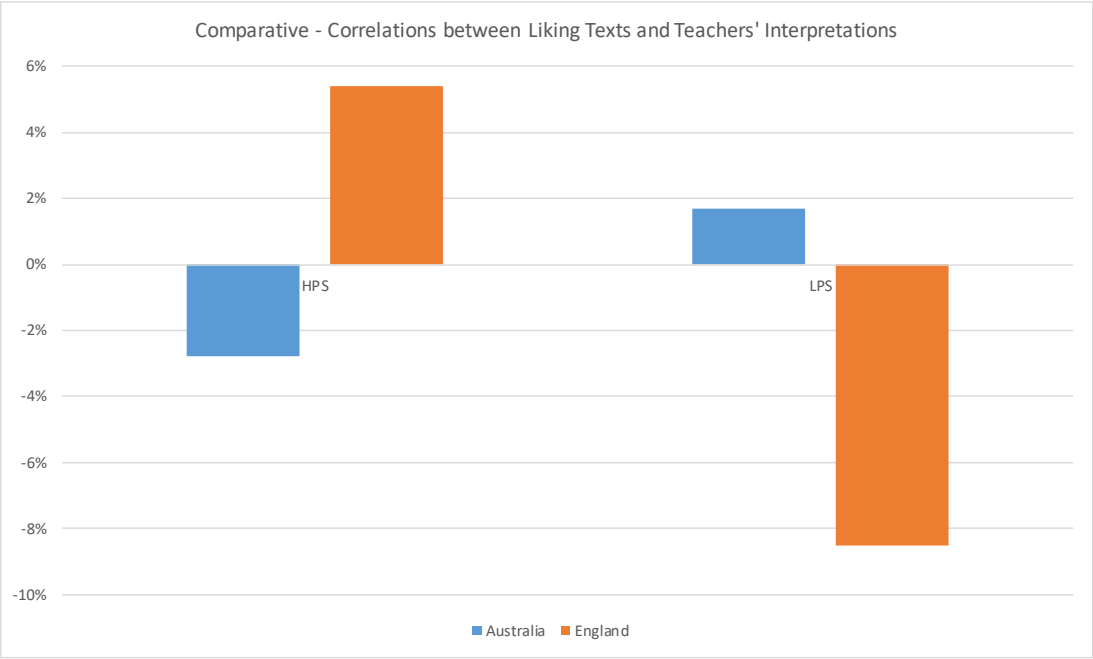

Figure 6.4.8: Comparative – Correlations between Liking Texts and Teachers' Interpretations

The figure above shows that there is a weak positive correlation (5%) between students liking English and their understanding of teachers' interpretations of texts for England students in HPS. This means that when students claimed they liked English, they also tended to indicate that teachers' interpretation of texts was clear, and vice versa. Whereas, the opposite relationship was true for LPS students, given the negative correlation (-9%). Students who claimed that they liked English tended to indicate that their understanding of teachers' interpretations was not very clear. These results are not statistically significant at the 10% confidence level; however, they are indicative of a possible directional effect. One might speculate perhaps HPS students had better abilities to relate to their teachers, or that teachers used different strategies that guided students to understand their interpretations. However, these speculations would not necessarily hold true in the Australian sample.

Surprisingly, the inverse relationship is true for the Australian sample, where there is a weak positive correlation (2%) between students' liking texts and understanding teachers' interpretations for LPS, but a weak negative correlation (-3%) for the same for HPS. This suggests that students who liked

English tended to be less clear about teachers' interpretations of texts in HPS; the opposite being true this time for LPS. Again, these results are not statistically significant at the 10% level, however this comparison shows, if a measure of engagement is to be taken from students' liking of English' and their ability to 'understand their teachers' interpretations' then engagement (in this example) likely encompasses more than these factors. This information suggests that students' engagement is also based on other elements of texts such as style, structure or content.

It is interesting to consider why LPS students expressed such strong liking of English as a subject, when in most instances English was not their first language, and were not expected to top final examinations. Bhabha suggests "the *'right'* to signify from the periphery of authorised power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are *'in the minority'*" (3).[579] If Bhabha's quote is applied to LPS learners, the postcolonial position here can be interpreted as an opportunity for those who are deemed less likely by the eyes of others to succeed to keep pushing against these stereotypes of performance. There is a body of literature, like the work of Peterson and Irving, who for instance, talk about the *unintentional role* performance has on students' abilities to believe in themselves (personal motivation) and an overall sense of well-being. Therefore, it is important that engaging students also transcends the boundaries of performance, and that regardless of the perceived abilities of the students, they should still be engaged to learn about other cultures and within these stories seek new meanings, perspectives and interpretations of others in society.

On the other hand, it can also be suggested that perhaps for those HPS and LPS students who indicated they had a good understanding of their

[579] Bhabha, H. K. (1994). The Location of Culture. New York, Routledge.

teachers' interpretations of texts, they had instructors who were very good at engaging their learning. Perhaps these teachers select texts that are more engaging and inspiring for their students and might be their first encounter at school or home with such literary texts. There are also arguments that

> Many experienced and beginning teachers have had little preparation for working in culturally diverse classrooms and little exposure to existing critiques of multicultural education … they often have inadequate time to examine their own assumptions and understandings of culture and schooling and a few opportunities to develop culturally sensitive teaching materials and activities geared towards social justice. Teachers are often unaware of how race and culture interact to create complex educational problems for students of minority backgrounds (36).[580]

This suggests that perhaps not all teachers are adequately prepared to transcend the barriers of cultural history and differences themselves, far less to engage their students. Daisey supports this and suggests that it is often difficult to understand how some teachers are to encourage young learners to engage with English when they themselves do not really engage with reading.[581] However, this is a difficult concept to measure because many teacher programmes encourage teachers to spend time with students from different cultures and find other avenues to help engage their interests which do not necessarily only involve developing a passion for reading.[582] A postcolonial view of engagement might build on the sentiments of McFadden and Munns that "it is students themselves who will be able to tell us that they are engaged and who will say whether education is working for them in a

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[580] Johnston, I. and J. Mangat (2012). Reading Practices, Postcolonial Literature, and Cultural Mediation in the Classroom. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers.

[581] Daisey, P. (2010). "Secondary preservice teachers remember their favorite reading experiences: insights and implications for content area instruction: this researcher's goal is to improve reading instruction by examining secondary preservice teacher's favorite reading experiences." Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy **53**(8): 678.

[582] Schultz, K., C. E. Jones-Walker and A. P. Chikkatur (2008). "Listening to Students, Negotiating Beliefs: Preparing Teachers for Urban Classrooms." Curriculum Inquiry **38**(2): 155-187.

culturally sensitive and relevant way" (364).[583] However, the postcolonial overlay of this statement would be to empower students with a voice to have a say in what interests their learning, or even being able to have an opinion or vote on the texts they want to study at schools; overall these actions facilitate including students in the planning process, making them contributors to their education rather than only the recipients.

