PUSHING PAST PERCEPTIONS: CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACIES OF TRANSNATIONAL
IMMIGRANT YOUTH

By

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ABSTRACT

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While there has been an increasing focus in the research literature that examines how
individuals act and react across mediated spaces in the modern, networked, and participatory era,
the perspectives of immigrant students are largely missing from the research. This results in
unexamined spaces where more can be learned about how technology supports and enhances
immigrant students' identities and sense of belonging, their engagement in civic matters, and
their ability to speak back to harmful narratives and discourse through their thoughtful critique of
media messages. This dissertation aims to fill this gap and to inform teachers, teacher educators,
policymakers, and others about approaches they can use to build upon transnational immigrant
youths' already-present critical media literacies within and beyond school in further support of
youths' belonging in both virtual and face to face encounters.

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the relationship between critical media
literacies, civic engagement, and immigrant youths' sense of belonging. The dissertation is a
qualitative case study that asked: What identities do three immigrant and refugee youth in a
multicultural studies class draw upon to enact critical media literacies within and beyond school?
How do they do this? and What internal and external factors influence how a teacher supports his
students' critical media literacies? How do these factors relate to the teacher's pedagogy? This
dissertation's methodological approach and research questions were rooted in Mihailidis's 5A's
of Media Literacy (2014) framework that conceptualizes approaches to media literacy in a
continuum, moving from access to awareness, assessment, appreciation, and action. The

dissertation draws on four main data sources: 1) one-on-one interviews with focal students and their teacher, 2) classroom observations, 3) teacher-produced curricular materials, and 4) student-produced artifacts.

I argue that the three focal youth called upon their transnational experiences, their religious affiliation, and the languages they knew other than English to critique and re-frame public narratives about immigrants, refugees, and Muslims. However, the findings also revealed the limitations of youths' civic action given their marginalization within school and society. Furthermore, this study demonstrates a disconnect between a teacher's pedagogical practices and youths' already-present practices. While a classroom teacher was supportive of his students' media literacies, more work could have been done to help students address issues of power, privilege, inequities, and oppression. This dissertation's findings therefore enhance understandings about what might be done to further support transnational youths' rights to have their voices recognized, so they can more fully embrace their roles as active change agents in the world.

Keywords: transnational, immigrants, belonging, civic engagement, Muslims, multilingual, youth, critical media literacies

To Sally, Katrina, Madelyn,
Dad, Mom, and Vicki

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Prologue

This is a dissertation about belonging and, like other stories about belonging, it addresses the nature of inclusion and exclusion (and, I would add, confusion). Although the writing of this dissertation took place across my final two years in graduate school, I can trace the origins of this work to my first year as a graduate student. My family and I had just returned to the United States following a decade of life in China and I was assigned to supervise student teachers in the disciplines of the social studies. As a former high school English teacher and as an English language teacher and teacher educator in China, I was confused by this assignment. I had not previously taught social studies and I felt out of place. My peers at Michigan State also doing field supervision and the professors overseeing my work all identified as social studies educators. Even though I felt welcomed into their community, I wondered why I had not received a field placement in literacy or English. In hindsight, I recognize the assignment was exactly where I belonged. Although I wrestled with how to position myself as an emerging scholar at the time, my work in two social studies classrooms provided me with the opportunity to build relationships with two teachers, Mr. Denker (pseudonym) and Mrs. Vega (pseudonym) and their immigrant students. In fact, although I did not know it at the time, my journey back to the United States coincided with both Albarko's (pseudonym) and Mena's (pseudonym) arrival in the country. Although I would not start interacting with these two students, who became focal youth in this dissertation study, until their junior year in high school, my entrée into field supervision at Hallandale High School (pseudonym) set the foundation for each of those relationships to develop.

Coinciding with my entrance into the dissertation stage of my program was the U.S. Presidential primary season for the 2016 election, and with it someone who prided himself on not belonging, at least among the political elites governing in Washington D. C., Donald Trump. Therefore, although I personally believe Trump's rhetoric and influence have no place in civilized public discourse, he won the election and found himself residing in a place where few people think he truly belongs—The White House. Currently, Trump's tweets set the conversation for what is discussed in the news each day. Although I would rather Trump not belong in the space of this dissertation, his presence is felt across the chapters.

As I draw the various threads of this dissertation together, I realize that stories of belonging often include confusion. Even though it seems like confusion should not be part of a dissertation, I welcome the incongruity. I have already provided an example about my own, initial uncertainty for doing work in social studies classrooms, and acknowledged the bewilderment many people have felt about Trump. In the two findings chapters to come, the seeming disconnect between the focal youths' critical media literacies and the approaches Mr. Denker took to support youth could lead to initial misunderstanding. That is, the two chapters do not seem to belong together, and their inclusion may leave some wondering why one of the two was not cut. However, I trust that by the concluding chapter any confusion will be cleared. Therefore, I welcome you to the learning ahead, and the opportunity to experience how my own journey toward belonging provided me the amazing opportunity to engage in work as an emerging digital literacies scholar amplifying the voices of immigrant youth.

Contextualizing the Study

During the Presidential primary season in the fall of 2015, Donald Trump made a number of disparaging comments about immigrants and refugees, including statements about building a

wall to keep Mexican nationals from entering the country and enacting a registry for adherents of the Muslim faith who were seeking asylum in the United States (Brand, 2016; Haberman, 2015). One year later, in the fall of 2016, Trump won the national election amid reports that fake news propagated widely across social media assisted, to a degree, in Trump's successful bid to become the 45th President of the United States (Maheshwari, 2016; Sydell, 2016). As President-elect, Trump named Steve Bannon, a noted White nationalist, to be his chief political strategist (Shear, Haberman, & Rappeportnov 2016), and appointed Betsy DeVos, an eminent Republican philanthropist with no formal teaching experience and a reputation for promoting charter schools and school choice vouchers, as Secretary of Education (Mayer, 2016; Zernike, 2016). Within this politically charged climate that profoundly shapes the daily experiences of immigrant and refugee youth, and their sense of belonging, my dissertation study took place.

Undoubtedly, the 2016 election shaped public discourse about immigrants, affecting their treatment across society. In the days immediately following the election, reports of acts of aggression towards minoritized individuals such as immigrants were widespread, including acts within schools. For example, two days after the election, middle school students in Royal Oak, Michigan chanted "build that wall" during their lunch period. The incident was documented in a cell phone video and later uploaded to Facebook that spread virally with over 8 million views in three days (Berenson, 2016)**.** Moreover, a report issued by the Southern Poverty Law Center (2016) three weeks after the election, found eight in ten teachers out of 25,000 educators surveyed reported heightened anxiety on behalf of marginalized students, including Muslims, immigrants, African Americans, and LGBTQ-identifying students. Many students experienced a sense of political trauma in the aftermath of the election (Sondel, Baggett, & Dunn, 2018). In his first week in office, Trump suspended the U.S. refugee program and indefinitely barred Syrians

from entering the country (Shear & Cooper, 2017). Two weeks later, after the President's executive order travel ban was blocked by the 9th Circuit Court, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents conducted immigration enforcement raids across six states (Rein, Hauslohner, & Somashekar, 2017). Clearly, the political climate under the current Presidential administration that seeks to exclude the lived experiences of so many necessitates that educators take up roles as allies and advocates for more just experiences for immigrant students.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

My study builds upon shifts in student demographics (Hussar & Bailey, 2014; Suarez-Orozco & Michikyan, 2016), changes to the ways in which immigrants are positioned in U.S. society, and the affordances of networked communities in supporting youths' transnational identities as they engage across mediated spaces (Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, & Robison, 2009). The purpose of my dissertation study is to investigate the relationship between critical media literacies, civic engagement, and immigrant youths' sense of belonging. This study grows out of a current gap in the field to understand how immigrant and refugee youths' online interactions and critical media literacies affords and constrains their civic engagement and sense of belonging. The goal of my study is to answer the following research questions and sub questions:

RQ1: What identities do three immigrant and refugee youth in a multicultural studies class draw upon to enact critical media literacies within and beyond school? How do they do this?

RQ2: What internal and external factors influence how a teacher supports his students' critical media literacies? How do these factors relate to the teacher's pedagogy?

Building upon ongoing work with immigrant youth at a local school, my dissertation recognizes the ways in which immigrant youth capitalize upon a wealth of experiences to help them meet, navigate, and address the challenges they may face in and out of school. Contrasting

the negative perceptions towards immigrants outlined above, my work builds upon that of other scholars who frame immigrant youth from a strength-based perspective (Sadowski, 2013). Specifically, I recognize and highlight the already-developed linguistic and cultural skills these students bring with them to their schooling. For these reasons, my dissertation topic has profound and timely importance, as my work can amplify the voices of a population often denigrated in contemporary public discourse.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. This first chapter serves as an introduction, explaining the details of my study and emphasizing why this topic is important to the research base concerned with supporting the language, literacy, and civic engagement practices of culturally and linguistically diverse immigrant students. The second chapter reviews the relevant literature on transnational immigrant and refugee youth, attending to considerations of youths' religious and multilingual identities. In this chapter, I also examine the current literature related to shifting understandings of citizenship, civic engagement, and critical media literacies. Chapter Two closes with an overview of the theoretical framework used to guide analysis of data collected across the study: Mihailidis's (2014) 5A framework (access, awareness, assessment, appreciation, and action) for promoting students' critical media literacies. The third chapter describes the methodology for my investigation, including my research design, data generation, and data analysis. Chapter Four presents findings that answer my first research question based on my engagement with Leah, Albarko, and Mena, focal youth participants. In Chapter Five, I answer my second research question with a focus on Mr. Denker and his multicultural studies class. Chapter Six serves as a conclusion to the dissertation and provides implications for further scholarship based upon the insights gained from my study.

Immigration in Contemporary Contexts

Any discussion of immigration must contend with the fact that the issue is complex, nuanced, contentious, and politicized (Hilburn & Jaffee, 2016). As referenced above, immigration is a contested policy issue, and anti-immigration sentiments have become a regular part of U.S. political discourse (Hilburn & Jaffee, 2016). While immigration is a historical reality, the increasingly widespread movement of peoples across borders holds consequences for both those who immigrate and for the nation states that receive immigrants (Nieto, 2016).

Fundamentally, conversations around immigration are bound up in notions of citizenship and belonging; however, immigrants to the United States have historically faced exclusion. As Abu El-Haj and Bonet (2011) argued, "to be substantive, citizenship must include social and cultural rights that allow people to participate as full members of their communities" (p. 31). Unfortunately, as Nieto (2016) acknowledged, most new immigrants are not welcomed or wanted in large part due to difference; immigrants are positioned as too different or foreign to be accepted by the mainstream population as equal. Therefore, immigrants can be viewed as "existential threats" to the nation-state (Bekerman, 2016, p. 110). Put another way, immigrants are viewed as a threat to national identity since the views immigrants hold have potential to shape notions of what it means to belong to the nation-state (Stepick & Stepick, 2002). Ultimately, immigrants are disenfranchised when their lived experiences and views toward citizenship are not taken up (Pace & Bixby, 2008). For example, even though immigrants may accept the values and traditions of a new country, they may still lack a sense of belonging. This is often the case for immigrants of color who are not accepted as legitimate citizens due to racial and ethnic bias and exclusion by the White majority (Ignatiev, 2008; Nieto, 2016; Roediger, 2005).

Negative views toward immigrants are problematic for many reasons, but especially considering recent shifts in national demographics. Immigrant youth are currently the fastest growing group of the U.S. population (Callahan & Muller, 2013). Their participation and sense of belonging in society will continue to significantly shape and determine the cultural and social fabric of society for decades to come (Stepick & Stepick, 2002; Jensen, 2010).

Transnational Citizenship

Widespread migration has resulted in global shifts of people across nation-state boarders and led to an increasingly diverse K-12 U.S. school going population (Suarez-Orozco & Michikyan, 2016). As a result, scholars are more and more interested in students who maintain ties to two or more countries, also defined as transnational youth (Skerett, 2015). Additionally, scholars progressively understand citizenship from a relational standpoint (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), particularly because participation in democratic societies is inherently connected to emotions associated with inclusion, exclusion, and belonging (Yuval-Davis, Anthias, & Kofman, 2005; Abu El-Haj & Bonet, 2011). Bennett (2007) has argued that earlier conceptions of citizenship, as connected solely to the nation-state, are ill suited in today's digitally networked society. He posits dutiful citizens who adhere to traditional notions of civic engagement must give way to actualizing citizens, or individuals who reflect civic ideals through a personalized, yet socially networked lens (Bennett, 2008). For example, rather than seeking membership in structured organizations like a political party, individuals join self-defined interest groups across online spaces based on their social network connections. Furthermore, Mihaildis (2014) claimed broader views of citizenship must account for the role of media, specifically online media, in connecting individuals in new and dynamic ways. This is especially beneficial for immigrants

whose transnational status and whose personal and political sense of belonging supersedes nation-state borders (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Yuval-Davis & Kofman, 2005).

Critical scholars committed to social justice are continuing to open space for more productive conversations about citizenship and belonging. As Dolby and Rizvi (2008) argued, immigration is not only a movement from one space to another but constitutes a new sense of identification and belonging. Such framings are especially relevant and helpful given the transnational connections many non-naturalized immigrants maintain and the fact that many immigrants participate in society regardless of their legal status (Jenkins, Shresthova, Gamber-Thompson, Kligler-Vilenchik, & Zimmerman, 2016).

Civic Engagement in a Networked Era

Concerns about civic engagement often accompany discussions about citizenship because democratic societies depend upon an engaged citizenry who contribute to the political and civic life of the society (Bennett, 2008; Callhan & Obenchain; 2016; Mihailidis, 2014). Some scholars have noted civic engagement for youth from racial and ethnic minority groups or marginalized communities is low (Addington, 2016; Wilkenfeld & Torney-Purta, 2012). Levinson (2010), for example, suggested that immigrant youth are positioned as having a civic empowerment gap that affects their ability to contribute to social and political issues in the broader society. However, other studies refute these claims, arguing that immigrant youth engage civically through networked communities (Jenkins et. al. 2016), protest (Lopez & Marcelo, 2008), and community service (Stepick, Stepick, & Labissiere, 2008).

For many scholars (Jenkins, Ito, & Boyd, 2015; Jenkins et. al., 2016), the rise of digital media platforms has ushered in a new era of civic engagement through participatory, networked communities. Such communities have been seamlessly integrated into the daily lives of citizens

worldwide through mobile technology (Mihailidis, 2014). Moffa, Bejwo, and Waterson (2016) have argued that online interactions provide a new platform for political expression and a wider audience for messages and actions rooted in the sociopolitical. They note any aspect of schooling concerned with teaching students about society must shift its focus to consider online spaces as well. As Mihailidis (2014) argued, educators must utilize media inside the bounds of the classroom or risk exposing students to learning experiences that are detached from the community, civic participation, and democracy already at play in youth's daily civic engagement across social media platforms.

Ultimately, an essential part of this process is helping students to become critical consumers of media, since this is not an inherent practice for most youth (Boyd, 2014). While such practices can be learned independently, schools should take responsibility for cultivating students' critical media literacies (Gallagher, 2014). For example, students should learn how to interpret biased messages, share their opinions in a respectful manner, and make sense of controversial social issues that inform their own positions as they engage across mediated spaces (Moffa, Brejwo, & Waterson, 2016). Moreover, students must confront issues of power, inequality, and oppression (Janks, 2010) to understand how cultural, economic, and political ideologies shape media messages (Luke, 2012), especially as notions of power continually shift in digital worlds (Avila & Pandya, 2013).

Opportunity Space

While there has been an increasing focus in the research literature that examines how individuals act and react across mediated spaces in the modern, networked, and participatory era (Boyd, 2014; Ito, 2009; Jenkins, Ito, & Boyd, 2015; Jenkins et. al., 2016), the perspectives of immigrant students are largely missing from the research. This results in unexamined spaces in

which more can be learned about how technology supports and enhances immigrant students' identities and sense of belonging, their engagement in civic matters, and their ability to speak back to harmful narratives and discourse through their thoughtful critique of media messages. By centering the voices of immigrant youth and their experiences as transnational youth participating in networked communities through technology, my work can push back against deficit narratives and the ways in which immigrants are viewed as "less than" in contemporary society.

Research Approach

I studied, with permission from my university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the approval of a local school district, the experiences and perceptions of immigrant youth and their technology use across mediated spaces within the context of a local high school. Participants were students enrolled in Mr. Denker's third period multicultural studies class at Hallandale High School. My study employed qualitative research methods associated with case study design. This approach supported the bounded nature of my inquiry and the use of multiple data collection methods, including classroom observations, interviews, analysis of classroom-based artifacts produced by teachers and students, and discussion about online social media posts. Across the study, I provide rich description of the case of Mr. Denker and the students in his multicultural studies class to comprehend the complexities within and across my investigation.

The Researcher

As a White scholar learning with and from students of color who are at multiple intersections of vulnerability, I recognize my unearned privilege. I am a White, adult male but engage in conversations with youth of color. I am a natural born citizen of the United States, but work alongside students who come from various backgrounds with differing citizenship status.

Although I consider myself bilingual and bicultural, having lived in China for ten years prior to beginning my doctoral studies, I realize that my experiences living abroad were based on privilege. The valuable opportunities and experiences I had as a government-invited, foreign English teacher in China greatly differ from the students in my study, some of whom immigrated due to factors outside of their control. Furthermore, my own positionality offers an almost unparalleled sense of belonging compared to the youth I learned alongside of at Hallandale. Nearly any place I might travel both in the U.S. or abroad allows for either an automatic sense of belonging or for my being welcomed in ways that quickly leads to belonging. This would not likely be the case for the youth who participated in my study.

While my understandings about my positionality and how it shapes the work I do continues to evolve, my goal in this work is to show the criticality of an individual who is working in solidarity with youth to forefront their experiences and voices instead of being another well-meaning researcher speaking without an understanding of power and privilege. To do critical work well, I need the ongoing support of others to help me see beyond my own privilege.

During the data collection phase of the study, I remained committed to ongoing self-reflection through journaling/memoing. I dialogued with colleagues and advisors across the process to continually address my subjectivity. Having their thoughtful, yet critical feedback for the varying drafts of this work allowed for more just and equitable framing of the youth and my learning alongside of them. In many cases, I encountered blind spots where I made assumptions based on my privilege that needed to be redirected. For example, in discussing youths' transnationalism I originally used language that suggested movement that was one directional towards the West rather than situating this movement as unilateral and reciprocal. I also

discussed students' use of language from the perspective that privileged the spoken form over other modes of reception and production such as reading and writing. Therefore, I changed the phrasing of my comment from "languages youth spoke other than English" to "languages youth knew other than English." In cases where my own privilege obscured issues of injustice, I carefully attended to feedback to ensure a more critical response to the work. This was especially true for the sequence of lessons Mr. Denker taught for "The Islamic Truth Project" which I originally saw as powerful, until I was challenged on this by my advisor. That is, her comments helped me to reconsidered what consequences might result for students who identified as Muslims as they encountered the harmful rhetoric present in the materials sent to Mr. Denker by a group called the Christian Seniors Association (CSA). Consequently, I will need to continue to take reflective stances and continue to cultivate a posture of openness to correction and redirection for my privilege and assumptions moving forward.

In carrying out my study, I built upon my previous engagement at Hallandale High School. My connections to Hallandale spanned four years, first as a field instructor supervising student teaching interns, and then through a study I did during the 2015-2016 academic school year with two teachers and four immigrant/refugee students for my research practicum. During the 2016-2017 academic year, I visited the school weekly as a participant observer in two social studies classrooms. I also volunteered as a tutor on Tuesday afternoons at Hallandale supporting the after-school learning of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Therefore, as I carried out the study, I built upon my familiarity, knowledge, and understanding of the local context at Hallandale High and the surrounding community. As I engaged in the work, I also drew from two assumptions. First, I assumed that students built upon their already-present literacy practices and abilities when critiquing and interacting with social media (Boyd, 2014; Watson 2018);

however, I also assumed these skills had the potential to be further developed through classroom-based instruction. Second, I assumed that many students were acting as digital citizens, taking part in participatory communities, and engaging in civic issues across mediated spaces (Jenkins et. al., 2009; Journell, Ayers, & Beeson, 2009; Mihailidis, 2014). Therefore, as I carried out my study, I asked students what their online interactions did for them as transnational youth and what these interactions meant to them when situated within the broader conversations they engaged in online.