[583] McFadden, M. and G. Munns (2002). "Student engagement and the social relations of pedagogy." British Journal of Sociology of Education **23**(3): 357-366.

Chapter Seven

Reflections, Implications and Directions

At the beginning of this thesis, I reflected on my education experience at secondary school in the Caribbean and how the selection and teaching of English texts were not satisfactory for engaging West Indian students in discussions of their own cultural identity in the backdrop of these texts. This research finds, close to two decades after my secondary schooling, that while there have been developments in terms of technological/digital texts and enhanced reading programmes for younger students, not much has changed in terms of English text selection and teaching for senior secondary students. The following addresses the extent to which my research aims were answered and puts forward some ideas for further consideration and development that are needed to flesh out comprehensive senior secondary English programmes that might enable students to assess and make contributions to global discussions of cultural issues in contemporary society.

7.1 Realising the Aims of the Research

This study has pursued four aims related to the selection and teaching of English texts to senior secondary students from different types of schools in Australia and England. The research has successfully engaged with each question and found that while curricula are periodically revised, the list of prescribed texts does not frequently change. The following summarises the extent to which the research questions have been addressed, and the postcolonial theoretical considerations that can be made:

7.1.1 Curriculum— to explore the extent to which the senior English curriculum is framed to challenge students to consider cultural differences in society

- This research was conducted during an interesting time of curriculum development, evaluation and change in Australia, with the coming of the National Curriculum, and in England, with the major reform to secondary education. In both systems, the changes to be implemented were quite diverse; from planning what should be included in an education curriculum for contemporary learners, to re-evaluating the programmes of assessment; changes which affect both educators and students on a country-wide level. Though, this research focuses on only English curricula, albeit a single section of the senior secondary programme, which invites discussions of cultures through students' interpretation and understanding of issues within texts. The results of this research, based on this focused study, cast doubts about curricula being built and balanced with contemporary students at the heart of its construction. Instead more emphasis is placed on; (i) loading more content into the curriculum, (ii) managing satisfaction levels of politics, policies and participants (i.e. teachers), and (iii) constructing a system for testing. This research found the *who* is being educated, and *why* this knowledge is relevant are seemingly not given equal consideration in curriculum design.

- The comparison of Australia (Board of Studies NSW) and England (AQA) show two different systems of curriculum design and dissemination; one where schools do not have much choice but to accept the Board of Studies curriculum (NSW), and the other in England, where educators are given a preference of eight types of curricula on offer. This research found that despite having two different curriculum boards, with polarised positions of power (NSW

monopolises, AQA competes), neither of these constructs have served in truly empowering teachers. For NSW the curriculum design process may not be visible and this perhaps blurs understanding of the boundaries that exist between designers (curriculum board) and facilitators (teachers). Whereas, the AQA acknowledges that teachers are motivated by a range of reasons that are not necessarily focused on students, such as; material they are comfortable working with, what engages them, options that might be easier to succeed in exams, resources that are short and easy to cover. Therefore, empowerment of teachers is not necessarily just listening to what teachers want; they are a large cohort, with different skills, abilities, qualifications, interests and it is unreasonable to expect easy negation of power between them and the curriculum.

Postcolonial theory & curriculum

- A postcolonial approach to building curriculum would perhaps involve designing curricula that encourages more integration of students with different abilities. This research found the *who* is being educated, and *why* this knowledge is relevant are seemingly not given equal consideration in curriculum design. A postcolonial approach to curriculum design will take into consideration the political, global and economic changes that have resituated the values of empire.

- External influences, like politics, economy, globalisation have significant impacts on how curriculum boards identify and determine the knowledge and skill sets that are necessary for an upcoming generation. A postcolonial approach would help reconceptualise their influence on curriculum design focusing more on empowering other voices that help shape and build knowledge economies in society.

- The analysis of both the NSW and AQA systems raises questions about how can a curriculum board maintain the robust standards within a competitive market, appease investors, and ensure that consistency and meaning in terms of structure and content is preserved? A postcolonialist might speculate that one needs to actively involve other bodies which interact with curriculum boards (e.g. Government, Ofqual) who help moderate processes not just in terms of achieving outcomes but also to assist with maintaining the balance of power and voice.

7.1.2 Prescribed texts—to investigate the tenets and processes of senior English text selection with a specific emphasis on texts selected to engage students in considering cultural differences in contemporary society

- In both systems (NSW, AQA) text selection involves consulting with external stakeholders or educators. While this process is procedural and not formally documented, this research found that the Board of Studies NSW consults with 34 different stakeholder groups and experts, although it is not compulsory for these experts to participate and, for the 2015-2020 prescribed list, the Media experts were not consulted in relation to the introduction of the new Media category for study. There is no evidence about the scope of these groups' expertise in education or English to guide them to make recommendations relevant to teaching contemporary students in schools. This raises questions about the extent to which the advice of these stakeholders or experts is sought or taken on board to guide curriculum decision making. Whereas, the AQA external consultations invite teachers to participate in the review process for selecting prescribed texts. This research found that, while teachers are involved in recommending

prescribed texts, they may not necessarily choose options that are beneficial to engage and motivate their students to read and discuss issues. It may be that some options do not necessarily add to their existing workloads, so they can assist their students prepare model essays for their final examinations.

- The findings reveal that for NSW and the AQA, selecting texts to appeal to the diversity and interest of contemporary students is not a priority when curriculum boards consider text options. Instead, examination boards have a primary focus on selecting texts that are suitable for setting examination questions. This highlights concerns about senior secondary education placing far too much emphasis on constructing curricula for examinations, rather than focusing on the needs of students. Because of this, there are challenges with the current lists of prescribed texts as they do not necessarily engage contemporary learners in discussions of cultural differences in society.

- NSW and the AQA English curricula text lists are populated by more canonical than contemporary (recently published) resources. As well, canonical options are rarely changed or removed, for instance choices like *'Great Expectations'* or *'To Kill a Mockingbird'* are often simply moved from existing parts of the curriculum to the main list, resulting on even fewer newer options being added. Though curricula in both countries are evaluated once every four to five years, this research found that prescribed lists are not often revised.

- NSW provides a wider spectrum of text types compared to the AQA, which lists only prose fiction, poetry and drama. The challenges with having a range of text types is firstly, considering how these options will present or express issues in texts and secondly, how are newer

multimodal resources changing the nature of English education, and if so, what does this digital age of English look like? However, a balance of these options is not clearly defined in either NSW or AQA prescribed lists, instead there are seemingly more traditional options listed for study. One potential reason this balance is difficult to achieve is because, in both case studies, the majority of texts were published between 1901-1999 with few newer publications emerging after the turn of the century.

- Of interest in this research is fixed number of options listed for study under each category. For instance, NSW reduced the total number of prescribed texts from 16 to 14 for the Area of Study, while the teaching period was extended to five years. Similarly, the AQA (prior to the reform) had selections like '*Of Mice and Men*' and '*To Kill a Mockingbird*' as prescribed options for decades, where students were even allowed to study the same text for two different levels of senior examinations GCSE and GCE; this translates to four years of schooling focusing on the same text.

Postcolonial theory & prescribed texts

- Overall, a postcolonial concern with the justification of text selection from the curriculum boards, is that it focuses more on teachers and examinations, and pays little or no attention to students.

- While many traditional texts have embodied more Western ideals of culture, it is interesting to consider how new forms of digital texts are presented in terms of perspectives and views of non-Western cultures. A postcolonial theoretical approach would encourage different forms of text types to be incorporated as this is potentially a means for

balancing off not just types of texts, but also content on different perspectives of power. However, caution would be exercised to ensure that texts selected to engage students and consider how messages of oppression, power and cultural dominance are represented from different points of view. A method of screening for these issues, would be to involve students' and teachers' input when selecting options, if only to generate a blanket understanding of their impressions of these texts and the values that can be extrapolated from them.

- The consideration that texts make larger contribution to students' lives raises a postcolonial concern; introducing any new form of text for education is primarily how messages of oppression and power are transmitted to students. Here, I put forward that a postcolonial consideration of text selection and students might include, representing and differentiating; (i) the popular views of the *West* to *Other* cultures but also, (ii) voices and perspectives of *non-Western* cultural considerations, and (iii) options that can help make clearer connections to issues of identity (*hybridized*) in contemporary society.

- Considering that canonical texts can transmit Western values, one might consider how students associate their entire experience with such a text (form and content) as disengaging relative to newer texts. To explain, more contemporary options are associated with *viewing* texts than *reading* texts, which could result in students regarding reading as less of an enjoyable task compared to experiencing film and media studies. A postcolonialist might suggest the selection of *reading* and *viewing* texts should not be juxtaposed as older, more canonical texts associated with *reading* and newer texts with film/media studies. One solution might be to list more texts under each category, ensuring the range of texts offered for study are a mixture of options (traditional

and newer selections).

7.1.3 Pedagogy—to probe issues encountered by teachers in mediating prescribed texts in senior English classrooms

- Teachers from both countries express concerns about the design of senior secondary English curricula, as not necessarily satisfying (meeting and/or challenging) the diverse learning needs of their students. This research found that teachers in both countries from both HPS and LPS institutions are aware and sensitive to the needs and abilities of their diverse students. Their statements indicate that despite knowing what is best for their students there is limited power or control over how they can make changes to their current education system to help students achieve better outcomes. In England of most concern to teachers are the changes post-reform to the education system, including modifications to curriculum learning goals and numbers of prescribed texts. Given these recent changes, it seems difficult for teachers to work out how these alterations will impact on their classes, particularly for the English modules where there has been an increase in the number of texts offered.

- For teachers in Australia and England the main issues encountered when selecting texts to engage students' interest were that; (i) resources do not suitably match the capabilities of students, (ii) there is little or no emphasis on encouraging students to read widely at senior secondary levels and, (iii) teachers are not adequately trained, or given sufficient time and resources to prepare material for new texts.

- Teachers note the implicit focus of senior secondary education is now less on engaging students learning and more on obtaining high passes in final (HSC or A-Level) examinations which has resulted in teachers

coaching students for their final exams. In this research, 24 teachers were interviewed about challenges they encountered with mediating prescribed texts. Most teachers indicated a dislike for teaching the same texts year after year, but felt that the system of testing students meant that senior education classes were more focused on preparing students for exams rather than teaching them to refine their arguments or think more broadly about cultural issues in contemporary society.

- The perceived need to focus on the goal of examination success leads to a narrowing of pedagogical goals for teachers which result in limiting learning opportunities for students. Pedagogical strategies for teaching senior English texts include selecting options that are available in the school book room, have been taught in previous years and are advantageous for their students to pass exams. These include providing HPS students with only the information necessary to pass examinations and, therefore, classroom assignments are based on rote learning model essays. Some of these strategies adopted by teachers include rote learning of model essays as a form of classroom assignment. As well, this research found that LPS Australian teachers (in this study) strategically choose texts or options they believe HPS teachers will not choose for their students. Teachers believe this strategy will afford their LPS students less competition when grading. It seems many teachers choose texts that will help their students perform better in examinations, rather than options that might be more engaging or useful to help them engage in reading, analysis and discussions.

- Teachers explain that the majority of resources are comprised of well-known, traditional or canonical texts and these pose certain challenges when engaging culturally diverse learners. One crucial finding

identified in this research is the unnatural connections teachers feel forced to make between prescribed texts and the Area of Study concept. Canonical texts are important options that should be kept on reading lists because of their structure of content, richness of language and legacy in literature. While these options are effective for achieving curriculum outcomes, there is concern (identified by at least three teachers in this research) that canonical texts are often difficult for many students to access and require extensive support for learning goals to be achieved; this takes time and effort and is not easily facilitated at the senior secondary level.

Postcolonial theory & pedagogy

- A postcolonial concern for *teaching to the test*, might be the empowerment of examinations which sets limitations around the definitions of success. This raises a few challenging questions for educators; how are educators certain that these examination standards are adequate measures of students' abilities, especially since teachers express that current curricula do not adequately meet the needs of contemporary learners? Secondly, what effects do examinations have on students' self-motivations and perceptions, how do both positive and negative examination results affect their approach and understanding of the wider world? And thirdly, how does such positive or negative reinforcement guide teachers' ability to disseminate their own interpretations of the values within texts?

- A postcolonial view of teachers' strategy of mediating texts by forcing meanings onto texts might have negative impacts on students; not only might they leave school with a poor analysis of a text but also carry with them *misrepresentations* of meanings which can include an

understanding of culture, values, tradition, ethics, to name a few. Therefore, a better alternative to forcing meaning would be enable students to approach texts with an understanding of their own interpretation and help them establish connections to *others*. This would simultaneously need to take direction from teachers' own mediation, through interpretation of the curriculum, and the alignment of the intended aims with the desired outcome of student learning.

- One comparison noted in this research are the two different approaches taken by the HPS and LPS teachers about choosing *'The Kite Runner'* as a text to discuss Muslim cultural issues. Perhaps a postcolonial approach for mediating *'The Kite Runner'* in classrooms might be a successful platform to engage diverse learners in discussions of cultural and religious differences in contemporary society. In this regard educators and students can perhaps consider how culturally diverse texts can be read in ways that are not reinforcing European fears and desires but rather addressing these as one of many other types of cultural fears.

7.1.4 Student responses—to sample students' perceptions of and responses to issues of cultural difference in prescribed texts within the English curriculum

- 310 students surveyed across eight school, four in Australia and England, identified with several different countries as places of ancestry; more than 50% of students born in Australia and England, identified their ancestry as being other than their birthplace. The data shows that 82% of students who were born in Australia, and 63% of students born in England identified having stronger cultural assocations of ancestry with other countries. In Australia, most

students indicated they were from Chinese ancestry, whereas in England many students identified with a South Asian heritage.