Rationale and Significance

The basis for this study originates in my desire to amplify the voices of immigrant youth and to contribute to wider understandings of the social and cultural factors affecting their schooling. While I have a background as an English language educator, I have come to appreciate investigating the broader issues affecting immigrant students beyond their multilingual abilities. My own bilingualism and biculturalism provides opportunities to engage with students from multilingual and multicultural backgrounds. Furthermore, although I have not formally taught social studies in the K-12 context, the multifaceted disciplines of social studies allows me to build upon the experiences I gained from living abroad and the Master's degree work I did in intercultural studies. This dissertation study, therefore, allows me to address both personal and professional interests at the intersection of transnational immigrant youth, civic engagement, and critical, digital media literacies.

My dissertation study is significant for several reasons. First, by investigating the online interactions of immigrant students across mediated spaces, I strive to capture the real-world experiences of a population that has not been a primary focus of recent research or scholarship. For example, some educational research has addressed the role of technology in the lives of

immigrants, but few studies have examined the role of media among immigrants (Elias, 2013). Therefore, given the increasing number of immigrant youth enrolled in K-12 schools, my investigation will begin to fill a gap by focusing on significant contemporary issues, such as transnational youth identity, immigration, civic engagement, and critical media literacies.

Second, because of increasingly negative rhetoric about immigrants who are viewed as a threat to national identity, knowledge gained from my research will reaffirm the importance and value of immigrant students' voices. Research on how technology supports and enhances immigrant youths' sense of belonging and their engagement in civic matters in the current political climate is especially important and can help challenge perceptions that immigrant youth are less civically engaged.

Third, my work might reveal effective pedagogical practices that in-service teachers can take up to support immigrant youths' critical media literacies. The findings from my study could also help identify approaches in-service teachers can take to support immigrant students' sense of belonging and ability to engage as civic agents, positioning immigrant youth as significant contributors to the well-being of society.

Fourth, my research has policy-based implications, with the potential to inform curricular frameworks. For example, findings from my study might reveal approaches that in-service teachers can take to support immigrant students' technology-related skills, including the development of critical thinking and critical media literacy skills. For example, curricular guides such as the 3C College, Career, and Civic-Life Framework for Social Studies (2013) include passing references to technology, but more could be done to infuse classroom teaching with critical media literacies (Vasquez, Stacie, Tate, & Harste, 2013).

Definition of Key Terms

Belonging. I conceive of belonging as a form of acceptance and inclusion among a group of people or community (Osterman, 2000). In this study, a sense of belonging is not connected to a specific physical location or status, such as citizenship, but rather associated with the dynamic feelings and emotions that result from taking part in relationships with others as a wanted and welcome contributor to that group or community. I argue considerations about belonging must address issues of inclusion, exclusion, and confusion.

Citizenship. As Loader (2007) posited, "citizenship is notoriously difficult to define" (p. 5). For this work, I draw upon Bennett's (2008) notion that "citizenship is a condition of civic equality" (p. 17) and Dalton's (2009) understanding of engaged citizenship, which defines citizenship as participation in civil society with concern for helping others. Since my study attended to students' perceptions of citizenship in a multicultural, global, and technological age, conversations about citizenship focused on what citizenship meant for non-naturalized immigrants (and refugees) within the broader context of transnational migration. Therefore, I compared what students said about transnational citizenship with what the literature base suggests.

Civic engagement. Whereas traditional framing of civic engagement is often relegated to duty-based (Dalton, 2009) actions such as paying taxes, participating in community service, or voting (Haste & Hogan, 2006; Jensen & Flanagan, 2008), I take up Knight and Watson's (2014) definition of civic engagement as when individuals seek to participate, critically question, and interact with self and others across mediated spaces and transnational borders. For example, when youth compose tweets in response to negative representations of Muslims and share their thoughts on social media with a community of followers they are enacting civic engagement.

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(Critical) media literacies. Scholars and practitioners succinctly define media literacy as "the ability to analyze, evaluate, and create messages across media" (Bindig & Castonguay, 2014, p. 139). In this study, critical media literacies refer to critique of information that people receive as citizens and consumers (Mihailidis, 2014). Critical media literacies help students reflect, analyze, and evaluate the structure and form of various modes of communication they receive. This, in turn, allows them to develop a broader understanding about the economic, social, and institutional aspects of communication and how those affect people's experiences (Buckingham, 2003). Furthermore, critical media literacies assist students in critiquing information they receive and becoming politically informed agents across a wider participatory culture to address issues of power (Janks 2010). The goal of critical media literacies is to confront injustices and provide students with an opportunity to use their expression to advocate for a better society (Mihailidis, 2014).

Identities. Drawing upon sociocultural understandings of identity I use the term identities to denote the social, fluid, and multiple nature of the construct which is both negotiated and formed through social interactions and social practices (Moje & Luke, 2009). I align with the work of Gee (2000) who argued that identities are understood when recognized within social contexts or relationships.

Immigrants and refugees. Generally, immigrants are those who immigrated voluntarily for a variety of reasons, while refugees are people who involuntarily leave their home countries due to fear of persecution or death (Cortes, 2001; Schmid, 2001). Refugees differ from traditional immigrants in large part because the refugee experience is one of necessity. Specifically, this population is comprised of individuals often fleeing from persecution, starvation, or war (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees www.unhcr.org).

Furthermore, immigrants are often able to freely return to their countries of origin, while refugees are not. In this study, both Albarko and Mena identified as coming from refugee backgrounds. However, I commonly refer to the focal youth in the study as transnational immigrant youth as this framing has more positive connotation than the term refugee.

Language ideology. This involves beliefs about language and how those beliefs shape institutional practices, including "a bias toward an abstract, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominate bloc institutions" (Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 67). An example of a language ideology is that even though the United States does not have an official language, some people hold the belief that everyone living in the United States should speak English.

Languages other than English (LOTE). Since every individual is continuously learning language, I reject the commonly used term English Language Learner (ELL) to describe the students in my study who are currently studying English in addition to the languages they already speak. Instead, I draw upon Barros' (2016) conception: speakers of languages other than English (LOTE). As Barros notes, while this term might seem to reinforce conditions of othering commonly experienced by minoritized language groups, the expression is used to accentuate the mobile nature of languages (Blommaert, 2010).

Mediated spaces. In this study, mediated space refers to sites of interaction between individuals (Mark, 1999). Technology assists individuals with overcoming limits on human activity and interactions by enhancing the resources available to support or 'mediate' them (Reno, 2005, p. 181). Therefore, spaces have increasingly become "mediated and populated by surfaces and by their technological relative, screens" (McIlvenny & Noy, 2011, p. 152).

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Multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is defined as one's relationship between self and cultural or ethnic groups, social class, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and ability (Banks & Banks, 2004). In this study, my investigation took place in a multicultural studies class that explored various elements of multiculturalism.

Multicultural education. This study took place in a multicultural studies elective course taught by a social studies teacher. While multicultural education has become an umbrella term to deal with issues around race, language, social class, gender, sexuality, culture, disability, and religion, the aim of this approach to teaching according to the literature is for educators to take action, challenge social stratification, promote equal opportunity for all students, and celebrate human diversity in their pedagogy and practice (Grant & Sleeter, 2012).

Technology. *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* (2008) defines technology as, "The branch of knowledge that deals with the creation and use of technical means and their interrelation with life, society, and the environment, drawing upon such subjects as industrial arts, engineering, applied sciences, and pure science." However, technology has also been described as a process. For example, *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* (2017) defines technology as "the particular application of knowledge especially in a particular area." These framings, therefore, position technology as both an artifact and a process. Both notions will be taken up in my study. Beyond these dictionary definitions, in the field of education, scholars have noted that technology includes both analog and digital, old and new technologies (Koehler, Mishra, & Cain, 2013). However, these same scholars recognize that digital turn in technology integration has proven challenging for teachers to integrate into their work, especially since many teachers earned degrees at a time when the use of educational technology was in a different stage of

development than today (Koehler, Mishra, & Cain, 2013) which is true of Mr. Denker in this study.

Transnational youth. Given widespread migration patterns and the advancement of technology that allows individuals to remain connected to their countries of origin, transnational youth refers to students who maintain connections or ties to two or more countries (Skerrett, 2015). For example, in this study, Albarko was born in Somalia, attended middle school in Turkey, and then moved to the United States. Albarko interacted with former classmates in Turkey, and with his friends in Somalia through online means following his relocation to the U.S.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

This literature review draws upon three broad bodies of scholarship and their attendant subfields. Specifically, I examine the research base on immigrant youth, citizenship and civic engagement, and media literacies. While each of these three bodies of scholarship exist independently and could be considered on their own, I place them in conversation with one another. I argue this approach is productive for extending the current research base, and necessary given the increasing interconnectedness among these three fields of study for my participants. In the following chapter, I first provide an overview of immigrant youth, advocating for an assets-based framing of this population. Next, I explore research literature in relation to youths' transnational, religious, and linguistic identities. I then examine the recent digital turn in the field related to citizenship and civic engagement studies. Finally, I provide an overview of media literacy studies, and specifically highlight the increasing importance of cultivating students' critical media literacies. Across the literature review, I discuss the role that teachers and schools have in educating immigrant youth to support their citizenship and sense of belonging, civic engagement, and critical media literacies.

Methods for Locating Literature

I utilized two primary methods to locate literature for this review. First, I conducted an online search using both Google Scholar and the ProQuest database system accessed through the Michigan State University library system. I engaged in keyword searches, such as "immigrant and refugee youth," "transnational citizenship," "civic engagement," "media literacies" and "critical media literacies," to find qualitative and quantitative studies published in peer-reviewed journals and other resources between 2006 and 2016. I focused my search on literature published

during the past decade because many widespread changes to mobile technology use have taken place during that time frame, and because this ten-year period coincided with an increase of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds entering K-12 U. S. schools. I primarily limited my search to studies done within the United States. Second, I reviewed the reference lists of journal articles and books that I read to find other sources and repeated the process until I reached a point of saturation (Randolph, 2009). Following data collection and analysis, I revisited the literature published from 2017-2018 to include updated citations of recently released scholarship. I also added additional categories to the literature review section based upon other topical areas that emerged throughout the research process.

Situating Immigrant Youth

For many immigrants, the journey to a new country is grounded in educational and economic opportunities and the quest for a better life (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Garcia-Coll & Marks, 2012; Suarez-Orozco et. al., 2009). Since its founding, the United States has received a continual influx of immigrants. However, the number of foreign-born individuals currently living in the U.S. is higher than any previous point in history (Shrestha & Heisler, 2011). Because of widespread migration, the country's demographics are radically shifting, contributing to an increasingly diverse K-12 student body (Paris & Alim, 2014; Strauss, 2014). For example, 25% of children under the age of 18 have at least one immigrant parent (Suarez-Orozco & Michikyan, 2016) and 22% of school-aged children speak a language other than English in their homes (Camarota & Zeigler, 2015). Adding to this diversification are children of 2 million refugees resettled since 1975, a number that has typically increased each year as the U.S. receives the highest number of refugees in the world in alignment with U.S. immigration policy which has, until recently, sought to purposefully protect refugees (Hos, 2016; Kandel, 2014). Given these

widespread demographic changes, scholars are increasingly focused on the social and cultural issues affecting immigrants, especially since schools are called upon to prepare students for responsible civic engagement and future careers (Crosnoe & Turley, 2011; DeCapua, 2016; Fruja-Amthor & Roxas, 2016; Masten, Liebkind, & Hernandez, 2012; Oikonomidoy, 2014).

Alongside increased attention on immigrant students, scholars have critiqued the ways in which multicultural and multilingual students are framed by deficit narratives (Alford, 2014; Bruton & Robles-Pina, 2009; Bunch, 2014; Gandara & Rumberger 2009; McCarthy & Vickers, 2012). That is, when immigrants enter a new social context, they are often categorized and positioned by others in terms laden with negative and stigmatized meanings of illegality, poverty, criminality, or barbarity which poses a threat to their identities (Deaux, 2006) and sense of belonging. Furthermore, immigrant students of color are confronted with issues related to language, culture, race, and social status that affect their social and academic participation in classrooms. Thus, immigrant students often find themselves relegated to the margins at school (Gibson & Carrasco, 2009; Shutlz & Coleman-King, 2012), even though their ability to move across languages and cultures should be positioned as an asset (Lam & Warriner, 2012) and teachers should call upon youths' lived experiences and funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Moreover, immigrant youth may encounter a lack of acceptance in school for divergent forms of thinking or experience rejection when they attempt to enact cultural practices that differ from the dominant culture (Gandara & Rumberger, 2009; Li & Protacio, 2010). To counter this negative framing, I join scholars such as Gutierrez and Orellana (2006) and Sadowski (2013) who position immigrant youth from a strengths-based perspective. I also join researchers seeking to amplify the actual voices and perspectives of immigrant youth (Mugisha, 2015; Roxas & Roy, 2012). Additionally, my work addresses a call by Alper, Katz &

Clark (2016) to transcend documentation of difference to consider how varying aspects of youths' social identities allow for the similarities among diverse youths' media practices. Specifically, I situate youth having already-present linguistic, technological, and cultural knowledge to support their literacy learning and civic engagement (Watson, 2018).

Immigrant Youth and Transnational Identity

Scholars estimate that one in four U.S. school-going youth participate in a transnational life (Coe, Reynolds, Boehm, Hess, & Rae-Espinoza, 2011; Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). That is, in many classrooms, students have expansive connections to other countries, supporting unique language and literacy practices benefiting their learning (Skerrett, 2015). Across their lived experiences, transnational youth draw upon a variety of understandings from personal, religious, familial, educational, and other domains (Bernardi, 2011; Sanchez, 2007; Skerrett, 2015).

While an exhaustive review of the literature in relation to identity is beyond the scope of this study, especially as different fields take up a wide range of theoretical and practical conceptualizations about identity (see Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, Gee, 2000; Harklau, 2007; Lee & Anderson, 2009), I focus on the scholarship most directly related to transnational immigrant youth because the focal youth participants in my study were a part of this growing population of students. That is, my approach to identity moves beyond psychoanalytical and cognitive approaches to identity first popularized by Erickson (1968) to focus on identity from a social and cultural perspective in which identity is viewed as a social construct. This approach views identity as an embodied process, in which identity is both constructed and negotiated through social interactions and social practices, instead of as a product mentally constructed within one's self (Moje & Luke, 2009). A fluid conceptualization of identity aligns with the consistently negotiated nature of the immigrant youths' sense of belonging formed across time and space at

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varying societal levels from the personal and local to the interconnected networked publics that transcend international borders.

Much of the literature base concerning immigrant youth identities builds on the work of the sociologist Bordieu (1984), who argued that identities are formed and shaped by the social and cultural forces of society, including social constructs such as race, gender, and class. By extension, Gee (2000) argued that identities are multiple and situated and connected to institutional, historical, and sociocultural forces. While Holland and colleagues (1998) argued that individuals enact, perform, and construct identities according to their cultural histories and current social contexts, researchers examining identity with immigrant populations must also attend to the complex and multiple factors across intercultural contexts (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Verkuyten & de Wolf 2002; Kadianaki, O'Sullivan-Lago, & Gillespie, 2015). As Chryssochoou (2004) argued, when people encounter different ideas, values, and languages in multicultural societies, there is a change in the ways people define and perceive themselves. By extension, Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hillard (2004) noted that continually shaping youths' understandings about ways of being are their connections to global culture and flows of information, such as media, movies, and fashion that transcend geographic regions.

In response to these shifts, scholars have increasingly examined the lived experiences of transnational youth within and beyond school (Abu El-Haj & Bonet, 2011; Dolby & Rizvi, 2008; Hahn, 2015; Knight, 2011). For example, Abu El-Haj and Bonet (2011) discussed the case of Kamal and Zayna, brother and sister Muslim youth who were born in the United States, but spent part of their young lives living in Iraq until they were displaced by war. Abu El-Haj and Bonet (2011) discussed how Kamal and Zanya called upon their lived experiences to actively engage "in social, cultural, and political realms that reflected their connections to multiple communities"

(p. 31). Likewise, Knight (2011) shared about her ongoing learning from Kwame, an American-Ghanaian transnational youth she interacted with across Kwame's high school to college-going years. Knight reflected on the ways Kwame maintained civic involvement across borders to make active and informed contributions as a member of the broader global community. Themes across studies about transnational youth identities and sense of belonging suggest the need to advocate against stereotypes and deficit framing of transnational youth (Abu El-Haj & Bonet, 2011; Knight, 2011), a movement away from notions of assimilation into the nation-state (Abu El-Haj & Bonet, 2011), and the need for additional transnational approaches in educational research, including an understanding of transnationalism from multiple perspectives and not only a U.S.-centered one (Bondy, 2016; Sanchez & Machado-Cases, 2009; Skerrett, 2015).

Transnational Youth, Multilingualism, and Identity

Moje and Luke (2009) argued that identities are constructed "in and through the stories people tell about themselves and their experiences" (p. 427). For multilingual immigrant youth, these stories are shaped as they negotiate their identities across varying social worlds and languages (Beach, Thein, & Johnston, 2015; Darvin & Norton, 2015; De Costa & Norton, 2017). For example, Ushioda (2011), in her examination of the links between language learning, youth, and identity noted, "students' transportable identities are grounded not only in the physical world of their lives, but increasingly in the virtual world of cyberspace as well as mobile communication and entertainment technologies in which their life is immersed" (Ushioda, 2011, p. 206). Ushioda (2011) further argued that the highly interactive environment of the current generation of youth has become an integral part of these students' identities, many of which are developed and created in virtual spaces. Additionally, Darvin and Norton (2015) provide case studies of two focal youth coming from varying geographic and social backgrounds, Henrietta in

Uganda and Ayrton in Canada, to show how these youth positioned themselves across digital spaces. Through her engagement at an Internet café, Henrietta drew upon her linguistic capital as an English speaker to develop digital literacy skills by researching HIV/AIDS to become a knowledgeable insider about public health issues. Arton, a 16-year-old Filipino male whose family moved to Canada as a member of the Investor Class of experienced business people contributing to the country's economic growth and prosperity, participated in an online currency trading course. He positioned himself as a future currency trader able to interact with an established a network of people across geographical locations. Youths' experiences, supported by online engagement and the ability to use English and other languages, shaped their transnational identities.

In their synthesis of the research on transnationalism and literacy, Lam and Warriner (2009) argued that language and literacy practice play a significant role in helping migrants to build and maintain relationships across borders and the ways in which they both position and navigate their sense of selves across social settings within and beyond national borders. They also argued that language ideologies influence both youth and family language practices and the effect of institutional systems, such as schools, on the ability, or not, of transnational youth to call upon their linguistic resources (Lam & Warriner, 2012). That is, scholars recognize that transnational youths' ability to know multiple languages facilitates their content and academic language learning within and beyond English (Wiley, 2014), even if these abilities are not taken up in school (Cummins, 2005; Seals & Peyton, 2017). Collectively, scholars also understand that migrants call upon their linguistic repertoires to position themselves as part of various social domains within and across nation-state boundaries (Lam & Warriner, 2012). However, while literacy scholars have investigated how transnational mobility shapes youths' language and

literacy practices (Lam & Warriner, 2012; Jimenez, Smith, & Teague, 2009, Sanchez, 2007; Skerrett, 2012), especially in connection with their multilingual abilities (Lam 2000; Lam, 2004; Lam, 2009) and online identities (Black 2005; Black, 2009, Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009; Yi, 2008), the research base has yet to consider the role of transnational youths' critical media literacies and the impact this has on youths' identity negotiation. My study can add to this literature base.

Immigrant Youth, Muslim Identity, and U.S. Schools

Abu El-Haj and Bonet (2011), in their review of the research literature on Muslim youth from transnational communities, noted the unique challenges facing this group of students, particularly following the events of September 11, 2001. Therefore, in an era where government policies and practices have threatened the human and civil rights for Muslim communities in response to their religious identification (Murray; 2004), researchers must carefully recognize the variable and dynamic nature of youths' cultural and religious beliefs and practices (Abu El-Haj & Bonet, 2011) and how this impacts their sense of belonging.

Several studies have revealed the ways transnational Muslim youth encountered discrimination and surveillance following 9/11 and the impact of these pressures on their multiple identities (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Ewing & Hoyler, 2008; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2009; Maira, 2004, 2009; Sirin & Fine, 2008). For example, Abu El-Haj (2007) found that Palestinian-American youth struggled with the way they were positioned according to their ethnic and religious identities in schools. Likewise, Ewing & Hoyler (2008), in an investigation of South Asian Muslim youth in the U.S. Southwest, found that young people encountered substantial struggles and ambivalence over the possibility of taking up both Muslim and American identities. Researching Muslim American youth in New York City, including youth born abroad,

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Sirin and Fine (2008) used focus groups, surveys, and identity maps to examine how youth made sense of their multiple identities. They found that youth spoke back to a political climate that positioned them as a threat to the nation-state. Youth provided counter perspectives to educate the broader public about the positive ways that Muslims help contribute to a pluralist and multicultural nation (Sirin & Fine, 2008). Collectively, youth in these three studies drew upon their identities as U.S. citizens and their transnational communities to seek justice and inclusion (Abu-El Haj & Bonet, 2011).

Regrettably, several studies have found that lack of understanding about Islam and Muslims in U.S. society challenges teachers and schools serving Muslim students (Asher 2008; Taggar 2006). In their investigation of Arab American students in Midwestern schools, Sabry and Bruna (2007) found that the curriculum and schooling of Muslim youth was beset by bias and inaccuracy. Furthermore, widespread notions of Islamaphobia impact Muslim populations. For example, Zine (2006) noted that hatred and fear "of Islam and its adherents translated into individual, ideological, and systemic forms of oppression and discrimination" (p. 239). Unfortunately, this fear is carried out across social systems such as schools. For example, Moore (2009) argued, if multicultural education seeks to reduce prejudices and integrate curriculum that reflects a pluralistic society, then public schools need to include content about Islam and Muslims in instruction. Furthermore, multicultural education must consider the important role that religion plays in national and international interactions (Banks, 2004; Bennett, 2007). This includes teaching students about the role of Islam in history and contemporary times, the core tenets of the faith, and the faith's contributions to human civilization (Moore, 2009). Ultimately, scholars have called upon schools and teachers to prepare students to understand Muslims in more thoughtful and nuanced ways, so that myths and wrong assumptions about Muslims and

Islam are debunked (Abu El-Haj, 2006; Elbih, 2015; Klepper, 2014; Morgan; 2012; Yoder, Johnson, & Karam, 2016).

Given the complex factors contributing to Muslim youths' identities, my work can add to the ongoing scholarly conversation by examining the ways Leah, Mena, and Albarko position themselves or are "being positioned in relation to questions of identity, nation, and belonging" (Abu El-Haj & Bonet, 2011, p. 37). Furthermore, my study can answer the call to understand how youths' "discourses and practices around particular forms of identification" related to their identities as Muslim youth "emerge in specific local contexts, intimately bound up with national and global contexts" (Abu El-Haj & Bonet, 2011, p. 41) and are experienced through their online interactions.

Immigrant Youth and Technology

While much research has discussed immigrant students' academic performance and engagement in schools (Baum & Flores 2011; Gandara & Rumberger, 2009; Preissle & Rong, 2009), very little has focused on the role of technology in assisting immigrants as they navigate schooling in a new culture or how the use of already-present technology skills enhances their ability to belong. As Elias (2013) noted, the role of media in the lives of immigrants has received limited research attention. This is problematic since technologies offer youth unparalleled opportunities to engage in public life (Bennett, 2008). Scholars have engaged in large-scale research that examines how digital media are shaping the ways in which youth learn, socialize, and play across a broad range of social contexts, such as schools (Jenkins et. al., 2015). Additionally, research has revealed incorporation of digital media into the curriculum allows for active engagement in learning (Moje, 2009).

However, from this body of knowledge, a specific focus on how immigrants take up such opportunities is missing. In fact, most scholarly discussion about immigrants regarding technology focuses on contexts not directly related to school (Chen, 2010; Madianou & Miller, 2013; Navarrete & Huerta, 2006). Therefore, while all youth are increasingly using technology to consume and produce media (de Block & Buckingham, 2007; Ito et al., 2009), scholars have recently called for further understanding of how ethnically, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse populations use media and technology (Alper, Katz, & Schofield, 2016). Such understandings are important because, as Elias (2013) argues, immigrant youth possess "valuable cultural, social, and emotional resources needed for personal growth and empowerment" (p. 393).

While, historically, research has focused on immigrants' assimilation and acculturation into the host country (Gordon, 1964; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997), recent advances in technology and growing mobility have allowed immigrants to remain connected to their home cultures as they enact transnational identities (Brinkerhoff, 2009; de Block & Buckingham, 2007; Katz, 2010; Sánchez, & Machado-Casas, 2009; Skerrett, 2015). In general, technology often plays a bilateral role in helping immigrants to stay connected to their countries of origin while simultaneously allowing them to forge cultural connections in their new country of residence (Dhoest, 2015; Madianou & Miller, 2013). For example, Elias (2013) noted that immigrant youth principally use the internet in three ways: 1) as a source of information about the new society and culture in which the youth have come to live, 2) as a platform for connecting youth with peers who share similar identity features such as national or ethnic origins, and 3) as a tool for native language preservation and host culture language development skills. Furthermore, many immigrants access and use what Matsaganis and Katz (2016) refer to

as ethnic media, which is curated by individuals from similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds who once lived in other countries, but now reside in the United States. This media symbolically affirms immigrants' ethnic identities and their ability to enact behaviors corresponding to their home cultures while promoting a sense of belonging in a new country (Matsaganis & Katz, 2016). Just as immigrants seek to form connections between the host country and the wider population (Madianou & Miller, 2013), or what Elias and Lemish (2008) identified as bonding and bridging host culture with home culture, use of mediated online spaces can further assist in social integration into the new culture.

One issue taken up widely across the literature is concern about digital equity and immigrants' access to technology. Framed as a digital divide (Van Dijk, 2006), researchers have expressed concerned over the ability for individuals to access internet technology based on structural inequalities. For instance, researchers have noted immigrant students often live in underserved communities where broadband connectivity is expensive in relation to residents' incomes or difficult to obtain inside the home due to broader social disparities (Kazt & Gonzalez, 2016; Matsaganis & Katz, 2016). Nonetheless, use of information and communication technology by immigrants is common. In some cases, this means immigrants and others in underserved situations seek out internet connections in communal spaces, such as a public libraries or community-based organizations (Fry 2014; Jenkins et. al., 2016). While there is concern about inequalities in access to digital technologies, members of marginalized communities, particularly youth, are using their digital media skills to establish social movements to empower themselves and others (Gamber-Thompson & Zimmerman, 2016)

In educational contexts, peer-reviewed studies have shown that immigrants, especially immigrant youth, draw upon digital literacies learned prior to migration and apply that

knowledge at school (Dhoest, 2015; K. Yoon, 2016). Therefore, while some researchers have suggested that accessing school-based digital communications requires computer literacy skills that may challenge families less accustomed to engaging with school in this way (Machado-Casas, Sánchez, & Ek, 2014), research has also revealed immigrant families use collective approaches and strategies to access different technology and media platforms to a larger degree than native-born peer families (Katz, 2014). For example, parents may share various media resources with their children to promote the use of the mother tongue, while children can broker parents' connections to English language media or other platforms less known to their parents (Matsaganis & Katz, 2016). While the literature base focusing on technology use by immigrants in school-based settings is nascent, the role of technology and its impact on understandings of citizenship, belonging, and civic engagement is more broadly developed. In the sections that follow, this idea will be further discussed.

Contemporary Framings of Citizenship and Civic Engagement

Contemporary notions of citizenship and civic engagement seek to address the limitations inherent in the historical framing of these constructs. Traditionally, citizenship has been concerned with integrity of the nation-state (Kuisma, 2008). For example, Isin and Turner (2002) noted, while citizenship studies is interdisciplinary in focus and transnational in scope, most citizenship laws are primarily enacted at the national level. Traditional framing of citizenship views the construct as nationally-bounded membership (Fischman & Haas, 2012) or legal membership (Banks, 2008). Such classic notions of citizenship are concerned with rights and responsibilities, such as paying taxes, voting, obeying laws, learning the language of the nation-state, or having technical knowledge for how government works (Anderson, 1991; Barros, 2016; Dalton, 2009; Soysal, 1994; Westheimer, 2015). In schools, many teachers continue to preserve a

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conservative model of democratic citizenship education focused primarily on knowledge of American history and patriotism (Abowitz & Harnish 2006; Journell, 2011). Likewise, civic engagement was historically oriented around traditional means of participation and political duties like campaigning, voting, being an active member of an association, or contacting government officials (Dalton, 2008). However, some youth today are deliberately choosing not to endorse certain methods of participation, like elections, which they view as flawed (Levine, 2006). Thus, the current generation's seeming disengagement from political and civic activities has caused some to view youth as cynical and apathetic (Damon 2001), and others to suggest certain forms of civic participation are declining (Patterson 2003; Putnam, 2000; Wattenberg 2006). Overall, the literature has noted a growing disillusionment from young citizens towards modern governments and mainstream, traditional politics (Barros, 2016; Van Biezen, Mair, & Poguntke, 2012).

Traditional theories of citizenship and civic engagement do not consider the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences found across pluralistic societies, differences that often result in oppression of those denied full membership and rights as citizens (Banks, 2008; Choi, 2016; Nieto, 2016; Matsuda & Duran; 2013). As Lister (2007) contended, the contemporary literature base on citizenship "is marked by the challenge it poses to citizenship's exclusionary tendencies and by its attempt to make real citizenship's inclusionary promise" (p. 50). While much scholarship focuses on citizenship from a conceptual or theoretical standpoint (Banks, 2007; Banks, 2017), I found four empirical pieces examining connections between immigrant youth, citizenship, and belonging. Abu El-Haj (2007), in her work with Palestinian-American students, found that school-related issues like harassment from classmates and being positioned as terrorists affected how the youth thought about citizenship and belonging. Specifically, while

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youth in the study viewed U.S. citizenship as a privileged status providing economic advantages that allowed youth the right to work and support extended families in the West Bank, they still had to contend with being positioned negatively by peers as outsiders and enemies of the U.S. because they were Muslim.

Working with Latinx students, Bondy (2015) and Dabach (2015) investigated notions of citizenship and belonging. Bondy (2015) found that Latina youths' citizenship identities and sense of belonging were shaped by stereotypical images and dominant discourses others made about the Latinx community, but noted that Latina students were able to respond in ways that resisted and modified negative discourses for how they were positioned as citizens. Dabach's (2015) work examined documented and undocumented students and found that, as students wrote letters to the President about policy issues that mattered to them, students with different citizenship statuses were able to actively engage in political action regardless of their documentation. In a different study, Dabach (2015) examined how a teacher saw youth in her general education government class as citizens, while she positioned students in her English learner government class as non-citizens, revealing the ways that language status might serve as a proxy for citizenship status and affect students' sense of belonging.

Collectively, these four studies have implications for my work. Each deal with how youth are positioned as citizens and suggest the ways that such positioning affects youths' sense of belonging. Youth across the studies pushed back against negative positioning by others, and asserted their rights to be considered part of the broader communities in which they engaged. Missing from these studies, however, is the role of technology in supporting youths' sense of belonging, which my study will address.

In alignment with shifting views about citizenship, widespread changes are also being discussed across the literature in regarding civic participation and engagement. This includes new understandings of civic engagement through participatory, networked communities and the ability for individuals to critically question and interact with self and others across mediated spaces and transnational borders (Jenkins et. al. 2009; Knight & Watson, 2013). Despite the argument that contemporary youth are seemingly disillusioned and less politically engaged than their historical counterparts, scholars are jointly investigating how younger generations are embracing new forms of political and civic engagement (Banaji & Buckingham, 2013; Brough & Shresthova, 2012; Crowe, 2006; Cohen & Kahne, 2012; Dalton, 2009; Jenkins, Ito, Boyd, 2015; Levine 2007; Wells, 2015).

Touraine (1985) first identified a sociocultural turn toward new forms of collective action and engagement as a movement away from sociopolitical framings of engagement. He noted an increasing focus on social movements as sites of struggle over information, symbolic goods, images, and culture. Today's youth are less interested in engagement related to civic organizations or electoral politics and are more focused on their own interests, social networks, and other forms of activism (Brough & Shresthova, 2012). In other words, youth are highly engaged about issues they or their peers see as important. For example, Ballard, Malin, Portner, and Colby (2015) found first generation Latino participants in their study were concerned about immigration reform and were motivated to take civic action to address the issue. Likewise, Bennett (2008) recounted an anecdote about concert-goers who began to promote a fair-trade organization after learning about it at Coldplay concert. Such approaches reveal a propensity for youth to demonstrate higher levels of participation through non-traditional activities.

In recent years, a growing body of work has focused on immigrant youths' civic engagement, although many of these studies are centered on the Latinx immigrant community. For example, Gutiérrez (2014) drew upon qualitative data from a larger multi-phase ethnographic study to understand how Mexican immigrant youth in a xenophobic school confronted their oppressed identities and worked as change agents to become civically engaged citizens. Gutiérrez (2014) found the youth in her study could demonstrate agency through their civic engagement and developed strategies that strengthened their cultural, linguistic, and learner identities. With a study taking place in a similar geographic context, O'leary and Romero (2011) used survey data from 99 Latinx students to understand the impact of Arizona Senate Bill 1108, referred to as the anti-ethnic studies bill, on youths' well-being. The researchers found that, despite an influx of negative messages and obstacles created by those in power, youth found strategies and approaches for remaining engaged in national civic matters. They also developed personal resilience as they sought to address systems of power.

In a qualitative investigation that examined how ten Latino immigrants viewed their high school social studies experiences as shaping their development as political and civic participants, Callahan and Obenchain (2012) found that teachers played a significant role in empowering their students to engage both civically and politically. This included helping students know how to critically evaluate information presented to them, which helped them make informed choices when encountering political messages. In a later study, Callahan and Obenchain (2016) examined the role of parents and teachers in shaping immigrant youths' civic development in the context of social studies. Using a mixed-methods approach with interviews and a national survey, the researchers found that, while parents expressed high expectations for their children regarding academic and civic engagement, teachers' expectations for their students to be

civically engaged was an essential factor in promoting the civic development of immigrant youth.

Currently, the largest numbers of immigrants to the United States come from Latin America and Asia. Therefore, Jensen (2008) drew upon 80 parents and children from El Salvador and India living in Washington D.C. to understand the degree of civic engagement for immigrants from these two backgrounds, and the extent that their engagement focused on cultural or immigrant issues. Using results from semi-structured interviews that took place in participants' homes, he found that immigrants positioned civic engagement as important and were engaged across their local communities. Jensen concluded that immigrants were culturally, rather than politically, motivated toward civic engagement, revealing seven ways they demonstrated cultural civic engagement, such as welfare of immigrant or cultural communities, assistance to country of origin, and bridging communities. Additionally, drawing from data collected across 52 metropolitan areas that investigated immigrant engagement across civic events, Ebert and Okamoto (2013) found that immigrants were more likely to engage in events that had a direct impact for improving their local community.

Examining the civic engagement of African immigrants, Knight and Watson (2014) report on data gathered from interviews with 1.5 generation African immigrants to New York City in an interpretive case study. They found that immigrant youth built upon the social and transnational context of their families to support civic engagement as reflected by their ethnic and racial identities. For example, one study participant identified as Alimatu, a U.S. citizen and 1.5 generation immigrant from Guinea, recounted her right to take action and act within a local community, and also across the African diaspora to her community back home in Guinea. Another youth in the study, Susan, moved between identification as African, African-American

and/or Black based upon the situations in which she finds herself revealing flexibility of her cultural citizenship status, racial, and ethnic identities. Such positioning revealed civic learning across local, national, and global contexts informed by family. Ultimately, Knight and Watson (2014) argued that civic teaching, learning, and action develops across one's life span and results from dialogue and relationships mediated across youths' varied identities that transcended national borders.

Clearly, the number of studies that investigate the civic engagement of immigrant youth is growing. My work can make an added contribution to the literature base because current studies have not considered the role of youths' critical media literacies in direct relation to their civic engagement.

The Digital Turn and Participatory Networked Communities

Coinciding with the movement toward broader conceptions of citizenship and civic engagement is the digital turn in citizenship studies (Ribble, 2011; Svensson, 2011). While conceptions of digital citizenship vary, they are often concerned with rights and responsibilities; civic engagement and participation; a sense of belonging; a sense of decorum when engaging online; and digital, media, and social literacies (Collier, 2011; Hobbs, 2011; Ribble, 2011). In his scholarship, Mihailidis (2014) has argued that wider conceptions of citizenship cannot happen without the inclusion of online media. Furthermore, he suggested that citizens must view themselves as core participants in the media process and not just passive consumers of content. The digital turn in citizenship studies, therefore, provides important implications for how individuals act and react online, especially regarding political and civic engagement. How citizens adapt to online spaces will play an increasingly significant role in the efficacy of the masses for participation and civic engagement (Mihaildis, 2014).

Across society today, youth are increasingly turning to networked spaces that serve as new platforms and practices for democratic participation and engagement (Cohen & Kahne, 2012; Dahlgren, 2009; DeAbreu & Mihaildis, 2014; Loader, Vromen & Xenos, 2014; Svensson, 2011). These forms of participation are often engaged through informal networked connections such as the internet (Bennett, 2008; Ito et al., 2009; Jenkins et. al., 2016). As Moffa, Brejwo, & Waterson (2016) have noted, democratic life is carried out through the actions of citizens, so youth should recognize their contributions to social networks as democratic engagement. Furthermore, social media can serve as a viable and productive medium for individuals who may lack traditional efficacy in politics (Moffa, Brejwo, & Waterson, 2016). For instance, Cohen and Kahne (2012), in their Youth & Participatory Politics Survey Project, found that new forms of media facilitate a more equitable distribution of political participation for youth from varying ethnic and racial groups. Likewise, Jenkins and colleagues (2009) have noted that participatory culture is creating opportunities for individuals to interact according to shared interests though new media technology in powerful new ways.