- For this sample, 51% of students who claimed that texts did not often refer to their culture were of Asian or African ancestry, while 63% of students who claimed texts referred to their culture at least 'Sometimes' or 'Frequently', were of British, European, or American ancestry.

- In Australia and England students mostly discussed social class issues in texts with their teachers, rather than parents or friends. One possible explanation is that issues of class are predominant in texts and/or a potential issue often raised in examinations. Another interesting fact is that students in Australia indicated that social class was most frequently referenced when discussing gender; whereas in parallel, England students suggested that when social class was discussed in texts it was mostly associated with themes about '*Women*'.

- Overall, these findings suggest that issues of social class and gender may not be discussed frequently through texts in English classrooms, and where they are, they may be presented in a way that they are taken to be either interchangeable or otherwise confounded. Additionally, whenever they *do* discuss these themes, there is little evidence to suggest how students utilise these texts to help facilitate discussions more broadly in other aspects of their lives (with friends and parents) rather than solely in the classroom (with teachers).

Postcolonial theory and students

- A postcolonial point of view, may question whether the large proportion of students (Chinese and South Asians), sampled in this

research, are represented through texts in English classrooms. This information raises two questions; (i) what are the means of learning about cultural others? and, (ii) are there any exclusions of culture in English classrooms?

- The postcolonial argument can be to include a wider spectrum of voices to be sure that students can utilise their prior knowledge and experience by associating their place of belonging amongst other cultures in the classroom, as opposed to *learning*, or *unlearning* only those cultural groups that are perhaps perceived to be more relevant, appropriate or important for understanding.

- It must be noted that, a postcolonial approach for inclusion of students' opinions does not mean that students exclusively drive the process for selecting texts they will like to study. Inclusion of their opinions, is perhaps equivalent to empowering them or giving them voice, and offers a means for assessing which cultural texts are perhaps less relevant or appealing to students. Such texts can perhaps be exchanged for other more contemporary options, which might inspire students to engage in more discussions at schools.

- Furthermore, a postcolonial approach would seek to distinguish between aspects of power struggles and identity through social class and gender as being separate. This would be an attempt to seek greater balance of voice not just *within* cultural groups but also *between* them; thus avoiding further marginalization and inclusion of voice of one group at the expense of the *Other*.

7.2 Research Limitations

There are inevitable limitations to any doctoral level research given time and financial constraints; this study is no different. Given that the choice of class in each school was a school level decision, it was not possible to control the student gender balance or teacher experience, for example. The number of schools surveyed in each country is small (four per country) and only three senior classes in each could be included. In some schools there were four senior examination classes at least three or four non-examination classes of senior students (Year 11 or Lower Sixth form) who were not writing exams. With the benefit of hindsight, it would have been preferable to survey all senior students at each school and not restrict it to the three offered/selected.

Moreover, given the exigencies of school timetables and the reluctance to share learning time with research time for senior students, it was only possible to have one lesson period in which to both observe the class and administer the questionnaire. Because of this, any data taken from observation in the very limited time allocation was not meaningful or informative since most of the class observation period was given over to the completion of the questionnaire. Such data has therefore been excluded from presentation and integration with the body of the research. The questionnaire also would have benefited from the addition of questions relating to students' reading habits and preferences and probing whether they wished to study texts that discuss issues in present society (and if so which issues?) as well as whether they are interested in studying texts about their culture? Such information would be useful to gauge if students might be more interested in reading newer, culturally applicable material. More time to observe and to be able to follow up on the initial questionnaire would have been preferable to understand what issues are focused on in each lesson and how students respond to texts in classrooms in both oral and written forms.

While generally satisfied with the structure and execution of the

teacher interviews, there are two changes that would have been preferred. Firstly, as indicated, surveying all senior students and interviewing all the English teachers would have been an effective means of gaining responses about the frequency of discussing social or cultural issues like social class, gender and ethnicity in texts with students. This would have been interesting to compare to the students' responses to the same cultural issues to determine if teachers intend to focus more on some issues than others. Secondly, given that there were two schools in England where the teachers insisted on being interviewed as a group, this undermined the phenomenological approach to data collection for those schools. For a more holistic and pure study of teachers' experiences in classrooms, they would need to be interviewed individually so that they can feel secure in interview environment, rather than feeling restrained in the presence of other teachers.

The interviews with Curriculum Officers were limited to the knowledge or information they had before the interview, which means the Officers did not have the time to prepare or provide supplementary resources to explain further in detail the processes and rationales for selecting prescribed texts. Perhaps a better approach would have been to supply the interview questions to the Officers beforehand and ask if they can please prepare their responses or provide additional materials to support their claims. Although, it can be argued there were strengths and positive aspects resulting from the approach used in this study, Officers were able to share the most pertinent issues they encountered with the text selection process. This research would have also benefited from the opportunity to interview the stakeholders or experts, external to Examination Boards, involved in the text selection process. However, due to time constraints and budget for international and local travel, it was difficult to incorporate this level of fieldwork into this research.

As a final remark, with more time and resources available, it would have been more methodologically sound to institute a pilot study near the beginning of the instrument design phase to help pre-assess the viability and

address unexpected design flaws or issues with maintaining the integrity of the instruments. For example, it may have been possible to pick up in advance that LPS students tended to respond toward the extremes of questions asking about their personal feelings towards discussions in and of texts. Addressing this in advance may have insinuated a smaller three-point Likert scale design, and therefore would have promoted better comparability between the samples of HPS and LPS students.

7.3 Implications of the Study

There are clear implications from this research that have the capacity to contribute to more effective learning and teaching for students. These considerations/issues for the relevant sectors are summarised as follows:

- ***Curriculum development***
  - To what extent is the discussion of social class, gender, ethnicity, or cultural diversity appropriate as a focus in the study of English Literature *vis à vis* Social Science or Politics or History?

  - How are secondary school English programmes in other countries being influenced or affected by international bodies measuring student performance like PISA, NAPLAN (in Australia) and League tables (in England)?

- ***Prescribed texts***
  - To what extent are external selection committees trained in English and education? Is this optional or prerequisite to select texts for secondary school students?

  - What are some of the challenges/balancing issues external bodies encounter when making text recommendations to Exam Boards?

- Why are so many canonical texts repeated on school lists especially with increased access to more technology in classrooms and an increase in the accessibility and availability of digital texts?

- How do text selection processes and pedagogies vary between schools located in rural areas as compared to urban regions in each country?

- ***Teacher education***

- Given the criteria developed for text selection,[584] the emphasis placed on the need for supplementary teacher resources and the potential challenge to teachers inherent in multiple new texts, it is relevant to question the extent to which current teachers have had adequate training in the discipline of English as distinct from English education.

- How do teachers choose the thematic aspects of texts they are teaching and to what extent do they differ?

- Is the thematic burden of the curriculum too great for some/all texts?

- How do teachers, at different stages of their careers, change or adapt their text selection and teaching practices?

- ***Students' learning***

- To what extent is the cultural diversity of students an important issue for teachers as opposed to Exam Boards when selecting texts?

- To what extent might culturally diverse texts be inherently more appealing for students to read?

[584] For text selection rationale refer to Chapter 4, for Australia and Chapter 5, for England, on pgs. 131 and 194, respectively.

- In Australia and England, students indicate that social class is the most frequent issue discussed through texts in classrooms. What are other contentious issues arising due to cultural or global shifts in society? What religious issues are regarded as too contentious and thus are avoided in classrooms?

- What does an active avoidance of contentious issues mean for the future of English education? Is education moving in the direction of sidestepping issues that are too difficult or confronting to discuss? Is this beneficial/harmful for young, diverse global citizens?

- To what extent do parents/guardians with a university degree have an impact on the quantity and variety of texts students have been exposed to or read at home?

7.4 Directions for Further Research

In each of the areas mentioned in 7.3, there are questions in search of answers. Some of these are scoped as follows:

- What do we know about what examiners value in student writing about texts? To what extent might there be received wisdom in this regard which could potentially mitigate against opinions and ideas emanating from the cultural diversity of the current student population in both England and Australia?

- What kinds of *reading* dominate students' extra curricula reading? Might there be a fundamental mismatch here between technologically mediated reading across the spectrum and the largely print driven environment of current prescribed texts? What might this mean in terms of student interest and perceived relevance?

- *'Culturally diverse texts'* encompass texts written by people from different cultures discussing specific themes relevant to different cultural beliefs, values and practices. A study comparing teachers' and students' responses to issues discussed in texts would be useful to develop criteria for the types of culturally diverse texts that are most suitable for study in schools.

- A study of the pedagogical methods used by teachers at different stages in their career (retired/current/first year of teaching) might help scope how teaching practices have changed over time, (e.g. with the increase of technology in classrooms) and how teaching methods characterise different stages of teachers' careers.

- As founded in this research LPS students, across both samples, expressing more 'liking' for English Literature? Is this a general trend in other regions, countries and schools?

- A survey to investigate how teachers research, analyse and prepare when approaching a new text for study. One methodology might be to present teachers with two texts a well-known traditional text and a new contemporary text and ask them to construct plans for teaching both texts to current students. Such a study might assist with collatating and informing approaches to be used and with the development of best practice models for teachers to reference when teaching newer or well-known texts helping to make these relevant and engaging to contemporary learners.

- While this study examines students' responses across HPS and LPS in urban regions, it would be useful to know how these responses compare to students' responses to texts in rural or more remote regions

of Australia and England?

- ***Directions***

While the previous section details a number of potentially useful research questions which might be explored in relation to the current research, there are four projects of interest to me as I complete my future trajectory:

- Firstly, as this research sets the foundation to understand text selection practices in Australia and England, my future directions are to extend this study to understand practices in the third major developed English speaking country of America.

- Following this the plan is to examine how America, Australia and England teach and/or discuss contemporary religion issues through texts. This study will look closely at religion, considering recent terror attacks across the world, the attitudes related to selecting and discussing Islamic religious issues in senior secondary English classes. It would examine how developed countries with high populations of diverse students are educating young learners about the religious beliefs of other cultures through the study of texts in English classrooms.

A third project would be to investigate how former post-colonial countries develop curricula to incorporate a balance between more colonial or canonical texts and publications from local authors in regions like South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. This would investigate text selection practices in post-colonial countries and capture initiatives in place to ensure that there is a balance between canonical (colonial) texts and more diverse multicultural voices and local narratives on school reading lists.

- An overarching aim across those three projects would be refining how postcolonial theory can be used as a practical approach for selecting and teaching culturally diverse texts in English classrooms. Potentially this can be accomplished through facilitating a course as part of teaching training programmes at universities. It would also include working with Examination Boards to facilitate a programme that can assist with selecting texts more culturally relevant to contemporary students and inclusive of a range of resources about teaching new culturally diverse texts and discussing contentious issues with young learners.

English Literature is not a simply a subject exploring stories and language. It is a critical discipline that encourages growth and self-awareness through exposure to the words of different people, from distant time and places who share their experiences and/or perceptions of the world. Senior secondary English is an opportunity for students to become part of this tradition of learning, as it is through English they can seek knowledge and meaning that will shape their thinking, approach and analysis of people and situations in contemporary society. As an educator, I believe there is an urgent need to improve the teaching and assessment of senior English education in secondary schools.

A postcolonial approach to English education might entail more discussions between curriculum, texts, pedagogy and students. This would seek to implicitly or (explicitly where appropriate) address power struggles overlaying contentious issues like social class, ethnicity, religion and gender, and how ultimately students can be made to critically associate situations within contemporary society through English education. The process of drawing out connections between texts and current examples in society might assist students to consider different perspectives shared by diverse groups of

people and potentially develop enhanced tolerance, understanding and respect for the cultural beliefs and values of others.

Appendices

Appendix A: Curriculum Interview Questions Australia

Interview with Curriculum Designer(s) NSW (Board of Studies) Senior Curriculum Officer(s) (English)	
1	• What is the general process for selecting prescribed texts for the HSC curriculum in NSW? Is this an annual process? What is the timeframe? *(Prompt: How far ahead are these texts selected)* • The committee who selects these texts is comprised of a series of stakeholders. Who are the stakeholders?
2	• What is the rationale used for selecting these texts? Or principles derive the process? • How are these principals derived? • How do you decide on the balance between contemporary texts and classical texts from the canon?
3	• Are there any stipulations that immediately rule out the selection of particular text? Why? • What are these specific rules?
4	• How does the process and rationale used for selecting texts in NSW differ if at all from that of other states in Australia?
5	• What consultative loops exists when selective texts? For instance, are university education specialists consulted with selecting texts, teaching materials or resources?
6	• How does the NSW education department receive feedback for the prescribed list of texts? • How does the department respond to negative feedback about the prescribed list of texts? Can you give an example?
7	• How does the committee select texts to address a culturally diverse classroom? • To what extent is awareness about cultural diversity an important aspect of text selection? • Is there consultation with cultural groups about text selection? Is the committee itself culturally diverse?
8	• The Area of Study in the HSC curriculum is belonging. This theme is wide scope and covers a range of interpretations. How did the department come up with this umbrella of study and why?
9	• Does the NSW Education department provide recommended teaching resources? If yes, what are these resources? • For the new ACARA K-10 curriculum does the department provide professional development for English teachers? Can you give an example?
10	• How often do you use recently published texts? Why do you decide to include it? • Anchor texts like 'Heat and Dust' and 'Great Expectations' have been on the curriculum for more than two decades and continue to stay on the curriculum. Is there a reason for sticking with these classical choices? • In your opinion how has the balance between texts from a non-European background in addition to European classical texts made an impact on the quality of education received in schools today? (*Prompt: Do we have a better*

	quality of education now than say 30 years ago as a result of the texts we choose for the current generation to engage with as academic stimulus?)
11	• How has the process and rationale for selecting prescribed texts improved and become more effective over the years? • If ACARA successfully introduces a Senior Secondary Curriculum how do think the current process for selecting texts will change?
12	• Are there any comments you would like to add?