While traditional news outlets still produce in-depth stories of events such as the Boston Marathon terrorist incident or the Arab Spring movement, research has demonstrated that citizens are often the first to share photos, videos, and texts or tweets that capture the scene of the incident (DeAbreu & Mihaildis, 2014; Saleh, 2013). The emergence of new technologies, therefore, allows for widespread discussion and conversations on a diversity of civically oriented issues and topics around the globe. Youth increasingly use digital tools and social networking sites to engage and influence issues of public importance across a broad range of topics from police misconduct, to poverty, and immigrant rights (Jenkins et. al., 2016). For example, immigrant youth activists have recently used social media to highlight the Development, Relief,

and Education for Alien Minors (DREAMer) movement, thus mobilizing support for undocumented youth, raising awareness about immigration reform, and providing online resources regarding legal matters connected to citizenship status (Khane, Hodgin, & Eidman-Aadahl, 2016; Nichoolls, 2013). Undoubtedly, technology is assisting in the amplification of civic voices, allowing individuals to engage in outreach, community organizing, social movements, and access to open data sources across mediated spaces (Mihaildis, 2014). As students construct, produce, and deconstruct media, they can empower themselves and others toward democratic engagement and social action (Stein & Prewett, 2009). For instance, in school settings, Greenhow (2011) found students' use of an online social networking application facilitated their ability to share information about environmental issues and encouraged civic engagement across school and community contexts. Ultimately, digital platforms allow youth to extend their voices and the voices of those in their community from classrooms to schools to local communities and beyond (DeAbreu & Mihailidis, 2014). Since immigrant youth are sometimes invisible to others in school and their voices are prone to being silenced (Patel, 2012), the use of digital platforms as explored in my work is significant. As Barros (2016) noted, the use of social media technologies can give agency and voice to invisible actors and be used to build transnational alliances toward common causes.

While civic education and social media seem to pair well together (Bennett, 2008), scholars lament that K–12 education in the United States has largely disregarded social media as an outlet for civic engagement (Jenkins et. al., 2009). For example, Rheingold (2012) claimed that educational institutions are not able to change quickly and broadly enough to keep pace with changes in digital culture. The result is that many schools restrict popular social technology use at school (Mihailidis, 2014). For instance, many schools block or filter access to social media

sites (Krutka & Milton, 2013), which prohibits students from using such sites for educative ends. These preventative measures are often a result of what Fry (2014) identifies as protectionist positioning that seeks to reinforce negative assumptions that the internet is a dangerous place from which youth need to be protected. While the anonymity of online spaces can result in problematic exchanges among individuals where offensive, hateful language with racist, sexist, or homophobic tones is used to denigrate individuals (Khane, Hodgin, & Eidman-Aadahl, 2016), teachers can empower youth with productive ways to respond to those opposing viewpoints and still promote civic engagement across mediated spaces (Fry, 2014; Kushin & Kitchener, 2009).

Media Literacy

Since technology plays such a vital role in contemporary citizenship, belonging, and civic engagement, the need for students to have media literacy skills is increasingly important. Moreover, since most individuals can produce and distribute media with ease, teaching users to question the objectivity, quality, and authority of mediated knowledge is increasingly important (Livingston, 2004). Widespread contemporary media use underscores public, private, and family interactions and is foundational to the ways in which youth engage across society Livingston & Wang, 2014). However, within the United States, media literacy education is relatively new (Kellner & Share, 2005), is not widely or consistently taught in schools, and is rarely implemented as part of teacher preparation programs (Jolls & Wilson 2014; Stein & Prewett, 2009).

The study of media literacy is interdisciplinary, drawing on the fields and methods of sociology, political theory, psychology, race and gender studies, art, cultural studies, and aesthetics (Koltay, 2011). Historically, media education built upon the early work of McLuhan and his theory that the "medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1967, p. 63). That is, McLuhan

believed the form of a message was as important as the content of the message. Put differently,

McLuhan posited while different media can report on the same event, each medium will convey

different messages and generate different impressions for a person (Jolls & Wilson 2014). In his

foundational work in the field, Masterman (1989) argued the central and unifying concept for

media education is representation. He theorized the role of media is to mediate and "not reflect,

but re-present the world." (Masterman, 1989, n.p.).

A consensus on the concept of media literacy in the U.S. first arrived in 1992 when the

Aspen Institute brought together leaders from North America to develop a common language

that recognized a multiplicity of approaches toward media literacy and media literacy education

(Tyner, 1998). At that meeting, a concise, clear, and widely accepted definition emerged: media

literacy is the ability to access, evaluate, analyze and create messages in variety of forms

(Aufderheide, 1993). More recently, the MacArthur Foundation organized and funded a research

project investigating digital media and learning to "drive positive change in American education

that builds on the new modes of learning observed among young people using digital media and

related tools" (MacArthur, 2006, as quoted in Mihailidis, 2014). The outcomes of the MacArthur

Foundation work led to scholarship on social networking forums as spaces of learning (Field &

Grimes, 2012), assessing learning in a digital age (Schwartz & Arena, 2013), and understanding

how learning is supported through engagement in a participatory culture (Middaugh, 2012).

The ubiquity and broad use of media today has led scholars like DeAbreu and Mihailidis

(2014) to argue that media literacy in contemporary society is non-negotiable. Masterman, in

1985, presciently noted, "widespread media literacy is essential if all citizens are to wield power,

make rational decisions, become effective change agents, and have an effective involvement with

the media" (p. 13). Today's educators, therefore, should consider what it will take to prepare

members of society to actively engage and critique media. As Fry (2014) noted, "when a society is held together by the modes and patterns of the communications media controlling it, then media literacy education is essential" (p. 135).

Leading proponents of media literacy have agreed upon five tenants, principles, and assumptions drawn from scholarship cited widely across the literature (Aufderheide, 2001):

1. Media are constructed and serve to construct reality, in other words media are not naturally occurring.

2. Media are rooted in commercial interests and media messages are created to sell products and services.

3. Media have political and ideological implications, messages encoded within media suggest tacit beliefs about the world.

4. Content and form are related in each medium and each medium is comprised of unique codes and conventions, different forms of media create different types of messages and impressions based on specific aesthetics.

5. Meaning is negotiated by the receivers of media, different audiences and individuals understand the multiple messages media sends in varying ways.

Pungente (1985) argued the work of media education draws upon the collaborative expertise of teachers, parents, researchers, and media professionals to address the diverse skills needed for media literacy. In school contexts, educators must build upon the skills and abilities that youth have already developed to extend upon their needs and experiences with technology (Loicq, 2014; Rosen, 2010).

For students, media literacy should involve a deeper understanding of how form shapes content and context (Fry, 2014). Students should also distinguish between mediums and codes.

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For example, a magazine is a print based, mechanical medium. However, in the internet age, a magazine can also be found online in electronic form. In this way, old media are re-mediated (Bolter & Grusin, 1999) and become content for the new medium. Furthermore, students should be able to recognize the differences among codes.

Codes, as Fry (2014) explains, are communication symbols systems such as text, images, and language used within each medium. For instance, print relies primarily on language in the form of writing, while video, an electronic medium, mostly relies upon sound and moving images. Understanding video does not necessarily require alphabet literacy, but it does require some type of hardware to decode the content broadcast electronically and later digitized, and the ability to make sense of the message being communicated through visuals and sound (Fry, 2014; Strate, 2012). Therefore, a student reading about outcomes of an election in a newspaper will rely upon different codes than they would watching election returns on television, and students should be able to distinguish between the two. This example reinforces Postman's (1985) view that moving from a print-based to a visual culture shifts awareness of events and one's understanding of the world with consequences for both democracy and politics, even though Livingston (2004) acknowledges "the crucial point is not that computers are replacing television, just as television did not replace print; rather, people now engage with a media environment which integrates print, audiovisual, telephony, and computer media" (p. 5).

Overall, the benefits of media literacy are numerous. For instance, Loicq (2014) noted that media literacy can support students in determining audiences, considering how audiences receive information to negotiate meaning, and noticing how media contributes to cultural experiences. Media literacy also helps students cultivate understanding of the techniques, impacts, issues, and nature of media messages (Loicq, 2014). Through media literacy education,

students can evaluate the credibility of information they encounter online and identify divergent viewpoints on a variety of issues (Cohen & Kahne, 2012). Such skills are significant since gaps in media literacy can exacerbate gaps in civic participation and knowledge, especially regarding how one might seek out and evaluate credible sources of information (Livingston & Wang, 2014).

Incorporating media literacy in formal educational spaces can impact local contexts and engage youth in using media and critical thinking skills to participate across their communities (De Abreu & Mihaildis, 2014). However, technology has commonly been used to enhance teachers' presentations or assist with organization and has been less integrated into pedagogical approaches to empower students with critical agency for their digital futures (Mihailidis & Cohen, 2013). While media literacy education could exist as its own discipline of study, policymakers have generally viewed media literacy as embedded within the existing core curriculum in English language arts, social studies, and health sciences (Stein & Prewitt, 2009).

One pressing issue for why media literacies are not being taught in schools more broadly is connected to the school reform movement. For instance, Garcia, Mirra, Morrell, Martinez, and Scorza (2015) acknowledged the recent emphasis on high stakes testing has narrowed definitions of literacy to basic skills that can be measured on standardized tests. Therefore, media literacies are not always taught in schools because they are not required by curricular frameworks or tests. For example, the Common Core State Standards for English and Mathematics contain elements that align with media literacy, but the term is not mentioned explicitly (Gallagher, 2014; Jolls & Wilson 2014). In the social studies, the College, Career, and Civic Life (3C's) Framework (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013) mentions technology and recommends that

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students should be able to gather and assess information coming from a variety of sources, but does not use the specific term media literacies.

Critical Media Literacies

Critical analysis is closely connected to the discipline of media literacy (Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012; Sholle & Denski, 1993; Torres & Mercado, 2006). Whereas media literacy skills are concerned with the knowledge needed to read, produce, and interpret artifacts and texts, given the ubiquity of media today, Kellner and Share (2005) argued there is an increasing need for media literacy that draws upon critical pedagogy and cultural studies to address issues of social and multicultural difference. As commonly discussed by theorists in the field, critical literacy calls readers to engage in reading the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 2005). Given shifts to understandings of literacy by The New London Group (1996) beyond narrow views of decoding, I align with scholars such Avila and Pandya (2013) who argued for critical literacies in the plural form because the skills and practices they entail are diverse and multiple. For example, B. Yoon (2016) argued for use of the plural form to emphasize "critical literacies are not about some fixed practices, but are diverse and multiple processes that unfold in cultural, social, and political contexts" (p. 33). Most recently, the field of critical literacies has moved to address multimodal literacies commonly found in digital mediums (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Gee, 2014; Avila & Pandya, 2012) because a focus on multiliteracies supports a view of literacies as part of everyday practices and social meanings, predominantly concentrated on digital communications and technology (Street, 1997). Additionally, the field of critical literacies has expanded to consider global perspectives (Albers, 2017; Pandya & Ávila, 2013; B.Yoon, 2016).

Critical media literacies "involves cultivating skills in analyzing media codes and conventions, abilities to criticize stereotypes, dominant values, and ideologies, and competencies to interpret the multiple meanings and messages generated by media texts" (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 4). That is, while media literacy more broadly is also concerned with codes and conventions, *critical* media literacy challenges students to analyze these codes and conventions with an eye toward issues of power, privilege, inequities, and oppression (Janks 2010; Luke, 2014; B.Yoon, 2016). This view aligns with the idea that texts are never neutral (Bakhtin, 1981; Fairclough, 2001; Freire, 1970; Luke, 2012) but are created to position readers in certain ways.

In the nascent years of the internet era, Hobbs (1999) argued, "determining the truth value of information has become increasingly difficult in an age of increasing diversity and ease of access to information" (p. 2). The fast-paced nature of communication in contemporary times leaves little time for critical thinking and reflection, especially given the breadth and scope of media present in daily life (DeAbreu & Mihailidis, 2014). From the dawn of social networking in 2004 and onward, the internet has become even more dynamic, providing individuals with the ability to create and circulate information. However, Hobbs (2011) noted that few people verify information they encounter online and generally trust what they find regardless of the source. Therefore, work done in support of helping students become critical consumers of media messages requires increasing attention, especially regarding the ways people make meaning of, challenge, take up, or not, the media they encounter (Pandya & Golden, 2018; Johnson &Vasudevan, 2014).

Although critical thinking skills are one aspect of evaluating media sources, there is not a direct provision for teaching critical media literacies explicitly in the standards. Overall, media literacy education must be taken up to assist students in promoting both critical expression and

inquiry which are foundational to students flourishing in digitally mediated spaces (Mihailidis, 2014). Since youth are shaped both positively and negatively by information they receive across their mediated interactions, criticality is needed to help youth navigate the mixed messages the media sends (Flores-Koulish, 2005). As Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, and Weigel (2006) acknowledged, youth need safe environments in which they can cultivate skills as citizens and consumers of media. They must learn to deconstruct messages and separate facts from falsehoods. This is especially pertinent for youth who are beginning to test new forms of creative self-expression and community participation (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013). Furthermore, critical media literacy skills help youth to "discriminate and evaluate media content, to critically dissect media forms, to investigate media effects and uses, to use media intelligently, and to construct alternative media" (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 4).

In the social studies, the ability to critically analyze available information is essential for engaging in democratic practices (Kellner & Share, 2007; Youngbauer, 2013). Mason and Metzger (2012) insist that critical readings of media are vital for meeting the larger aims of participatory democracy, especially given the fact that the contemporary media environment is being controlled by an increasingly small but powerful group of media conglomerates. In fact, Youngbauer (2013) observes that media texts are specifically created with pedagogical intent to guide users in what they should know, believe, and value. To engage as digital citizens, Moffa, Brejwo, and Waterson (2016) emphasize that students need to learn how to interpret biased messages, share their opinions in a respectful manner, and make sense of controversial social issues to clarify and inform their own positions.

While researchers have examined critical media literacies across ethnicities (Baker-Bell, Jones, & Everett, 2017; McArthur 2016; Melki, 2015), languages (Black, 2006), and religions

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(Meliki, 2015), little empirical research exists that examines the role of critical media literacies in the lives of immigrant youth. For example, Choudhury and Share (2012) reported on the critical media literacy practices of urban youth in an English as a Second Language classroom at a Los Angeles, California middle school, but the work is not empirical. Currently, the only empirical work I could locate was a qualitative study that examined the multiple literacy practices of adult immigrant learners in within a Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program. In this work, Waterhouse (2012) found that critical approaches to reading newspaper articles and discussing current events allowed immigrant students to investigate sources of power, cultural politics, and the beliefs that shaped interactions with self and others. The potential for new understandings regarding how immigrant youth interact critically, or not, across media sites is fitting for further investigation.

Theoretical Framework

For my dissertation study, I draw upon the scholarship of Mihaildis (2014) who advanced The 5As Ecosystem for analyzing media. The 5As of Media Literacy (Mihailidis, 2009) was borne out of a gathering of 51 students from over 15 countries who took part in a consortium on global exchange and media in 2007. The goal of the gathering was to identify core attributes of media literacy for a global audience. Specifically, Mihaildis sought to construct a framework that connected critical inquiry to critical action. The result of this work was a new conception of media literacy emphasizing representation, flexibility, and inclusiveness (Mihaildis, 2014). According to Mihailidis (2014), the framework seeks to provide youth with "a common structure for media competencies in digital culture" (p. 129). The international scope of this work and focus on media literacy for a global audience aligns with the transnational focus of my study.

The 5A Ecosystem attempts to move beyond a siloed approach that views print, radio, TV, and the internet as separate entities acting in isolation, toward theorizing media technologies as converging and transcending borders. Mihaldis (2014) therefore situates the 5As as a continuum—moving from access to awareness, assessment, appreciation, and action:

> *access* to media, *awareness* of media's power, *assessment* of how media cover international and supranational events and issues, *appreciation* of media's role in creating civil societies, and *action* to encourage better communication across cultural, social, and political divides. (p. 130)

Foundational to this framework is an understanding that democratic societies, as currently conceived, cannot exist without access to information and that everyone in the current media environment has the ability to be an active participant in the broader global community (Mihaildis, 2014). Such framing carries important considerations for transnational immigrant youths' sense of belonging as they consider how their voices contribute to on-going conversations across mediated spaces.

Each of Mihaildis's 5As are further divided into four sub-categories informed by core questions listed in Appendix C . For example, under the access umbrella, Mihaildis (2014) suggests four areas to consider: ownership, digital, participatory, and barriers. Put another way, discussion about access is rooted in who controls the information (ownership), what barriers there are to accessing information, the role of technology in accessing information (digital), and the ways in which these platforms serve to facilitate how people comment, share, and participate (Mihailidis, 2014). In addition to the subcategorization, Mihailidis poses a series of questions for the 5As. These questions, such as, "who controls access to the information?" and "how does access differ from national, religious, ethnic, racial, gender, and sexual orientation backgrounds?" (p. 133), help to establish how and why access to media matters. Mihailidis's framework therefore provides important considerations for how personal identity factors are

situated within broader media messages and contexts. Additionally, the framework allows for

comparison and consideration of the individual in conversation with the broader media society.

For example, under the action tenet, a person's sense of agency and voice can be considered

within the broader sense of the communities they seek to engage. Taken collectively, each of the

subdivisions for the 5A terms are grouped together into a conceptual framework ecosystem that

Mihailidis developed, represented in the figure below.

Figure 1: Mihailidis's (2014) 5As Ecosystem
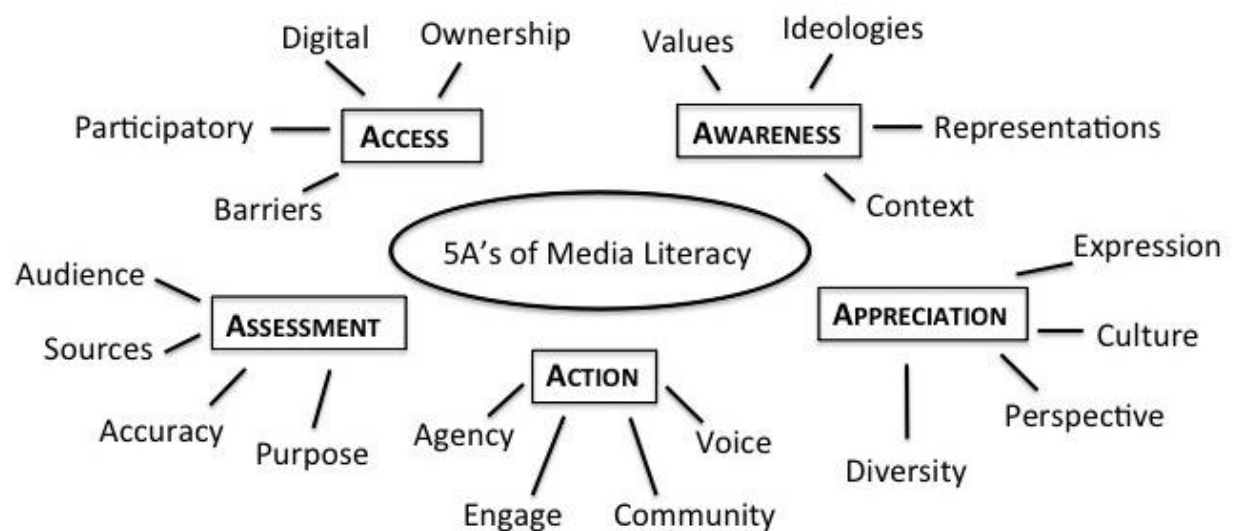
In applying the 5As framework to my study, I take up Mihaildis's (2014) suggestion that

the framework is not intended to be prescriptive. Mihaildis (2014) himself noted there is not a

"singular mechanism" (p. 141) for applying the 5As. Furthermore, he challenged educators and

scholars seeking to enact media literacy practices in their space to follow the lead of digital

media culture by remixing, shifting, shaping, and re-appropriating the framework to fit the

priorities of their work. Therefore, as the data emerged, I applied different parts of the frame to

my work and called upon the parts of the framework most essential in helping me to analyze and

make sense of my data. By blending the core assessment questions with the four specific focal

areas under each tenet, I was able to make sense of the data.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of my dissertation study is to investigate the relationship between critical media literacies, civic engagement, and immigrant youths' sense of belonging. In this chapter, I describe the methodology for my study and include discussion of the following areas: (a) rationale and research design, (b) a description of the research context and participants, (c) methods of data collection, (d) analysis and synthesis of data, (e) ethical considerations, (f) issues of trustworthiness, and (g) limitations of the study.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

My dissertation used a qualitative research design to help me interpret how events occurring in a sociocultural setting are experienced and understood for a particular context at a particular time (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). To honor the voices of my study participants, I seek to move beyond positivist and post-positivist framing which too often silence marginalized voices. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) note, "the qualitative research act can no longer be viewed from within a neutral or objective positivist perspective. Class, race, gender, and ethnicity shape inquiry, making research a multicultural process" (p. 20). By following an interpretivist and constructivist approach to data collection and analysis, I allowed for multiple accepted meanings and understandings based on my engagement with the world I am interpreting (Creswell, 2005). This is especially pertinent as meaning-making is social and arises from interactions across communities (Creswell, 2005).