Appendix B: Curriculum Interview Questions England

Interview with Curriculum Designer(s) UK (AQA) Senior Curriculum Officer(s) (English)	
1	• Can you please give me a general overview of the AQA English Literature curriculum? As there is a Literature A and B syllabus- what is the major difference between them? • How are final exams set for the A Levels? • How many GCE subjects are students allowed to take? Are there set limits by the curriculum board? • What is the general process for selecting prescribed texts for the AQA curriculum in the UK? Is this an annual process? What is the timeframe? *(Prompt: How far ahead are these texts selected).* • (The committee who selects these texts is comprised of a series of stakeholders. Who are the stakeholders?
2	• What is the rationale used for selecting these texts? Or principles derive the process? • How are these principals derived? • How do you decide on the balance between contemporary texts and classical texts from the canon? • In a recent education committee report there were statements made about the concerns about links between exam boards and publishing companies when selecting texts for study. Do you view this as an on-going concern?
3	• Are there any stipulations that immediately rule out the selection of particular text? Why? • What are these specific rules?
4	• How does the process and rationale used for selecting texts in AQA differ from all other examination boards?
5	• What consultative loops exists when selective texts? For instance, are university education specialists consulted with selecting texts, teaching materials or resources?
6	• How does the AQA department receive feedback for the prescribed list of texts? • How does the department respond to negative feedback about the prescribed list of texts? Can you give an example?
7	• How does the committee select texts to address a culturally diverse classroom? • To what extent is awareness about cultural diversity an important aspect of text selection? • Is there consultation with cultural groups about text selection? Is the committee itself culturally diverse?
8	• The AQA have listed options of study, for instance in English Literature A there are options such as Victorian Literature, Struggle for Identity in Modern literature and World War One. How are teachers encouraged to teach for exams using these options- are there more specific themes under these options? Or do these options just help categorise texts?
9	• Does the AQA department provide recommended teaching resources? If yes, what are these resources? • There are currently concerns as expressed in a 2012-2013 House of Commons Education Committee report, about the incentives in the exam system amongst the boards, is leading to downward competition on standards. What are your thoughts about the current examination standards?

	• Do you see the current changes in the examination process for instance Secretary Grove's move to change the GCSE from coursework to final exams in 2014 as a good move? • If you had the power to change or improve the current A-Level education system what would you do? • Are there concerns or criticisms of Ofqual being the sole independent education regulator?
10	• How often do you use recently published texts? Why do you decide to include it? • Can you list some of the anchor texts on the current curriculum? In other words, texts that might have stayed on for more than a decade? Is there a reason for sticking with these choices? • In your opinion how has the balance between texts from a non-European background in addition to European classical texts made an impact on the quality of education received in schools today? *(Prompt: Do we have a better quality of education now than say 30 years ago as a result of the texts we choose for the current generation to engage with as academic stimulus?)* • Recent remarks about England's children being the most tested in the world as no other country puts its pupils through so many government or board based examinations. Do you think this will result in better education standards? Will England's students be better off as a result of it in the next decade?
11	• How has the process and rationale for selecting prescribed texts improved and become more effective over the years?
12	• How is the AQA funded? By the government? Are other education boards similarly funded by the government? • Does the AQA provide curriculum services to both private and public schools? Do you know where the majority of services lie- with private or public schools? • Are there any specific academic texts that speak about the history of the AQA education system in the UK? • Do you have any documents that record all the texts that have been selected and changed since the beginning of the AQA to date? • Are there any comments you would like to add?

Appendix C: English Teacher Interview Questions (NSW)

Interview Questions for NSW English Teachers (app 30 mins)	
Section 1: Getting to know you and your school	
1	• How many years have you spent working as an English Teacher?
2	• In terms of student population how culturally diverse is this school? • What are some of the cultural groups of students present in this school?
3	• On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest) how would you rate the overall English HSC performance of this school?
4	• What areas of English would you say your weaker students struggle with the most: reading and comprehension, or analysis and interpretation?
5	• When you completed your teaching training, how well did your training prepare you to teach students from diverse cultural backgrounds? *(Prompt: For instance, students from indigenous cultural backgrounds)* • Do you think current teacher training places enough emphasis on preparing teachers to work with growing numbers of students from diverse cultural backgrounds?
Section 2: Curriculum and Prescribed English Texts/Novels	
6	• What are your thoughts about the current range of prescribed texts available in the HSC curriculum? *(Prompt: Do you think these texts span a wide range of cultural themes to teach students from diverse cultural backgrounds?)*
7	• The present HSC curriculum lists a wide range of texts under prescribed texts. For instance, Charles Dickens 'Great Expectations' to June Winch's 'Swallow the Air'. If you had the power to change the current balance between traditional and new texts- how would you change it? And why?
8	• How openly and easy are contentious issues like race, social class and gender discussed in your classroom within the framework of the texts prescribed? • How do you manage or negotiate discussions about cultural issues in your class? *(Prompt: In other words, how do you encourage your students to speak up or contain offensive opinions?)* • Does the cultural diversity of your classroom present any management issues? *(Prompt: Do you change your class management techniques depending on the cultural mix of students you have per year?)* • What support does the school give to help manage cultural diversity in the classroom? *(Prompt: For instance, are there special considerations made for different cultural groups that perhaps would not be made for others?)*
9	• As an English teacher would you say there are any other themes or sensitive cultural issues present in novels that you prefer not to engage with your students? Can you give an example?
10	• How familiar are you with English drafts of ACARA's Senior Secondary Curriculum? • What are your thoughts about moving from the current HSC system to a national Senior Secondary curriculum? Will this be a plus or negative for your school?
Section 3: Pedagogy Practices	
11	• Prescribed texts are taught to only Year 12 students. Can you please explain the system used at this school for selecting other novels for teaching younger age groups? *(Prompt: How do rationalise the selection of these texts, does the*

	English department rely on online forums, external teacher resources, journals, book reviews etc.) • Would you say the majority of novels you teach in your classes are books selected by the English department of this school or by individual staff members of this school?
12	In the HSC curriculum, under the section Area of Study the theme 'Belonging' is introduced as supporting differing perceptions; Perceptions and ideas of belonging, or of not belonging vary. These perceptions are shaped within personal, cultural, historical and social contexts. A sense of belonging can emerge from the connections made with people, places, groups, communities and the larger world. Within this Area of Study, students may consider aspects of belonging in terms of experiences and notions of identity, relationships and understanding • This theme seems to cover a wide scope and range of interpretations. What are your thoughts on using wide themes, like Journey or Belonging to teach English novels? *(Prompt: Are these themes useful or do they get in the way?)*
13	• When reading and discussing novels with your class, are you able to entertain discussions of the text beyond the outlined learning goals of the curriculum? *(Prompt: For instance, do you have the time to teach more than just the specified learning goals outlined for that unit?)*
14	• How do you prepare to teach a new novel to your class? What research do you find necessary? • What literary theory do you use to teach these texts? • How often do you change your selection of texts for Year 10 or 11? • What are the reasons for changing texts?
15	• What are some teaching or learning strategies you use in your English classrooms? *(Prompt: For instance, do you engage students with activities using the jigsaw method or group reading?)*
Section 4: Quality versus Equity	
16	• In 2012 there were many debates in the Australian Government about the quality of teachers being sent into the workforce. Do you think better trained teachers will result in better skilled students?
17	• What are your thoughts about the education gap between public and private schools in Australia? Is this gap getting wider or are education policy changes (like discussions about the Gonski report) going to help narrow this gap?
18	• Most schools in NSW say they need more money to improve their education services and quality. Aside from more money, what other major changes you think need to occur to progress the performance of general education in Australia? *(Prompt: In other words, how would you prioritise the spending of more money, what would you list as being the top three most important or priority expenses?)*
19	• Do you think our current English curriculum and school novels are enough to educate a growing multicultural Australia?
20	• Are there any further comments you would like to add?

Appendix D: English Teacher Interview Questions (England)

Interview Questions for England English Teachers (app 30 mins)	
Section 1: Getting to know you and your school	
1	• How many years have you spent working as an English Teacher?
2	• In terms of student population how culturally diverse is this school? • What are some of the cultural groups of students present in this school?
3	• On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest) how would you rate the overall English A-Level performance of this school?
4	• What areas of English would you say your weaker students struggle with the most?
5	• When you completed your teaching training, how well did your training prepare you to teach students from diverse cultural backgrounds? *(Prompt: For instance, students from indigenous cultural backgrounds)* • Do you think current teacher training places enough emphasis on preparing teachers to work with growing numbers of students from diverse cultural backgrounds?
Section 2: Curriculum and Prescribed English Texts/Novels	
6	• What are your thoughts about the current range of prescribed texts available in the AQA curriculum? (Prompt: Do you think these texts span a wide range of cultural themes to teach students from diverse cultural backgrounds?)
7	• The curriculum lists a wide range of texts. If you had the power to change the current balance between traditional and new texts- how would you change it? And why?
8	• How openly and easy are contentious issues like race, social class and gender discussed in your classroom within the framework of the texts prescribed? • How do you manage or negotiate discussions about cultural issues in your class? *(Prompt: In other words, how do you encourage your students to speak up or contain offensive opinions?)* • Does the cultural diversity of your classroom present any management issues? *(Prompt: Do you change your class management techniques depending on the cultural mix of students you have per year?)* • What support does the school give to help manage cultural diversity in the classroom? *(Prompt: For instance, are there special considerations made for different cultural groups that perhaps would not be made for others?)*
9	• As an English teacher would you say there are any other themes or sensitive cultural issues present in novels that you prefer not to engage with your students? Can you give an example?
10	• In the last decade have there been many changes to the A-Level AQA curricula? • If you had the power to make changes to the current curricula or text list, what would you advise?
Section 3: Pedagogy Practices	
11	• Prescribed texts are taught to sixth form students. Can you please explain the system used at this school for selecting other novels for teaching younger age groups? *(Prompt: How do rationalise the selection of these texts, does the English department rely on online forums, external teacher resources, journals, book reviews etc.)*

	• Would you say the majority of novels you teach in your classes are books selected by the English department of this school or by individual staff members of this school?
12	• In Australia there are focused themes like 'Journey' or 'Belonging' and texts generally focus on using texts to teach concepts around a central uniformed theme. Do you use themes for teaching Literature in England? In other words, where does the focus lie – in the curriculum or on the texts?
13	• When reading and discussing novels with your class, are you able to entertain discussions of the text beyond the outlined learning goals of the curriculum? *(Prompt: For instance, do you have the time to teach more than just the specified learning goals outlined for that unit?)*
14	• How do you prepare to teach a new novel to your class? What research do you find necessary? • What literary theory do you use to teach these texts? • How often do you change your selection of texts for sixth form? • What are the reasons for changing texts?
15	• What are some teaching or learning strategies you use in your English classrooms? *(Prompt: For instance, do you engage students with activities using the jigsaw method or group reading?)*
Section 4: Quality versus Equity	
16	• In 2012 there were new streamlined regulations on performance management and appraisal model of annually managing teacher quality and standards. Do you think these measures will result in recruiting and maintaining highly skilled teachers? • According to Michael Grove the current exam system in the UK in fundamentally broken and we need to make exams tougher. In addition to this there have been concerns about poor literacy and numeracy skills of students despite higher GCSE A*-C results in English and Maths. Will tougher exams result in a better quality education for students?
17	• What are your thoughts about the education gap between public and private schools in England? Is this gap getting wider or are education policy changes going to help narrow this gap?
18	• Most schools in UK say they need more money to improve their education services and quality. Aside from more money, what other major changes you think need to occur to progress the performance of general education in England? *(Prompt: In other words, how would you prioritise the spending of more money, what would you list as being the top three most important or priority expenses?)*
19	• Do you think the current English curriculum and school novels are enough to educate a growing multicultural England?
20	• Are there any further comments you would like to add?

Appendix E: Student Surveys

Australian National University

STUDENT SURVEY

Dear Student,

The information you provide in this survey will be analysed and used to evaluate the current English novels you are asked to read at secondary school. This survey is part of a research project investigating how these novels help engage contemporary students in discussions of cultural diversity in society. Below are a few important points to note before you begin. Please note there are no right or wrong answers to these questions.

- Your participation is 100% voluntary.
- All of your responses are completely confidential.
- You and your school will never be personally identified in this research.
- Your school and teachers are not allowed to view your responses.
- Please answer all questions honestly and to the best of your ability.

☐ ***Please* tick this box if you agree to all of the above conditions.**

<u>Instructions</u>: Please select your answer by placing an ☒ or ☑ the box of your choice.

SECTION A: STUDENT INFORMATION

1. Are you 16 years or older?

☐ Yes (please continue to question 2) ☐ No (please stop and speak to the researcher)

2. Are you male or female?

☐ Male ☐ Female

3. Were you born in this country?

☐ Yes ☐ No, I was born in _____

4. How many languages do you speak?

☐ Only English ☐ English + 1 other language ☐ English + 2 other languages ☐ English + 3 or more languages

5. What is your family ancestry? You can select up to 2 different options.

☐ United Kingdom (e.g. British, Scottish, Irish, Welsh)

☐ Europe

☐ Africa

☐ North America (including Canada)

☐ Latin America & Caribbean

☐ Australia

☐ South Asia (e.g. India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka)

☐ East & South East Asia (e.g. Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Thailand)

☐ Middle East & North Africa (e.g. Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia)

☐ Other _____

Please list the countries you consider to be your ancestry _____

6. What is your religious belief or background?

☐ Christian ☐ Muslim ☐ Hindu ☐ Buddhist ☐ No religion ☐ Other _____

7. Do you like English literature? Using the scale below please select your preference, 5 being highest or most liked and 1 being the worst.