Case Study

My dissertation uses a qualitative case study design. Merriam (1998) noted that case study is an ideal method for interpreting and understanding educational phenomenon. Although

my research focuses on how youth use technology across mediated spaces both in and outside of school, I situate my inquiry within one high school classroom. Use of the case study approach aligns with my inquiry as I seek to investigate "a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). An essential aspect of case study research is the use of multiple data sources (Creswell, 2007) such as interviews, observations, and artifacts. Although multiple data sources are used in this study, interviews are the optimal data source I used to answer my research questions. The unit of analysis for my study are three immigrant students and their teacher at a local high school. I enacted a single-case study design with embedded units (Yin 2014). I choose a single case study design with embedded units because I sought to understand how immigrant students' interactions across mediated spaces supported their sense of belonging, civic engagement, and ability to critically engage with media within and beyond a social studies elective course. Whereas case study work is often concerned with using multiple data sources for triangulation (Yin, 2009), my study uses the idea of crystallization (Richardson, 2000). I take up this approach because triangulation is based on a two-dimensional object, a triangle, whereas crystallization centers on a three-dimensional crystal. Crystals are multifaceted, having a variety of shapes and angles (Richardson, 2000) reflecting the complexity and diversity inherent in my proposed study. As Richardson (2000) argued, "crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic" (p. 934). In my study, crystallization allowed me to analyze the different data sources I collected to make sense of the complex interactions happening. Understandings about students' critical media literacies and the role of technology in promoting immigrant youths' multiple and varied identities are specific to the context of my study resulting in a "thoroughly partial" understanding.

My research is also informed by principles of humanizing research. According to Paris (2011), humanizing research is a methodological stance that seeks to develop relationships of care and dignity between both participants and the researcher as they dialogue with one another and engage in consciousness-raising. I have taken this stance in my prior research and a humanizing posture is one I embraced across my dissertation work. Practically speaking, this means I allowed students to make claims about themselves and their identities. I honored students' voices as I wrote up my study and worked to include students' understandings of concepts and ideas discussed instead of imposing definitions upon them. This also means that I did not make specific grammatical corrections to students' language in my interview transcripts or reporting of the findings.

Data Collection

Research Site

My study took place during the Spring 2017 academic semester in a public school district in a mid-sized, Midwestern city. For the 2016-2017 school year, the district had over 2,200 bilingual students. More than 60 languages are spoken in the city's public schools, across 85 home countries (District, 2016). Hallandale High School (pseudonym) was the research site. I carried out my study at Hallandale in alignment with my commitment to sustaining relationships with research partners and participants over time. At the time of data collection, I had been a part of the broader Hallandale school community for four years. I completed my research practicum at Hallandale and supervised student teaching interns from my university. Hallandale is a Title One school and home to the largest population of bilingual students in the district high schools. Students at Hallandale come from thirty different countries and speak fifty different home languages other than English (District, 2016). For the prior school year, 47% of 1,400 students at

the school were identified as Black, 27% White and 17% Latina/o. At Hallandale High, 66% of students were eligible for free lunch (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Participants

There are four research participants in this study: three students and their teacher. Leah, Albarko, and Mena (pseudonyms) were students in Mr. Denker's (pseudonym) multicultural studies elective course at Hallandale High School (pseudonym). At the time of data collection, Leah was a junior while Meena and Albarko were seniors.

Leah, Albarko, and Mena came from varying backgrounds, but all three held transnational connections. Leah was born in the United States to parents who left Somalia due to political unrest in the country. Mena came to the U.S. during her freshman year of high school in 2013. She was the daughter of a mother who claimed Jordanian citizenship and a father who had Iraqi citizenship. Albarko was born in Somalia, but attended middle school in Turkey. He relocated to the U.S. in 2013 at the start of high school to be reunited with his mother and sisters. All three youth self-identified as Muslims and were bi- or multilingual. Both Leah and Albarko are students of color. Students in this study were selected based on three main criteria: 1) they were enrolled in Mr. Denker's multicultural studies class during the spring 2017 academic semester; 2) they self-identified as immigrants, refugees, or the children of refugee parents; 3) they were of different genders to allow for notation of difference in students' use of social media and their online media practices.

Leah. At the time of data collection, Leah was a 16-year old, junior student at Hallandale. When I first started observing lessons in Mr. Denker's class, I noted the ways that Leah engaged in class discussions to challenge the perspectives shared by her classmates. Originally, Leah thought she would not be eligible to participate in my study since she was born

in the U.S. As the daughter of immigrant parents, I assured her that she was welcome to participate. Leah was the middle child in a large family of eleven children. Leah's four oldest siblings were born in Kenyan refugee houses or Somalia. Leah was the second child to be born in the United States. My conversations with Leah often centered around her religious practices and her decision to start wearing a hijab during her sophomore year of high school. Leah's engagement on social media primarily centered around Twitter, although she was also active on Snapchat. Leah had a Pinterest account which she used to get ideas for her job with a local family-school partnership for an area literacy collation. Leah previously had Facebook, but had deleted it, noting "it's just not for me, it was too much drama, it was useless within my community." Across our interactions, Leah was consciously aware of how much time she spent on social media becoming informed about world events. This, in turn, led her to consider if she should delete her accounts. In some cases, like Instagram, she did, while in others, she entertained the idea but ultimately kept her account. For example, Leah noted, "I spend so much time on Twitter and I feel like I should delete it, but I'm like, no, it's so beneficial."

Albarko. I first met during the 2015-2016 school year when he participated in an earlier study I did at Hallandale High. Now 17 years old and in his senior year, Albarko and I built upon our prior relationship and shared appreciation for travel, culture, and language to discuss a wide range of topics from popular culture to international business. Before coming to the United States, Albarko spent three years living in Turkey where he attended a boarding school. Prior to that, he had lived in Somalia with his family. Albarko self-identified as a refugee and was multilingual with the ability to speak Somali, Turkish, and English. He was active on Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, using the different social media platforms for varying purposes. Albarko stated, "I have Facebook, for news or stuff going on around, Twitter and

Snapchat for friends, talking, texting, and I was sometimes [posting] pictures on Instagram." To support his retention of Turkish, Albarko used file-sharing programs to watch Turkish television shows, such as *Survivor Turkey* and *Icerde* a serialized crime drama based off the Hong Kong action-movie *Infernal Affairs.* Trending topics on Twitter were a frequent entry point into conversations around social media, as Albarko paid close attention to that feature of the micro-blogging site. Social media was also a productive way for Albarko to engage his love of sports. Apart from social media, Albarko supported his desire to learn more about international business by watching various YouTube channels and TED talks. Outside of school, Albarko was also involved in several extra-curricular activities from National Honors Society to a part time job. He also spoke highly of his experiences with a college-going preparation program called Gear-Up. During one of our conversations, he showed me pictures he had saved from Snapchat of his graduation from the program and talked excitedly about the Microsoft Surface Pro gifted to him upon his completion of the program.

Mena. At the time of data collection, Meena was a 19-year-old senior preparing to graduate. Although she was born and raised in Jordan, Meena held Iraqi citizenship even though she had not spent much time in the country. The contested nature over her sense of belonging factored into several of our conversations. Overall, Mena used social media to support her love of reading. For example, she was a member of an Arabic language Facebook group page that recommended books to read. Mena also relied on a Palestinian Facebook page and Google World News to stay informed about issues related to Palestine. Although her family had a cable box that enabled them to watch television programming, news, and movies in Arabic, Meena noted, "I'm not a big fan of TV…I just read the news." While Mena had a Snapchat account, she was not active on that social media platform. Across our conversations, Mena shared with me

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how she used social media to maintain transnational connections with individuals back in the Middle East.

Mr. Denker. At the time of data collection, Mr. Denker, a White, monolingual male, was in his fifteenth year as a classroom teacher. Mr. Denker had an MA degree in Educational Technology and worked formerly as a photographer and journalist before starting his career in teaching. Mr. Denker was the social studies department chair at Hallandale, and regularly served as a mentor teacher for student teaching interns. At the time of my data collection, he was mentoring Mr. Xavier, an intern from my university. Mr. Denker was active on Facebook and in his local community. During data collection, Mr. Denker shared with me a letter he had written to his local newspaper in support of better funding for public schools. He also participated in several partnerships to support youth development in the local community. This included hosting an annual Junior Achievement Reverse Job Shadow program at Hallandale, where community members from various professions came to Hallandale to share about their jobs with youth, and sponsoring students to participate in a city-wide Youth Entrepreneur Startup Competition.

The Multicultural Studies Class.

Mr. Denker's multicultural studies class was made up of 28 students; nineteen were seniors, six were juniors, and three were sophomores. The class was comprised of immigrant and refugee students from countries, such as Nepal and Somalia, in addition to U.S. born youth. During a class wide discussion on race at a different point in the school year, students in the class problematized how they were racially positioned by others. For example, one student of mixed race identified as Black, while a student from Cuba rejected being classified as a Latino; he identified as Black. Based on how students self-identified their race/ethnicity, the class was comprised of: 3 Asian males, 1 Asian-American male, 1 Asian-American female, 1 Arabic male,

5 Arabic females, 4 Black females, 4 Black males, 1 Latino male, 1 Latina female, 2 White males, and 5 White females. Additionally, 9 students in the class identified as Muslim.

Data Sources

There are four data sources for this study: 1) one-on-one interviews with focal students and their teacher, 2) classroom observations, 3) teacher-produced curricular materials, and 4) student artifacts (school-based coursework and technology-related data gathered from students' sharing about posts or feeds they encountered on social media). Use of multiple data sources is common for the case study method (Yin, 2014). By analyzing many different data sources, I was able to crystalize data (Richardson, 2000) and ensure that themes, as revealed through iterative data interpretation, were supported by my various data sources.

One-on-One Interviews

All one-on-one interviews took place at Hallandale High School and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Student interviews were conducted after school or during the student's lunch hour in the school library. Interviews took place in English and ranged between 15 minutes and 55 minutes. I conducted ten one-on-one interviews with both Leah and Albarko and four one-on-one interviews with Mena. My interviews with Mena were limited by her availability. That is, she had fewer opportunities to stay after school to talk with me. During the first interview, I asked a series of questions using a semi-structured interview protocol to get to know each of the students better. I asked about their families, hobbies, friends, experiences in the local community, and so forth. I also asked students to share with me about their social media use, their media and viewing habits, and their access to technology. The point of this initial interview was to build context for my research and to establish relationships with the focal youth based on reciprocity and trust. Subsequent interviews were open ended. I generally tried to ask questions

around a series of similar topics such as: Is there anything that stood out to you as you used social media and technology in the past week? Do you have any thoughts about the things you have been discussing in Mr. Denker's class? Is there anything happening at home, school, or the community that stands out to you that we might discuss? This structure provided continuity for the students and gave me flexibility to ask the students follow up questions based on the things they shared. I used the most recent interview I conducted to guide discussion for the subsequent interview. I followed this approach with the interviews to provide flexibility for Leah, Albarko, and Mena to speak about topics and issues that mattered to them. Using this approach also allowed me to conduct conversations that were as student-centered as possible. Following each interview, I wrote analytic memos and recorded the main topics, ideas, and issues we discussed on a table in Microsoft Word for later reference during data analysis. In total, I conducted twenty-four interviews with the three focal youth.

Interviews with Mr. Denker were conducted during the school day or after school, depending on Mr. Denker's availably. Most interviews took place in Mr. Denker's classroom; one interview was held in a teacher work space adjacent to the school's library. These interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 50 minutes. Similar to the one-on-one interviews with Leah, Albarko, and Mena, my first interview with Mr. Denker was semi-structured and the rest were open ended and organized around topics instead of specific questions. This approach provided opportunities for Mr. Denker to share about issues in a less structured way. These topics included Mr. Denker's thoughts about the multicultural studies class, his impressions on supporting students' critical media literacies, his reflections on events happening at Hallandale and the school district, and his own engagement both online and in the local community. In total, I conducted five interviews with Mr. Denker across the semester.

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations took place in Mr. Denker's third period multicultural studies elective course. During each observation, I sat in the same unassigned student desk which was situated in a row of three desks located next to Mr. Denker's desk. I took ethnographic field notes on a laptop computer. These notes included the date of the lesson observed, the lesson's content, and the main modes of instruction (Mr. Denker's pedagogical approaches). I also noted use of technology across the lesson in addition to any discussion or instruction that supported students' ability to cultivate critical media literacies or allowed students to critically engage or use media during the lesson. While Mr. Denker's instruction was the primary focus of my observations, I also documented in my field notes how students responded to Mr. Denker's instruction via their comments and questions. Additionally, I documented social interactions among students and between students and Mr. Denker. In total, I conducted 32 observations. I also accompanied students on a field trip to the Arab American National Museum and took field notes during the visit on my iPad.

Curricular materials. During my fieldwork at Hallandale, I collected copies of curricular materials used in instruction. These materials included handouts and worksheets, copies of two PowerPoint presentations, copies of completed student work, and links to online teaching resources and digital materials used in class. I also documented curricular materials produced by Mr. Denker and students displayed in the classroom such as posters, charts, graphic organizers and electronic documents displayed on the smart board. I used my iPad to take pictures of each artifact I collected which I uploaded and stored on Google Drive.

Student artifacts. To protect students' anonymity, I did not follow Leah, Albarko, or Mena on any of their social media accounts, nor did I collect any data from these accounts.

Rather, I allowed students to talk about any recent postings they were willing to share with me as a springboard for discussion. This approach is like one used by Tobin, Hsueh, and Karasawa (2009) who used videos, not as data, but as a multivocal text and means to stimulate critical reflection. At various times, Leah, Albarko, and Mena would tell me about certain accounts or feeds they followed and I would document the usernames or web domains for those sources. In some cases, youth wanted to show me things they had screenshotted from either their own accounts or those of people they followed. In these instances, I asked students if I could take a picture of the artifacts they were sharing with me. For example, I took a picture of the Twitter feed of @_yarsin that Leah showed me to refer to at a later time for a specific point she was making about that tweet.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an ongoing and iterative throughout the data collection process (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). This approach allowed me to focus on emerging themes and direct my attention, during classroom observations and interactions with students across interviews, to data that reinforced or contradicted those themes. Following each classroom observation and interview, I recorded analytic memos. Analyzing data throughout the data collection process also assisted me to identify topics in further support my conversations with both Mr. Denker and the focal students. Throughout my study, I asked comparative and analytic questions and reshaped my research questions as initial findings emerged (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

At the close of the spring semester, I re-read through the multiple data sources I collected, reviewed classroom observation field notes, and revisited researcher memos to begin the coding process. For this study, one-on-one interviews with Leah, Albarko, Mena, and Mr. Denker were used as the primary source of information. Other data sources such as my

classroom observations, the curricular materials, and student artifacts were used as supporting and confirming sources of evidence. I transcribed all audio-recorded interviews first, and then printed out copies of each transcript and placed them in a large three ring binder. During a first round of closed coding, I read through each interview and began assigning codes according to the continuum of Mihailidis's 5A theoretical framework: access, awareness, assessment, appreciation, action. I used five different colored highlighter markers to assign descriptive codes for each of the five A's. I then organized these codes into tables using Microsoft Word so that I could compare within and across interviews by participant. For example, in an interview, Leah shared with me the following "you won't see some of this stuff on CNN, it's not breaking news, what was it 10 airstrikes in 30 seconds, it's not news for them" as awareness. See Appendix D for a full complement of first round codes. During a second round of coding, I assigned codes according to the four areas that served as sub-categorizations for each of the 5As in Mihailidis's framework. This round of coding allowed me to see more specifically how participants were enacting critical media literacies. That is, I was able to note reoccurring patterns and themes. For example, when assessing media sources, youth were concerned with accuracy of information and claims being made by the media, especially regarding Muslims and Islam. For a sample of second round codes, see Appendix E. As the data became more condensed (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) across the two rounds of coding, I came to recognize the need to reconsider reframing my first research question based on the emergent themes. Originally, I asked: How do three youth in a multicultural studies class enact critical media literacies within and beyond school? While my data supported me in answering that question, what the data suggested more clearly was that youth were enacting critical media literacies in response to their identities. Therefore, I revised my first research question so I could demonstrate the ways that youths'

transnational status, their Muslim faith, and their knowledge of languages other than English

guided and shaped their critical media literacies in and out of school.

Using the consolidated data from my first two rounds of closed coding, I engaged in open

coding based on the emerging theme of youths' identities. I re-read my data and created three

new tables in Microsoft Word for youths' transnational identity, religious identity, and linguistic

identity. I mapped examples from my second round of closed coding on to each identity

indicator, distinguishing between youths' critical media literacy practices in and out of school.

For example, Leah shared with me her decision to study Arabic to refute those who spoke out

against the Quran, which I coded in relationship to her linguistic identity. Then I returned to my

data again to find additional data that aligned with my new question.

To answer my second research question, I followed the same approach I used with the

focal youth. I coded copies of the interview transcriptions by hand using highlighter markers to

identity each of the 5As in Mihailidis's framework. I then organized these codes into a table on

Microsoft Word. During a second round of closed coding, I assigned codes according to the four

areas that served as sub-categorizations for each of the 5A's in Mihailidis's framework. For

example, in an interview, Mr. Denker noted

> I think the one thing I really hope that kids will take from making them stop, and pause
>
> and wonder if something is accurate or true is that just having that warning light going off
>
> in their head, going wait a minute could this be wrong, could this be inaccurate, should I
>
> maybe look for something that tells me if this is true or not.

I coded this as assessment and assigned the sub-categorization code of accuracy to this

statement. For a list of examples of second round codes for my interviews with Mr. Denker,

please see Appendix F.

To reinforce what Mr. Denker shared in interviews, I revisited classroom observation field notes, curricular materials, and students' work to crystalize (Richardson, 2000) the claims I made about Mr. Denker's pedagogy. In my analysis of the data, I came to recognize that a number of internal and external factors were influencing the ways Mr. Denker attempted to support his students' critical media literacies. Therefore, I revised my second research question to address this phenomenon. To account for this change, I reread the condensed data from my second round of coding to create new codes that identified the internal and external codes influencing Mr. Denker's teaching. For example, I coded Mr. Denker's comment "So how do we find a solution that is subversive, you can have your phone out, but you are going to use it to learn" as an internal factor influencing his ability to support students' critical media literacies based on his philosophy about technology. Similarly, I coded his statement, "what I feel I am left out of is the time to have the creativity and thus the energy to head towards a more blended learning environment" as an external factor related to lack of resources, in this case, time, to further support students' critical media literacies. Once again, I returned to the data to find additional examples that aligned with my new question.

Ethical Considerations

I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) and school district permission to carry out my research. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and notified that their participation in the research was voluntary. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. To protect anonymity, pseudonyms were used for all participants including the students, teachers, and research site. Study participants received gift cards for joining the study. I employed safeguards to ensure the rights of the participants were protected. For example, all research-related records and data were stored on a password protected computer and backed up

on Google Drive which employed encrypted passwords for access. My advisor, who is listed as the PI on this study, and I were the only ones who had access to research materials.

Issues of Trustworthiness

I am aware of the positivistic origins that frame questions and issues regarding trustworthiness (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). However, as an emerging researcher and scholar, I would be remiss to not address concerns of integrity around my study. Building on the framing of Lincoln and Gruba (2000), I seek to establish the trustworthiness of my study by addressing issues of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. In Chapter One, I addressed issues of positionality and how this affected my interaction with participants across the study. While I acknowledge issues of subjectivity cannot be fully controlled, I do seek to be explicit about the ways in which my own dispositions potentially enhanced and limited the study.

Credibility

To support the methodological validity of the study, I crystalized (Richardson, 2000) across data sources and data collection methods. Collecting data from four sources and by varying methods and modes allowed for a fuller depiction of the phenomenon I studied. To enhance the interpretation of my study, I stated my positionality as a researcher and acknowledged the assumptions I had as I began the data generation phase of the study. Across the dissertation study, I was in regular contact with my advisor who helped me to debrief problems or issues I encountered. Having these discussions allowed me to work through complications I was facing and provide a forum to discuss emerging findings with a mentor. Furthermore, I engaged in peer checks during the coding phase of data analysis. Dialogue with

individuals not directly involved in the data collection and analysis process provided

opportunities for my expectations to be challenged, especially regarding emergent findings.

Dependability

I kept a researcher's journal and memoed throughout the data collection process. This

practice provided a detailed account for how the data were collected and provided a means for

asking analytical questions across the study. Researcher memos assisted me as I entered the data

analysis and interpretation stage of my study. When coding my data, I discussed and shared my

coding schemes with peers and worked with them to determine that coding schemes and

categories were consistent. I was also in dialogue with research participants following

transcription of interviews to check for clarity of ideas and views expressed during interviews.

When I had further questions writing up the research findings, I reached out to the focal youth

for confirmation about the claims I made.

Confirmability

To demonstrate reflexivity and ensure that data can be traced back to its origins, I have

kept copies of all field notes, transcripts, and research journal memos in three places: 1) on a

flash drive, 2) in a binder, and 3) in organized folders on Google Drive. I stored both the flash

drive and research binder in my secure graduate student locker in room 300F. Google Drive

served as a cloud-based, password protected digital archive. Journaling and memos demonstrated

my ongoing reflection throughout the study, whereas field notes and transcriptions provided a

means to assess the findings of my study.

Informing Future Scholarship

Generalizability is not the intended goal of qualitative studies, nor my research. Rather, I

hope that the deep and rich description of my study will add to the research base and

understandings for how immigrant youth engage across mediated spaces and how teachers can support students' critical media literacies. My aim is to learn with and from immigrant youth and to share that learning in ways that create opportunities for other scholars to learn with and from my research. Therefore, the claims I make can add depth and understanding for others asking similar questions and working to better understand the experiences of transnational youth in similar but other contexts. That is, I seek to show the ways and extent to which the findings of my study, as situated in a particular context, can inform another particular context (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) under similar, but not necessarily identical circumstances and conditions (Patton, 1990).

Limitations and Delimitations

The limitations of this study are similar to those found in other studies using qualitative approaches. As referenced above, the results of my dissertation will not support broad conclusions. Since my study focused on a small group of focal students at one high school, my findings were limited to the perceptions of Leah, Albarko, and Mena. Additionally, the students in my study were multilingual and multicultural; therefore, some of the students' responses could have been culturally bound. If the study were to be conducted in other grade levels, contexts, and subject areas, the results might differ. However, this study will add to the knowledge base about the relationship between critical media literacy, citizenship and belonging, and civic engagement for immigrant youth.

To address the limitations inherent in my study, I took the following measures. First, I acknowledged my agenda as a researcher and stated assumptions I had as I began the study. Second, I built upon the relationship I had with Mr. Denker at Hallandale High. Additionally, by participating in the after school tutoring program at Hallandale and interacting with students

throughout the academic year, I established my presence at the school. Third, I took a

humanizing stance (Paris, 2011) as I approached this work. Across my study, I came alongside

youth to learn with and from them. By developing relationships with students and building

rapport with them, I promoted open, honest dialogue as we discussed issues related to technology

use across mediated spaces. Furthermore, I used my researcher memos to reflect how my

interactions with students shaped the study. Fourth, regular meetings with my advisor during the

different phases of my study and interactions with peers during the data analysis stage supported

researcher reflexivity. Finally, use of rich description, as well as detailed and careful information

regarding the background of the study and the process of gathering and analyzing data, provided

opportunities to assess the application of my work to additional contexts.

CHAPTER 4: YOUTH IDENTITIES AND CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACIES

"Some people will post just anything." -Leah

In this chapter, I answer the following research question and sub-question: What identities do three immigrant and refugee youth in a multicultural studies class draw upon to enact critical media literacies within and beyond school? How do they do this? I organize my findings by participant to highlight how Leah, Albarko, and Mena's identities shaped their interactions and responses to media. Across each section, I demonstrate how youth called upon their transnational experiences, their religious affiliation, and the languages they knew other than English to critique and re-frame public narratives about immigrants, refugees, and Muslims. I conclude each section by synthesizing the varying approaches focal youth enacted as they critiqued media. While the events discussed in this chapter were current events during my data collection, they are ultimately bounded by time and will likely seem dated to future audiences of this work. I argue, however, that the critical media literacy practices Leah, Albarko, and Mena enacted in relation to their identities have efficacy across time and space, helping them deal with and process events that impacted their lived experiences and will continue to influence their sense of belonging and what it means to be an immigrant or refugee in the U.S. context.

Leah

Transnational Identity and Religious Affiliation

Across my conversations with Leah, the ways Leah interacted with media in accordance to her religious, gender, and ethnic identities informed our discussions. Leah's engagement across mediated spaces resulted from recent shift in her identity based on decisions she made about her religious observation and the ways she represented herself. Specifically, these changes were connected to Leah's decision to start wearing the hijab as a public representation of her

religious identity. During one of our first conversations, Leah shared with me, "at a younger age, I wasn't religious, and I didn't care. I know that as a Muslim I believe in the religion, but I wasn't a follower." However, Leah informed me that she began to interrogate her beliefs during Ramadan the summer following her freshman year of high school. She concluded, "if I am a Muslim, I should at least follow my religion, I'm going to start trying to pray, and I started [praying] in the morning before going to school and I just carried on." An additional part of Leah's change in her religious identity was wearing a hijab and doing so "properly." This action demonstrated Leah's desire that an outward manifestation would reflect an inward reality. Leah understood the importance of her decision, noting, "if I'm going to wear it, I need to represent Muslim women. I am representing my religion." Leah embraced the significance of her decision, realizing that becoming a more active participant in her faith would shift the interactions she had with others in-person and online. For example, Leah's commitment to enacting her faith more seriously was both challenged and reinforced by a podcast she discovered through a retweet on her Twitter feed. The podcast, hosted by an organization called Safina Society (https://www.safinasociety.org/), featured an episode entitled, "The Absurdity of the Atheist Muslim," and investigated whether an individual could (or should) identify as an atheist Muslim. Listening to the podcast gave Leah the opportunity to work through some of the earlier tensions she had shared about identifying as a Muslim: "If I am a Muslim, shouldn't I be following the religion? Or am I just a Muslim by name, because my heritage and my family is Muslim? Am I Muslim culturally, or spiritually?" Listening to the episode shaped Leah's thinking. She stated:

> I am just going to say it, it sounds absurd to say you are an atheist and a Muslim. I think
> you mean your heritage and your family are Muslim, but you're culturally Muslim, that

does not make any sense to me. You can't [do that]. A Muslim, [is] someone who

submits their will to God. How can you say you are a Muslim and an atheist at the same

time?

By comparing her own faith journey to the ideas expressed in the podcast, Leah was able to self-evaluate where she stood as a believer and take a definitive stance on what it means to identify as a Muslim. To her, to be a Muslim, one must express faith beyond familial or cultural associations to Islam.

Given the shifts in her identity, which resulted in an increased sense of political engagement for issues connected to Islam, Leah told me she debated whether she should "make a new Twitter because I have followers from back in middle school and high school, I am like, I am not the same person." For instance, Leah noticed the change in the ways her peers reacted to her online posts, stating "if I tweet something that is going on political or something, I don't get no favorites or retweets, but if I tweet…'oh, I hate school,' favorites and retweets come in." That is, Leah's new identity appeared at odds with how she previously interacted with her peers. Leah stated that she could not "talk about politics, or religion, with my family members or my friends because they will think I need to shut up or I disagree with them." To meet her need for a supportive community and a sense of belonging, Leah expanded her interactions on Twitter to include transnational peers who shared similar affinities, beliefs, and dispositions. She followed Twitter accounts of individuals based out of the United Kingdom, stating, "I like to get other people's perspectives that are in a different country." As a further illustration, Leah had recently come across a link to the website Mvslim.com in a tweet. Founded by Taha Riani and Hanan Challouki, two Muslim millennials, Mvslim.com provided Leah access to conversations with "people from different backgrounds and cultures, not only to create a strong community of

Muslims, but to make the world of Muslims more accessible to others" (http://mvslim.com/our-story/). Therefore, Leah's Twitter feed became an essential resource to make her aware of spaces that supported her as she moved beyond the local context of her school friends. Through social media, she found opportunities to engage and participate in ongoing conversations with transnational youth across the globe. Interactions within these online communities not only shaped and pushed Leah's thinking, they allowed her to refine her critical media literacy skills and reframe broader conversations about Muslims, thus promoting her development as a transnational citizen. For Leah, online interactions allowed her to be "connected to people I am not around, if I want a certain group of friends or a certain view of things and I don't have that here." Taken collectively, Leah framed online discussion as, "a whole bunch of people with their different views all over the world and you're just like in one [place] and you can see that, that's what social media, like Twitter has become for me." Ultimately, Leah built upon the multiple perspectives she gained from others to belong and contribute to a more robust online community for both herself and those who engaged in conversation around the faith. Leah's renewed commitments to enacting her faith, coupled with her decision to wear the hijab, led to a fundamental shift in how she perceived herself, her religion, and her interactions on social media.

Leah was especially attuned to issues of representation about her faith across media sources and engaged in conversations online to reframe narratives about Muslims and Islam. Specifically, Leah focused on depictions of the hijab. She shared with me, "[one] thing I have been seeing recently online is Muslim women wearing the scarf and I think they are misrepresenting the religion." Leah referenced a Huffington Post opinion article she had encountered entitled, "Has the hijab turned into everything that it's against?" (Begum, 2017).

Leah shared, "it's not just this, but other articles that I have been seeing mostly by Muslim women." For instance, Leah referenced an online Twitter conversation over a scrutinized Pepsi advertisement in which the model Kendell Jenner was shown crossing a protest line to hand a militarized police officer surveilling the event the brand's soda. A female photographer in the crowd of diverse protesters documenting the demonstration was shown wearing a head scarf. Leah also shared with me how Twitter raised her awareness to an interview in *Playboy* magazine featuring a hijab-wearing Muslim woman. Furthermore, she referenced the sports brand Nike's recent move to sell a branded scarf made from athletic material. Given the collective representation of the hijab from multiple corporations, Leah critiqued its appropriation: "some people think wearing a scarf is something that is oppressive, you know against us, and at that same time they are making something that is empowering and that they want it everywhere." Leah continued her skepticism for how marketers were seeking to represent the contemporary Muslim woman:

> The face of the Muslim woman is this, and I am like, why don't you put [pause]. I don't see Muslim women that look like me. Maybe it's someone that is like wearing make-up or something like that. I don't fit into that narrative. I don't think a lot of Muslim women agree with that narrative, you know, so some people, like, have taken us and our religion and what we believe in and turned it into something completely different, displaying Muslim women everywhere. Obviously, that is not within Islam.

As the above examples demonstrate, Leah not only critiqued the ways corporations and other organizations appropriated the hijab for financial gain, she also pushed back on a perspective seeking to foreground Muslim women according to a non-Muslim gaze and standard of beauty.

Leah was wary of trying to "display Muslim women everywhere" because, as she recounted to me, "the purpose of the hijab is to conceal."

Leah's concerns about representation and social values in relation to the hijab extended to an impassioned debate on Twitter. Leah encountered a thread were a non-Muslim woman commented on a video of a girl twerking, or dancing in a seductive way, while wearing a hijab. As she assessed the ongoing discourse unfolding on Twitter, Leah shared with me her practice of favoriting tweets by selecting the heart icon button in response to a tweet. She noted "the more people that favorite it, the more it is pushed up, so people can see it." Here, she referenced 'favoriting,' or liking, a Tweet made by a Muslim woman who condemned the twerking action as disrespectful to Islamic women and the faith. Leah noted, "the sole purpose of the hijab is to preserve one's modesty by covering themselves from people who are not their family." Leah rebuked the idea of a Muslim woman going to a club where members of the opposite sex might mix freely together. She stated, "we believe this should be avoided, as this will lead to bad things which Islam is against." In the case of a Muslim youth dancing in a sexually provocative manner, Leah clearly stated, "twerking does disrespect the hijab." By favoriting the post censuring the twerking act to raise its prominence, Leah was successful in shifting the conversation. She noted anyone accessing the Twitter thread "will see [the tweet] as the first thing, and that's true, because now it's like the first thing people see [laughs]." In this example, Leah contributed to raising the prominence of a Tweet refuting twerking to reinforce her belief that the modesty and decorum of Muslim women should be accurately represented.

In response to broader conversations about the hijab taking place across popular and social media, Leah contributed to the debate by tweeting: "Has the scarf become a piece of cloth that we have just placed over our heads?" She reflected, "it hurts to see a hijab placed over one's

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head, but not over our bodies or character, not an ounce of modesty or shyness to be found."
Although she normally had a closed Twitter account, Leah switched the restrictions to her
account "so that hopefully more people can see it. It's not like I want trolls to come in, but I just
wanted other people, maybe they agreed with it or what not." By opening her account to engage
in dialogue with others about her religious beliefs, Leah hoped to extend the conversation about a
matter of personal importance. However, Leah expressed hesitancy in her action and the types
of responses she might encounter. She stated, "you have to question people's intentions when
they are asking you something when it comes down to religion. Are you curious, are you
ignorant about something, and you want to know more? Or are you just trolling, and one thing
will lead to another problem with what I believe in?" Leah's uncertainty about public response
and reception to her opinion carried over to her desire to start a blog. She noted, "social media is
such a huge, huge, huge thing when it comes to getting your point out, people writing articles
and stuff like that, and it can completely sway a person from one perspective." However, Leah
equivocated on whether she was ready to start blogging as a high schooler, noting she might wait
until she was in college to begin. While we were chatting, Leah opened the notes application on
her phone and scrolled to a recent composition. Before reading out loud to me, she dismissed her
writing, stating, "I don't know, it's pretty lame," but then read from her notes:

> With much portrayal in the media and many world leaders considering Islamic extremism
>
> to be their country's major foe and threat, one may ask, are so called Islamic extremists a
>
> threat to the world as a whole? Do Islamic extremists cause the world largest number of
>
> senseless violence? Simply the answer is no. It is government sponsored violence
>
> approved of by world leaders that cause an outpour of mass violence, killings, and
>
> destruction. So why is it that when governments who kill innocent civilians and cause

destruction are not labeled as extremists nor terrorists. When government powers are questioned about their actions the answer is that "war is war" and innocent people will die in war, and other hypocritical-we-know-we-just-killed innocent civilians, but it's for-the-common-good answers.

Moved by the power of her sharing, I encouraged Leah to start blogging immediately. She stated, "right now I do not feel like I am fit to do it and I don't want to make a mistake." Therefore, despite her obvious skill for critically engaging with media and expressing her point of view both online and with increasing frequency in Mr. Denker's class (as discussed in the following section), Leah believed she was not yet ready to share her personal perspectives in a broad and open forum.

While many of our conversations about Leah's social media use were tangential to school, the role of school factored prominently in supporting Leah as she developed her sociopolitical consciousness and identity as an emerging civic agent. Leah credited the multicultural studies class as emboldening her to express to her views, opinions, and beliefs. For example, Mr. Denker's class provided space for Leah to personally engage in identity development through reflective writing. Leah shared with me,

> Mr. Denker once told us to write about ourselves, how do you view yourself as a profile and I thought it was hard. One of them was conservative but I put in parentheses that I hate this word because sometimes it is thought of as a political word like Republicans, but I think of it as I have traditional views. I also wrote open-minded.

Leah's conflict over the ways others might position her contrasted with her own understanding of what it meant to adhere to the doctrines of her faith. This reaffirms Leah's understanding that her traditional views and sense of conservatism did not necessarily make her

narrow-minded. Beyond processing her beliefs through personal, reflective in-class writing, the dialogic nature of Mr. Denker's pedagogy pushed Leah to refine and develop her views and take stances in class. Leah recounted to me, "before Mr. Denker's class, I was a shy person and I didn't like to talk in public or put my views out there." However, building upon conversations she was engaging in outside of school on social media and discussions around similar issues taking place as the class discussed current events from media sources like Google News, Leah noted, "I've been forced to, in my own way, to get out of my comfort zone and there were things being mentioned and it had to do with me, so I had talk about them like talking about religion or immigration." Even though Leah expressed she felt like "choking up" and stated that sometimes it "kills" to share in class, she felt she had "to say something because I can't just remain silent if I have a view on something." For example, when the class was discussing President Trump's state visit to Saudi Arabia as a current event in the news, the following exchange took place between Leah and Mr. Denker:

> Mr Denker: What is the significance of Trump going to Saudi Arabia? He makes that the first stop.
>
> Leah: I didn't listen to his whole talk, but he was talking about how the Muslim world needs to combat extremism, but I think he is a hypocrite and Saudi Arabia too. They are doing a deal. I think it's an arms deal.
>
> Mr. Denker: There are currently billions in armaments going over to the Saudis.
>
> Leah: I have something against people saying extremism.
>
> Mr. Denker: Let's take apart fundamentalism. We have been looking at religion- my in-law the cousin who is evangelical Christian and extremely fundamentalist.

Leah: I don't think there is a problem being a strong adherent to your religion, but Trump is dancing with them. When it comes down to money, everyone has the same religion.

Dominic: That's facts!

Leah: When it comes to the Royal family, the women are treated this way, then Ivanka [Trump] comes and they're treated [another] way.

In the above exchange, Leah links news she has encountered on her own social media feeds with news presented to her in class. That is, even though this event came up in class, Leah had already processed Trump's Saudi Arabian visit independently. A peer who Leah followed on Snapchat had posted pictures from Trump's visit to her account. Leah critiqued the image her friend posted of the Saudi Arabian flag and the U.S. flag crossed in front of one another as a sign of alliance and solidarity. As we talked, Leah expressed her confusion over why Saudi Arabia would "give [Trump] a round of applause and roll out a red carpet for him when he enters the country." Leah saw incongruence with the country's warm reception of the President, conjecturing, "I was like, whoa, the same guy who talked poorly about Muslims, said that they should not be in this country, and said the thing about Islam hates us." Leah retorted, "I am going to criticize [the Saudi government] openly, they're being hypocritical." She then shared a retweet from her Twitter feed with me, a quotation by the French philosopher Voltaire: "When it's a question of money, everyone has the same religion." Notably, this is the same quotation Leah later shared in class. Even though Leah's critique cast Muslim religious leaders in a negative light, she believed the need to call out those who used power for illicit financial gain. In reflecting back on the in-class exchange and the work she did to arrive at her opinion regarding Trump's State visit to Saudi Arabia, Leah shared with me, "I needed to put out my own perspective because maybe someone else isn't seeing it this way, and I want them to hear my point of view, and see if they

agree with it." Therefore, Leah's participation in class discussions contributed ideas and opinions which otherwise might have gone unheard. Additionally, her voice provided the perspective of a Muslim youth unafraid to critique religious leaders for their hypocrisy.