☐ 5 (I love English!) ☐ 4 ☐ 3 ☐ 2 ☐ 1 (It's the worst subject!)

SECTION B: STUDENT FAMILY INFORMATION

8. Which of the following best describes your total family income per year?

☐ Very high income ☐ High income ☐ Middle income ☐ Low income ☐ Very low income

9. What is the education background of your parents/guardians? If possible, please complete this information for both parents.

Male Parent or Guardian	Female Parent or Guardian
☐ University qualifications	☐ University qualifications
☐ Trade or Technical qualifications.	☐ Trade or Technical qualifications
☐ Completed Secondary school	☐ Completed Secondary school
☐ Completed Primary school	☐ Completed Primary school
☐ Did not complete Primary school	☐ Did not complete Primary school
☐ I don't know	☐ I don't know

SECTION C: PRESCRIBED NOVELS

10. Please list three novels you have studied while in sixth form. Note you will be using these novels to answer remaining questions in this survey.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

SECTION D: STUDENT RELATIONSHIP TO PRESCRIBED NOVELS

11. How often do these novels (you've selected above) discuss issues relating to your culture and or religion?

☐ All the time ☐ Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not very often ☐ Not at all

12. In your opinion how relevant are these novels to current societal issues?

☐ Extremely relevant ☐ Moderately relevant ☐ Some relevance ☐ Little relevance ☐ No relevance at all

13. How did these novels speak to you as a student? Using the scale provided please select how well you relate to the novels you've studied at school:

NOVEL	5 I related to the novel extremely well	4	3	2	1 I did not relate to the novel at all
1	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
2	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
3	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1

SECTION E: STUDYING NOVELS AT SCHOOL

In this section you will be asked questions on broad themes, such as race (physical appearances e.g. colour of skin), ethnicity (cultural factors, language, beliefs, ancestry), social class (the social, economic or educational status of different people in society) and gender (the male and female social roles and or opportunities prescribed by various societies).

14. At school how much term time are you usually given to read a novel?

☐ All year ☐ Approximately two months ☐ Approximately 1 month ☐ Less than a month ☐ I don't read the novels

15. How clear are you about your teacher's interpretations of these novels?

NOVEL	5 I am extremely clear about my teacher's interpretation of the novel	4	3	2	1 I am not clear at all about my teacher's interpretation of the novel. I do not understand the teacher.
1	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
2	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
3	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1

16. Please use the scale provided to rank the extent to which your teacher discussed the following themes using these novels? 5 is ranked highest meaning this theme was exhaustively discussed, while 1 is ranked lowest which means this theme was not discussed at all.

NOVELS	RACE & ETHNICITY	SOCIAL CLASS	GENDER
1	☐5 ☐4 ☐3 ☐2 ☐1	☐5 ☐4 ☐3 ☐2 ☐1	☐5 ☐4 ☐3 ☐2 ☐1
2	☐5 ☐4 ☐3 ☐2 ☐1	☐5 ☐4 ☐3 ☐2 ☐1	☐5 ☐4 ☐3 ☐2 ☐1
3	☐5 ☐4 ☐3 ☐2 ☐1	☐5 ☐4 ☐3 ☐2 ☐1	☐5 ☐4 ☐3 ☐2 ☐1

17. How often would you discuss these themes or issues with your <u>PARENTS</u> on an average week? 5 is ranked highest meaning you discuss this issue more than twice a week. 1 is ranked lowest meaning you hardly discuss this issue at all.

ISSUE	5 I discuss this issue all the time	4	3	2	1 I don't discuss this issue at all
Race & Ethnicity	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
Social class	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
Gender	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1

(a) How frequently do you refer to these novels when discussing these issues with your PARENTS?

☐ All the time ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Not at all ☐ I cannot discuss these novels and issues with my parents

18. How often would you discuss these themes or issues with your FRIENDS on an average week? 5 is ranked highest meaning you discuss this issue more than twice a week. 1 is ranked lowest meaning you hardly discuss this issue at all.

ISSUE	5 I discuss this issue all the time	4	3	2	1 I don't discuss this issue at all
Race & Ethnicity	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
Social class	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
Gender	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1

19. How frequently do you refer to these novels when discussing these issues with your FRIENDS?

☐ All the time ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Not at all ☐ I cannot discuss these novels and issues with my friends

SECTION F: SHORT ANSWER RESPONSE

Please select one novel you've read from the following list and use this novel to answer the following three questions. (You're almost at the end!)

From the above texts I've used in this survey. I've selected the following novel for my short answer response:

☐ _____

20. Briefly describe what you liked or disliked about this novel?

21. Did this novel help you better understand cultural diversity? Please explain how?

22. **Do you believe the cultural issues discussed in this novel are relevant to current society?**

23. **If you would like to tell us anything more about the novels you study in school, or anything about this survey- please feel free to write your comment in this space.**

Thank you for participating in this survey!

Appendix F: Sample Documents Referenced for Case Study

AUSTRALIA

Document Name	Type	Year
The School of the Air and Remote Learning	WebPage	2007
2014 HSC Course Enrolments	WebPage	2014
Australian Curriculum in NSW- Memorandum to Principals	WebPage	2012
Board of Studies NSW English Stage 6 Prescriptions: Area of Study	Government Document	2007
Board of Studies NSW Draft Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum English Consultation Report September 2012	Report	2012
Board of Studies NSW English Stage 6 Annotations of Selected Texts Prescribed for the Higher School Certificate 2015-20	Government Document	2013
Board of Studies NSW English Stage 6 Prescriptions: Area of Study	Report	2013
2014 HSC Course Enrolments	WebPage	2014
Board of Studies NSW Higher School Certificate Course Descriptions	Government Document	2010
Board of Studies NSW English : Stage 6 Syllabus : English (Standard)	Book	2012
Australian Curriculum in NSW- Memorandum to Principals	WebPage	2013

ENGLAND

Document Name	Type	Year
Great Britain - School Leaving Age	WebPage	2014
Great Britain - Types of School	WebPage	2014
The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010	White Paper	2010
Oral Statement to Parliament 2012: Oecd Pisa Results	Speech Transcript	2013
GCE AS and A Level Specification English Literature A	Report	2014
AQA Most Frequently Asked Questions GCSE and A-Level English Subjects	Report	2014
A-Level English Literature A: A-Level Draft 7712	Report	2014
AQA - About Us	WebPage	2014
AQA - English Literature A (2740)	WebPage	2014
AQA - AQA Subjects English	WebPage	2014
AQA - AQA Welcomes Ofqual Report on Marking	WebPage	2014

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