Given the rise in nationalism and an increasing anti-Islamic sentiment in the U.S. and abroad, Leah expressed the importance of media literacy in staying aware of global events. As referenced above, Mr. Denker began most lessons with a conversation about current events using Google News. In response to this practice, Leah shared with me, "I need to at least understand what is going on. Even though I am not living in France or Germany or Syria or Turkey, I feel like this has to do with me, or my generation, or my religion, or my people, so you have to understand it." Here, Leah's statement revealed her commitment to understanding contextual factors contributing to her sense of belonging and engagement across varying communities. By extension, at a different point in the semester when students were again discussing current events in the news at the start of class, Ms. Quitasol, an instructional aide, shared a forwarded text she received from her sister stating that Christian missionaries in Afghanistan were about to be executed. Although she did not act to directly refute the claim in class, Leah shared with me, "the Christians missionary thing seemed weird, having just happened after the bombing in Kabul, so I knew I should look into that." Leah told me she used her phone to verify the accuracy of the text alert by doing a quick search, "and it came back as 'fake news' all over the place." Although Leah was unaware where the text originated before it was passed to Ms. Quitasol, she was implicitly aware of the audience- Christians, and the purpose-- raising anti-Muslim sentiment. Here, Leah drew upon her awareness of geopolitical events, such as the recent bombing in Kabul, to focus on the accuracy of the text's source and reveal a potential bias and purpose behind the text.

Language

Leah identified as bilingual in Somali and English, but shared her discovery, via Twitter, of an application called Talkray that allowed her to study the Quran in Arabic exclusively with Muslim women from other countries. Leah's decision to study Arabic with women from places such as "Chile, Saudi Arabia, Australia, and Norway" was prompted by a quote she saw on Twitter that asked: "How long are you going to be a traveler with in your own religion?" Leah shared, "if someone brings a verse to you and you say this is what the Quran says and if you don't know it in Arabic you can't interpret it. The Arabic language can't really be translated, it can be interpreted." By seeking to actively participate in her faith through studying Arabic with other women to read the Quran, Leah enhanced her literacy practices toward a critical end. That is, one of the reasons Leah wanted to learn Arabic was so she could better refute claims that non-believers made about Islam and the Quran. Leah was especially critical of Tom Holland, author of the controversial documentary *Islam: The Untold Story,* and Tommy Robinson, a political activist supporting anti-Islamic causes. She reflected, "when they come at us on Twitter, they think they know what they're talking about, but they really don't." Leah contested the ways Holland and Robison positioned Islam as a religion of violence, specifically their insistence that ISIS perpetuated acts of terror in accordance with the Quran. From her interactions on Twitter and other media outlets such as YouTube, Leah shared "some people who have studied the religion and know it a lot better than me, they will come out and say it's not part of the religion and that ISIS are completely deviated from what the scholars have said in the Quran." The fact that non-believers sought to speak with authority about Islam perturbed Leah and she desired to refute their misrepresentations to expose their underlying ideologies about her faith.

Summary. Collectively, Leah's critical media engagement reinforced her identity formation as a female, Muslim youth in a political climate antithetical to such liberation. Her decision to wear the hijab and enact her faith more seriously affected both her face to face and online interactions. Calling upon Mihaildis's 5 A framework, I analyzed how Leah's use of Twitter and other social media applications provided access to broader transnational media conversations about topics of personal importance in alignment with Leah's multiple identities. Leah used social media to raise awareness for accurate representation of women, Muslims, and Islam by tweeting, retweeting, and entering conversations taking place among a connected network of transnational peers. Furthermore, she critiqued what she recognized as hypocrisy from individuals both inside and outside of her faith tradition. The work Leah did out of school to develop her critical media literacy practices, such as her assessment of media messages, supported stances she made in school like the critique she raised about the purposes of Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia. Concurrently, Mr. Denker's class provided the space for Leah, although initially hesitant, to start to take action by vocalizing and expressing her opinions and beliefs to a broader audience of peers. Ultimately, Leah considered ways to promote counter narratives that spoke back to religious discrimination, to forge a sense of belonging. This included the use of social media to reshape conversations within and beyond school in support of her multiple, varying identities.

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

Transnational Identity

Building on his experiences living in Somalia, Turkey, and the United States, Albarko utilized social media to contribute to a sense of belonging and remain connected to people and events in places where he no longer lived. His use of media applications shifted over time and location based on their contextualized efficacy. He stated,

I used to use only Facebook in Somalia. Then I went to Turkey and I have Whatsapp, that

came out, and I used Whatsapp a lot because it was free calling and texting with other

countries and easier to get a phone number. When I came here [to the US], there is a lot

of Twitter…but I use Snapchat these days, most of the time, 70% of social media use is

Snapchat.

While changes in social media platform use over time are common, Albarko called upon

a suite of applications to maintain access and continue his participation in disparate communities

based on the usefulness of each application. For example, Albarko discussed how Snapchat's

geofilter location tagging revealed that a friend of Albarko's family from Somalia, now living in

Canada, was visiting Somalia. She uploaded a video of her plane landing in Mogadishu to her

Snapchat story feed and later posted pictures of U.S. army drones outside Mogadishu to her

account. On Facebook, Albarko discovered TEDxMogadishu, a series of upcoming TED Talks

filmed in a location that held personal connections for Albarko. Given his perception that

Somalia lacked positive framing in the news media, Albarko looked forward to the diversity of

perspectives and expressions made possible by hosting TED talks in Somalia's capital city. He

shared, "I just followed their Facebook page yesterday. I want to watch like every part,

everybody's talk." Albarko mostly looked forward to an address given by Abbas Siraji, the 31-

year-old newly appointed Somali minister of public works and reconstruction. However, in the

time that passed between the filming of TEDxMogadishu and the broadcast of the series,

Albarko shared tragic news. Minister Siraji had been shot and killed in an apparent accident.

Bodyguards for another Somali government official mistook the car Siraji rode in as being used

to transport a suicide bomber and opened fire. News of Siraji's passing was particularly

discouraging to Albarko because "[Siraji] grew up in a refugee camp in Kenya, the biggest in the

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world, and then he went to university and graduated and came back to Somalia to help people." Albarko, in recognizing a personal connection between his own lived experiences and those of the Minister, expressed sadness over the senselessness of Siraji's death. He also regretted that people outside Somalia had likely not heard about this tragedy because it did not get widespread media attention.

During our conversations, Albarko critiqued the types of news used to raise awareness, or not, about Somalia. He stated, "in Somalia we have, every day, car bombs. I saw today in Facebook, in Somalia, 87 car bombs [already] in 2017." He continued, "maybe 50 people die in a car bomb and people make no sense of it, the media does not pick it up." He believed, "if more people talk about the thing, then lots [more] people talk about it, or nobody cares." Additionally, Albarko criticized instances of Somalia featured in popular media. During one interview we talked about the movie *Captain Phillips,* the story of a trade vessel overtaken by Somali pirates, and how the movie might shape the public's views about Somalia. Albarko believed that, while parts of the film were true, the motion picture overall ignored how international commercial shipping routes had disrupted the local fishing industry. Albarko stated, "fishers are saying, how can we make a daily living?" Albarko attributed the lack of gainful income and employment as the cause for increased piracy in the region. In this example, Ablarko's criticality of a Hollywood film demonstrated his desire for just representation of Somalia and Somali identity. Furthermore, Albarko's appraisal of the film demonstrates awareness of broader systemic, social inequalities general audience of the movie might ignore. Ultimately, Albarko understood that selective media reporting about events occurring in Somalia led to a lack of representation for news he believed should be covered. Furthermore, Albarko demonstrated awareness for how such reporting affected the global community's responsiveness, or not, to his home country.

In addition to his Somali connections, Albarko recounted the attempted coup in Turkey during the summer of 2016. He shared with me about staying up all night to remain informed of news about the unfolding situation. He stated, "I was talking with my friends…they were in smaller cities, but they heard gunshots and F-16s, I was like going crazy." Albarko expressed his relief when a friend in Turkey called later to tell him the coup failed. From his interactions with friends back in Turkey, Albarko gained a contextualized understanding of a historic event as it was taking place. While his perspectives were limited to the information his friends passed on to him, Albarko was still able to gain awareness to events transpiring in real-time through his friends' eye-witness accounts.

Albarko called upon a variety of social media applications to maintain transnational connections; however, he primarily used Twitter to stay well-informed about current events taking place domestically and internationally. Specifically, he highlighted the trending topics feature as an important means for cultivating awareness across his daily life, noting "something pops up, even if it's not political or sports, someone is talking about something and you go check it, the news, and see what is happening." Ablarko's interaction with global events supported his development as a transnational civic agent. He built upon his lived experiences to respond to situations, take stances, and voice opinions. He shared with me, "I was talking with my friend last night. We came out of the gym and he was checking his Twitter. It said that Donald Trump's new travel ban was suspended again, because it shows the top trending." Albarko shared his relief that Trump's executive order was being held back by the court system. Since Albarko was born in Somalia and the country was one of the six included in the travel ban, I was curious to learn more about his perspective. He reflected:

I don't know why he chose minority people. I am a refugee, and like most refugees don't

do a lot of the stuff. They think refugees are bad people, but most people used to live in

camps. They are lucky people like me that got to come and live here, so I don't know

why they are saying these guys are bad. Some people think refugees are bad people and

need to be checked before they come, but these are people who are running from the bad

people and need safety.

Albarko's response showed his desire to push back on negative ideologies about refugee

belonging held by the broader public. He also aspired to increase awareness and give voice to the

predicament refugees face as they leave their countries to relocate to receiving nation-states. That

is, the travel ban had personal implications for Albarko's community. He shared with me about a

Somali man, living with his cousin, who was anticipating his family's relocation to the United

States.

He bought a lot of stuff, and was planning to move apartments, but the travel ban

happened. When you come in, you know you have to go through the health process, and

their health [form] date is over, they have to re-take the health stuff and go through

another process, but now everything has shut down. He was expecting them and it's sad,

his wife and child were trying to get here for four years.

While contemporary discourse and popular opinion cause some to believe that immigrants and

refugees flow freely into the United States, Albarko provided additional context to challenge

some of the underlying values and ideologies implicit in the travel ban. He drew attention to the

vetting process, the length of time and effort required for relocation, and the emotional impact of

the travel ban on families seeking reunification. Furthermore, Albarko wondered why

immigrants were being highly vetted before entering the country, when the President himself

welcomed advisors into his own cabinet that were not as stringently scrutinized. He stated, "the guy with Russia [Michael Flynn] who then resigned, how he could end up as an advisor for the president? Some people knew and weren't sure and let him do it, it's crazy." Albarko's comparative stance highlights the nature of perceived threats to national security, with actual threats to the well-being of the nation-state.

Because Albarko had lived in Somalia, Turkey, and the United States, our conversations around his evaluation of media sources occasionally took up a comparative stance. Albakro understood from living in places where media was controlled differently that representation was not always what it seemed. For example, Albarko discussed the difference between government-owned media in Somalia where "they just talk nice about things" with the ability of the U.S. media to criticize government "because they don't like the White House." In short, Ablarko's varying experiences regarding the control of media influenced his assessment of news sources. By extension, Albarko understood the incongruency of media reporting in the Somali context. He provided an anecdote in which the media exposed the actions of an individual and that person died because of the information being made public. Albarko noted the media reported the individual's death was the result of terrorist activity. However, he questioned the accuracy of that claim wondering if those in power "hire a killer, just to blame a terrorist group." While bordering on conspiracy theory, Ablarko assumed there was more to the story than what was being reported. Notably, Albarko extended the same level of critique for U.S.-based news. For example, he was critical of the current presidential administration and the accuracy of its reporting. In response to a trending Twitter alert about press secretary Sean Spicer's comments following the gassing attach in Syria in which Spicer claimed that Hitler had not used chemical

weapons (Fandos & Landler, 2017), Albarko opined, "I was like this guy is already crazy… he lied about the Holocaust."

The comparative stances Albarko's took in assessing media also carried over to interactions at home with his mother. Interestingly, while Albarko's mom told him "don't believe everything you hear in the news," he applied the same philosophy to his conversations with her. While Albarko acknowledged that his mom helped contextualized Somali news because "[she] gives me an explanation and I am like you know more about the history, and I don't know it," he was also attuned to how the intended audience shifted news reporting. Albarko stated, "my mother always watches the news [Somali TV] and I started to watch it. Then when I saw the news on the internet, I would check it and see it was different." Albarko encouraged his mom to consider seeking out other TV sources, like CNN. Ablarko's capacity for assessing the accuracy of sources and his awareness for seeking out multiple sources to corroborate stories demonstrate criticality gained through lived experience.

During one of our interviews, Albarko referenced a lesson from his English class where the teacher discussed approaches to critiquing media. She encouraged students to verify the accuracy of sources. He stated, "you can check who wrote it because the author should provide his name and where did he get the news, so I go and look at that." When assessing something posted to a site like Facebook or Twitter, Albarko looked at the person's profile to see their interests, affiliations, and network of connections. He took this action to determine if a person might be using a fake profile or if a bot account was being used to post or re-post news. Albarko also read the comments sections of articles posted to social media to determine if people commented upon the veracity of the post and its accuracy.

Albarko discussed the process of cross-checking sources to make sense of the messages media send. For example, during the unit on Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama in Mr. Denker's class, students studied the life of Heinrich Harrer, a mountaineer who escaped a British internment camp in India to journey to Tibet where Harrer spent seven years tutoring the Dalai Lama. The class compared three sources: the book *Seven Years in Tibet,* the movie adaptation of the book directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud, and an obituary in *The Guardian* newspaper recounting Harrer's accomplishments. Since the book, movie, and obituary highlighted different aspects of Harrer's life, and the book and movie left out Harrer's involvement, as a young man, in the Nazi party, I was interested in Albarko's perspective.

> He says he went there to be a ski teacher, but his character, I don't think he wanted to be
> a real Nazi, but sometimes culture changes you, like you are in some place and everyone
> does something you are going to be like let me try it. He might regret taking a picture
> with Hitler, but when he went there [Tibet], he helped out the Dalai Lama. He didn't try
> to influence them with Nazi stuff, but he tried to learn there from what the Dalai Lama
> has. I don't think he would have been going SS and Nazi.

In his later years, Harrer disavowed his involvement with the SchutzStaffel, or German paramilitary, claiming his guiding philosophy was rooted "out of my life in Tibet" (Gittings, 2006). Albarko appeared to align with this framing of Harrer's experiences based on his interactions examining and comparing multiple texts in class.

Religion

Concern around sources and the precision of reporting extended more broadly for Albarko, especially when it came to accurately naming and identifying individuals involved in

large-scale terror events. Recounting racial and religious profiling following an attack in England, Albarko and I had the following exchange:

> Albarko: Like I see somebody says on Twitter, like yesterday, they were blaming on one guy.
>
> Matt: About the London [Westminster terror attack] event?
>
> Albarko: yeah, today they were saying another name. Maybe that guy will be in trouble [from being misidentified]. Sometimes they use somebody's picture and it comes out they are not the person doing that stuff, so what everyone knows his face, if they see him someplace else, they will be like 'that's the bad guy' so that is very dangerous too.

Given his own positionality as a Muslim, male youth of color, Albarko underscored how inaccurate reporting can carry significant consequences. While those most familiar with being wrongly profiled are sure to recognize this, Albarko contextualized the cost for me and others. Albarko was particularly critical of the current political situation in the United States. He stated:

> [The] President's just one side really. I was watching a TED talk and a lady [Adiche] was saying most people judge you because they are just one side of history. So I think Donald Trump, you know, is like one side history. What the media [says] and what he hears a lot, but he doesn't go there and see it or experience it.

Essentially, Albarko believed Trump and his administration should engage with more sources so that their views on pressing issues were more well-rounded and informed. Following the Manchester bombing at a time when Trump referred to Islamic extremists as "evil losers," Albarko and I had a conversation about ISIS and how this sect continually influenced how many people in the world position followers of the Islamic faith.

Albarko: In Arab countries or Somalia, they don't call them Islamic extremists. Nobody

calls them [that]. They are claiming to be Muslim, but no, I don't think they are.

Matt: People in Somalia don't…

Albarko: …recognize them as true Islam. We call them like *daeish*, Arab people call

them *daeish*, Somalians call them that, too. Arab and Somali people, no one calls them

Islamic state or ISIS, call them 'evil losers.' There is no one that should kill, like

children, like what happened yesterday [in Manchester]. I would never call them Islam.

Rather than legitimizing extremists by name, Albarko drew attention to how those inside the

Muslim faith positioned the radicalized and fringe sect. During the same conversation, Albarko

pulled up a retweet that the actor Ben Stiller had shared from the Twitter account of Blair Imani,

a Black, Muslim activist. In the aftermath of the Manchester bombing incident, she tweeted,

"again I mourn the murders of people I never knew, again, I am harassed & told to atone for

terror I did not and would never commit." In this instance, Albarko was grateful for the ways

Twitter helped people understand that radical Islam was not a reflection of true Islam. He stated,

"[Extremists] will be mad because they know the truth, like they are doing bad, but they know

the truth" that these actions do not accurately reflect the Muslim faith. Furthermore, Albarko

demonstrated attentiveness to celebrities using their voices to amplify others by promoting just

representations of public issues across social media.

Albarko credited Mr. Denker's class with helping him to understand additional

perspectives beyond a single story often shared by media, especially in terms of religion.

Ablarko noted, "I really learned a lot of things, like how other people think, how not to judge

other people's perspective. Just see, there is Hinduism, Buddhism they have different cultures

and different beliefs." As a Muslim youth, Albarko used Mr. Denker's class to develop a greater

appreciation of religions other than Islam and built upon his own commitment to understand the perspectives of others.

Language

As an avid consumer of media, Albarko recounted using the three languages he spoke to engage with various international media forms to sustain his language abilities. He did this by watching football matches, television shows, and movies from the U.K., Turkey, and Somalia. For example, Albarko relied upon both YouTube and Turkish websites he could access without a virtual proxy network (VPN) to watch Turkish *Survivor*, a Yemini version of the U.S. television show *Prison Break,* and other popular television shows and movies. When contemplating whether to spend time reading new books or watching television shows, movies, or YouTube channels he had not viewed before, Albarko used Somali, Turkish, or English to read summaries, watch trailers, and consider how highly other users ranked the media. He drew upon the source, location, and language of the media form to evaluate further interaction with the content. He also downloaded excerpts of texts to decide if he wanted to pursue reading, listening, or watching something. Furthermore, to support his engagement with varying media sources, Albarko curated content. That is, he would save multilingual media to his shopping basket on Amazon and bookmark website links to revisit later. During one of our later conversations, just before he graduated, Albarko pulled out his phone and showed me a multimodal composition he created on Snapchat of a bookshelf, overlaid with text and emoji, which he aspired to fill with books. Albarko wanted to build up his collection of English language texts in preparation for attending college in the fall. He planned to use the gift card from his participation in my study to purchase books from his Amazon shopping queue.

Furthermore, in alignment with his practice of following the top trending news on his Twitter feed, Albarko drew my attention to an example of the linguistic profiling of an Arabic-speaking Muslim male kicked off an international flight. Our conversation was prompted by the dragging of David Dao, a passenger on an oversold United Airlines flight. Albarko noted, "last time there was an Arab guy from Delta, in England, they kicked him out because he spoke Arabic." Albarko referenced a video that the popular vlogger Adam Sahleh uploaded to YouTube of the incident, noting, "some people just go crazy when they hear people speak other languages. We all speak different languages; most people who live in the US speak one or more languages. I don't know how they end up throwing them out?" In the video, Sahleh stated he was talking to his mother in Arabic. Since Albarko's mother did not speak English, the story resonated with Albarko. His multilingual abilities promoted his mindfulness of language ideologies expressed by media. His response to the incident demonstrated his belief in the importance of allowing for linguistic variation across social spaces. Moreover, Albarko deconstructed the false dichotomy, held by some, that a man speaking Arabic on a plane might be a threat to others' safety, promoting a sense of belonging that does not require giving up one's ethnic, religious, or linguistic background.

Summary. Albarko's transnational experiences provided a strong foundation for his critical media literacy engagement. He used social media to cultivate access and maintain relationships with friends and communities across three different countries in support of his transnational citizenship and sense of belonging despite geographical distance. He also shifted his use of media platforms, such as Facebook, WeChat, and Snapchat, based on the efficacy each application in support of his transnational identity. Additionally, Albarko relied upon the three languages he knew to access and engage with a variety of media sources. This allowed him to

assess media messages and confront monolingual language ideologies held by the public.

Although Albarko's overall use of media was grounded in an appreciation of sports and popular culture, he was also attuned to current events that provided a platform for him to reposition how Muslims and Somalis were viewed more broadly across media and online spaces. In school, Albarko's teachers supported his ability to analyze and evaluate information by providing him with skills and approaches for assessing and critiquing sources. Therefore, building upon his lived experiences and the reinforcement he received from teachers at school, Albarko cross-checked sources and called for accuracy and precision in reporting. His attention to correctness in media reporting, especially given his identity as a Muslim, reflected his desire to avoid the consequences associated with sharing misinformation, particularly following the aftermath of wide-scale terror events.

Mena
Transnational Identity

The following exchange demonstrates some of Mena's beliefs about both raising awareness for global issues and assessing media sources:

Matt: You said people need to care about issues outside of themselves. What are some ways we can get people to care about issues?

Mena: Show them the truth, talk to these people, ask them questions, talk to them, ask how they got to that point.

Matt: You said, like ask them about the truth, tell them the truth. How do we know what is true?

Mena: These people live there. You know how Syria has a lot of, some people say the President did it [gassing of citizens], some people are with the president and some people

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are like no. We don't know what is happening there, but the people who live there know,

so that's the problem.

Matt: are you saying we should look at trying to talk to local people?

Mena: Yes.

Matt: And why is that important?

Mena: 'Cause they know what happened there. I am not in Syria, I can't judge if he did it

or not, or say like 'he did it, he is a bad guy.' I don't live there.

In the above interaction, Mena reinforced her opinion that individuals should seek out external

contacts to try and gain eyewitness testimony about events taking place in localized settings. In

her own use of social media, Mena recounted gaining perspective by "talking to people on

Facebook from different countries like Syria, and we have Syrian students at Hallandale."

Calling upon her own experiences in different countries and cultures, Mena believed individuals

should "travel and go and talk to different people, and I mean really different people, and poor

people, to get a different perspective." These practices supported Mena as she attempted to verify

information and gain broader perspectives. That is, Mena was committed to hearing, learning,

and knowing more about people with differences to gain a diversity of viewpoints. Overall,

Mena's assessment of media sources was closely connected to her belief that individuals with

localized connections to events should be consulted. In seeking out information, Mena reflected,

"I go and look for, I do not look in just one place. Sometimes I will ask a friend who lives in

Palestine if something happened there or no." Over the course of our conversations, Mena called

for people seeking to be critical of media to "look outside of the U.S. because every country has

different views." However, despite this belief, Mena shared she preferred Jordanian news over

English news. This revealed to me that even though Mena appreciated a variety of perspectives, she held a language based and nationalistic preference for sources of information.

Mena's criticality about individuals being grouped, labeled, or positioned inaccurately based on media messaging was further advanced through an unfortunate encounter that took place with a substitute teacher in Mr. Denker's class. While Mr. Denker had been very cautious in how he negotiated conversations about religion across the multicultural studies course, stating "I don't want students to feel singled out because they aren't participating in a certain religion," the substitute teacher did not. Mena's negative encounter with the substitute took place during the class unit on Tibetan Buddhism. Mena noted, "there was a sub and he converted to like Buddhism five years ago, and the way he talked about it, I felt like he was like forcing us to go into that religion. He picked on me twice, I don't know why." I wondered if Mena was singled out because she was wearing a hijab, but she reminded me that other students in class wore the hijab. Mena reflected,

> He asked where I am from, and I said Jordan and he said, 'a Muslim country.' I mean, I said, 'no it has Christians,' and he said 'no, but it's still a Muslim country.' I wanted to say there are Christians because people think it's all Muslims, but we have Christians, too.

In this interaction, Mena was concerned for how the substitute teacher represented Jordan's religious composition. In speaking back to the guest teacher, Mena used her lived experiences to contribute a broader understanding of her country. Mena's own practices for gaining multiple points of view were supported by her understanding that sometimes when people only look at the surface of things as the media is prone to do, they might miss underlying realities about people and places resulting in stereotypical depictions.

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Religion

Given her upbringing in Jordan and Palestine, Mena was attuned to conflicts in the Middle East, especially about the contested nation-state status of Israel. When the issue came up in class during a unit on the region, Mena believed people were more likely to stand with Israel, "and not with Palestine's side." Mena foregrounded this perception when discussing the movie *Munich,* which students recently watched in Mr. Denker's class. Prior to viewing the film, Mena did not know about the events that transpired in Munich during the 1972 Olympics, in which eleven Israeli Olympic team members were taken hostage and eventually killed by the Palestinian terrorist group Black September. After viewing the film, Mena told me her wish that more people would "look what happened 70 years ago, look for the Palestinian side and not just the Jewish side." When I asked Mena if she knew that Steven Spielberg, the director of *Munich,* was Jewish, she said no, but responded, "yeah, he will stand with his community." Although Mena acknowledged differences across national, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, she hoped individuals would "look at Arab resources because U.S. resources aren't going to know us like we know ourselves." Since the deaths of both Israelis and Palestinians were a central part of the film, Mena opined, "killing will not solve anything, but no one talked about what Israel is doing with Palestine." To clarify our conversation about *Munich*, and issues of representation, context, and ideologies I restated my understanding of our conversation, "What I heard you say is there is not enough awareness, and there is not enough focus, and the focus is one directional." She replied, "yeah."

Mena's engagement with assessing media sources and promoting a variety of perspectives are best understood through her reactions to a four day, in-class investigation of media materials sent to Mr. Denker by a fundamentalist group called the Christian Seniors

Association (CSA). The resources, including a letter, survey, and brochure titled "The Islamic Truth Project" attempted "to show the American people what the *Koran* actually says" (emphasis original, CSA letter). In class, students reacted strongly to the CSA's materials, especially Mena. For example, the CSA's materials suggested "because of a corrupt media, most American's are only vaguely aware of the world's <u>#1 threat to civilization</u>. That threat is Islam, not just "radical" Islam. Islam." (emphasis original, CSA letter). Furthermore, in their letter, the CSA denoted, "Yes, it's true that many Muslims in America are hard-working, good people, not committed to violence against non-Muslims. But that's because they are Muslim in name only. They aren't really following the ***Koran***, and the doctrines of Islam" (emphasis original, CSA letter). Mena responded decisively to the letter in a conversation with me.

> I mean, I cannot force people to think I am a good person. There were some things annoyed me in that project. It said if Muslims not killing people, not doing something bad, they are Muslim in name [only]. So if I am not killing people, you cannot judge me if I am a true Muslim?

Mena took further issue with the ways that CSA misinterpreted the Quran, "and how they got article from the Quran and mistranslated it, that was like, no! A lot of people started to do that and that is a problem." By pushing back on inaccurate representations of Muslims, the Quran, and the Islamic faith, Mena countered the emotional appeals and fear-mongering rhetoric of the Christian Seniors Association.

In alignment with her commitment to a variety of perspectives, Mena also called for the sharing of religious expression. For example, she learned, via social media, that Canada observed world hijab day as one way for non-Muslims to show solidarity with Muslim women. Furthermore, since Mr. Denker's class allowed for comparison of the major world religions, one

thing Mena stressed was commonalities. She stated, "to be honest, all religion is love. We have difference, but we still have similarities." While Mena was deeply aware of how media could be divisive, she seemed hopeful for the possibilities media had to promote understanding across differences.

Language

Mena's use of her mother tongue allowed her to participate in a vibrant community of fellow Arabic interlocutors. Through a dedicated Facebook page and other means of interaction like a webpage that featured and recommended books in Arabic, Mena was also able to remain actively engaged and connected to issues taking place in her home community and culture despite living in the United States. However, Mena told me her primary use of media centered on accessing Arabic language resources to locate information that might not be picked up by Western news outlets. For example, Mena participated in a public, Arabic language Facebook group page that fostered a connection to Nour, a peer living in the West Bank. Over a five-year period, Mena reported corresponding with this friend "everyday" to gain find out from local Palestinians about events taking place in the region. When I asked Mena to share with me about news sources she relied upon, she shared, "the problem is, I read it in Arabic, but in the English part [of the world], they won't post it. That's the problem to me." Here, Mena expressed dual barriers. First, for anyone not able to read Arabic, an inability to comprehend news not picked up by English language media, and second a lack of access to specific kinds of news for transnationals residing in the United States for events taking place outside of the United States.

Summary. Mena's appeal for a diversity of media perspectives reflected her desire to assess and challenge reporting that led to one-sided or biased representations of people groups. Mena hoped media might be used to raise awareness so the public would become better informed

about global events causing harm to others and then respond with compassion and care. Even though she did not actively post to social media, Mena participated by reading and thinking about the posts, debates, and comments made by other online participants. Mena accessed and read Arabic language media sources to keep up with news about the countries and regions where she used to live to maintain a sense of belonging with those communities over distance. For example, she communicated daily with Nour who she relied upon as an informant. However, despite her own use of language to seek outside sources of information, this linguistic ability was not promoted in school. That is, Mr. Denker did not call for students to use the languages they knew other than English to critique media in class. Overall, Mena's critical media literacy practices supported her conviction for promoting understanding across differences so that others might feel a sense of belonging that includes their religious identity.

Discussion

In the section that follows, I synthesize my learning with and from Leah, Albarko, and Mena. I begin by discussing each finding, sharing how youths' identities as transnational citizens, Muslims, and multilinguals allowed them to enact critical media literacies in alignment with their lived experiences. Additionally, I show how the three focal youth took up critical media literacy practices based upon identity factors to contribute to their sense of belonging, their resistance to being positioned in stereotypical ways, and their call for broader awareness of events impacting marginalized people. Across my discussion, I synthesize youths' sharing to discuss areas where Leah, Albarko and Mena's approaches to critical media literacy overlapped and differed. I align my analysis with the literature base to contribute understandings for how my learning with Leah, Albarko, and Mena affirms, extends, and in some cases challenges prior scholarship about immigrants, critical media literacies, and civic engagement.

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Transnational Citizenship

Migration impacted the lives of all three focal youth. Displacement and movement across countries shaped Mena and Albkaro's experiences before entering high school in the U.S., whereas Leah's life was affected by her parents and four older siblings' relocation from Somalia to the U.S. prior to her birth because of political reasons. As my findings demonstrate, all three youth called upon their experiences and connections as transnationals to cultivate and promote perspectives and opinions (Sanchez, 2007; Skerrett 2015) that transcended their role as high school students in the U.S. Midwest. Just as they moved across existing borders in their physical lives, the focal youths' online interactions demonstrated fluidity as they virtually transcended spaces to participate in events unfolding outside of the United States. Based on the affordance of digital technology, specifically their phones, youth overcame distance to participate and maintain connections with broader communities that shared similar identity characteristics (Gee, 2010; Urry, 2007). For Albarko and Mena, this meant maintaining and sustaining connections to people, events, languages and locations where they previously lived (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Lam & Warriner, 2012). Although Leah, as a U.S. born youth, had connections to extended family living in the United Kingdom, she relied upon Twitter to develop transnational connections with others across the globe, in part due to her marginalization at school.

Transnational identity and belonging. Leah, Albarko, and Mena interacted favorably with classmates in the multicultural studies class, however their relationships with U.S. peers at school was limited compared to their networks outside of school. Leah connected with immigrant Muslim students at Hallandale, most likely because she had negative experiences with non-Muslim peers at school. For instance, while leaving an extra-curricular program on female empowerment, Leah said some girls standing outside the school, "acted like I couldn't speak

English because I was wearing my scarf" and made "those noises, those African noises, acting like someone could not speak English." This encounter, in which Leah suffered taunts from schoolmates expressing a linguistic form of racialized discrimination, likely shaped her desire to seek kinship with transnational peers. That is, even though she claimed U.S. citizenship, Leah's peers ostracized her based on her racial, ethnic, and religious identities, aligning with similar negative experiences faced by Muslim youth (Abu El Haj & Bonet, 2011). Youths' attempt to socially exclude Leah resulted in her turning to social media to build broader, inclusive, and more supportive networks with individuals beyond school (Gee 2008; Ito et. al., 2009).

Conversely, Mena's contested citizenship and conflict over her sense of belonging and place in the world resulted in a measure of social fragmentation and isolation (Jones & Hafner, 2012), a disquieting outcome of her migration. Like Leah, Mena built friendships with other female Muslim youth at Hallandale. However, she also sustained a five-year friendship with Nour, a girl she had never met in person, but talked with daily through an Arabic language Facebook group page. While many youth seek relationships with peers who share similar background and interests (Gee, 2010, Ito et. al, 2009; Jenkins et. al., 2009), the three focal youths' online engagement, based on their transnational background, went beyond school and nation-state borders (Skerrett, 2015, Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Yuval-Davis & Kofman, 2005). For example, Albarko continued friendships with peers from middle school still living in Turkey. This included interactions with them in difficult moments, such as during the attempted coup, and in more favorable times. For example, during the European Cup season, Albarko sent pictures on Snapchat of rival teams scoring goals against players his friends in Turkey supported. Collectively, mobile interactions supported all three youths' interactions to networked communities with peers outside of the U.S. (Urry, 2007; Bennett, 2008). Even though Leah,

Mena, and Albarko often associated with others who shared similar identity features in alignment with Elias (2013), they did not necessarily get caught up in what Pariser (2011) called filter bubbles. In their online engagements, Leah, Albarko, and Mena called for individuals to seek information beyond natural affinity spaces and interpersonal interactions based solely on shared backgrounds, experiences, and lifestyles (Bucher, 2013). However, Leah and Mena seemed to have trouble doing this at school. That is, the affordances of youths' transnational identities resulted in many of their relationships taking place at distance instead of locally. While none of the focal youth vocalized discontentment about maintaining friendships from afar, I see the phenomenon could contribute to a compartmentalized sense of belonging. It seems that even though Leah, Albarko, and Mena contributed to civic life in Mr. Denker's class, they appeared more likely to make contributions to participatory networks and relationships outside of school. Therefore, while youth overcame feelings of isolation by drawing upon their transnational identities, in school, their diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in relation to classmates from monolingual and monocultural backgrounds appeared to lead to cultural fragmentation from peers (Stanisevski, 2010). The complex nature of youths' position as immigrants and refugees given the political climate at the time of my study meant that even though youth used digital approaches to gain a diversity of perspectives, the ability for minoritized groups to communicate and build relationships with those outside their own communities appeared challenging (Jenkins et. al., 2009).

Religious Identity and Critical Media Literacies Enactment

As practicing Muslims, Leah, Albarko, and Mena were responsive to the ways that media represented Islam. However, I did not expect the primacy of Islam across my data set at the outset of my study. The three focal youth discussed Muslims almost 150 times and referenced

Islam nearly 40. In part, this might be for the following reasons: Leah and Mena wore the hijab; all three youth participated in prayer and fasting during Ramadan which took place at the end of my study; and students studied Islam in Mr. Denker's class. Regardless, it appears that Leah and Mena especially foreground this identity characteristic over others. Each of the youth shared a concern for accuracy regarding media portrayal of their faith and worked to provide counter narratives to raise awareness for how the ideologies and representations of Muslims aligned or not with their own understandings of the faith.

Leah's primary critique about representation centered on appropriation of the hijab, prompted by her decision to wear the veil. Beyond the hijab, Leah expressed concern for selective news coverage in response to attacks by Islamic extremists. She believed this led to an inaccurate view of which countries experience terrorism. For example, Leah referenced a tweet showing the horrific events carried out by ISIS were not confined to the West:

> Someone wrote: 'I am Charlie, I am Paris, I am Manchester,' and someone was like, 'I think you missed a few, there are no Muslim majority or Arab countries.' They wrote: 'I am Iraq, I am Syria, I am Somalia,' and these other places that have been afflicted with violence.

Leah also expressed how her community was unduly ostracized, "when terrorist attack after terrorist attack happened, who's going to get blamed for it? We are – Muslims. Especially if you are a refugee or immigrant, you will get blamed for things that you didn't take part in." Therefore, my findings align with other research showing Muslim youth provide positive counter perspectives to the broader public about Muslims (Sirin & Fine, 2008).

Likewise, Albarko questioned the accuracy of reporting about Muslims following terror events, raising his concern over profiling, a topic that also came up in conversations about

Trump's travel ban. His concern over profiling also extended to a video he watched on Facebook following a discussion in Mr. Denker's class. The clip featured a Muslim police officer who once met both the Dali Lama and President Obama. Since the class had been studying Tibetan Buddhism, and given his own position as a Muslim, Ablarko noted the clip piqued his attention. The officer noted that, while wearing his police clothing, he received respect, but when driving in civilian clothes, he shared about the increased likelihood of being pulled over and disrespected. Likewise, Mena responded to the Christian Seniors Association (CSA)'s inaccurate positioning of the Islamic faith, especially the Quran. By critiquing the accuracy of sources, questioning the precision of reporting, and rejecting profiling, the focal youth in my study opened space for counter narratives to reposition singular framings of Islam.

In their collective calls for broadened perspectives and accurate representation of their faith, Leah, Albarko, and Mena revealed their desire to move beyond stereotypical understandings and representations of complex issues (Adiche, 2009), such as religion, in alignment with their multiple and varied identities (Darvin & Norton, 2017). For example, despite her religious faith, Leah unashamedly critiqued the religious leaders in Saudi Arabia for their duplicity in welcoming Trump considering his numerous comments and actions to marginalize Muslims. In their calls to challenge popular narratives about the way media positioned their faith, youth enacted critical literacies as they questioned assumptions to resist dominant discourses (Janks, 2014; Luke, 2014; Mulcahy, 2011), such as Leah's reference of the "I am..." tweet. This aligns with Mills & Godley (2018) who suggested that Twitter can be an influential and commanding source for disseminating counter narratives to reduce discrimination. Taken together, the youth built upon their religious identification to engage and

actively participate in reforming civic discourse across nationality and ethnicity (Ewing &

Hoyler, 2008; Kibria, 2007).

Therefore, while scholars are increasingly recognizing the importance of counter

narratives in digital spaces (Godley & Loretto, 2013), especially regarding race and racism

(Brock, 2012; Gabriel, 2016; Mills & Godley, 2018), my findings add a new perspective to the

conversation. For example, I demonstrate how youth reclaimed harmful narratives, such as

Mena's rejection of the CSA's claim that all Islam is radical Islam, Leah's critique of the hijab as

oppressive, and Albarko's dismissal of Arabic speaking men on airplanes as a potential terror

threat. My findings also suggested possibilities beyond counter narratives, such as Mena's call to

look across differences to understand the commonalities people from varying religious

backgrounds share. That is, Mena's suggestion highlights the possibilities of using digital media

literacy to promote inter-faith solidarity and a greater sense of belonging that includes one's faith

orientation.

Multilingualism and Critical Media Literacies

As bilingual and multilingual youth, Leah, Mena, and Abarko had access to media in

languages other than English. Each used the languages they knew to interact and critique media

in similar and different ways. Leah's participation in language lessons via the TalkRay

application assisted her in gaining literacy in Arabic to support her religious community from

attacks by those outside the faith. Mena used Arabic to interact with Nour, aligning with other

transnational youth who participated in online linguistic communities across distance (Lam

2000; Lam 2009; Lam & Warriner, 2012). Mena's conversations with Nour, along with her use

of Arabic language Facebook pages, appears to have supported her in overcoming some of the

remoteness she felt in the U.S. context. This includes the potential linguistic isolation she felt at

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school (Seals & Peyton, 2017). As a speaker of three languages, Albarko used media to both sustain and develop language. He watched Turkish language media to remain connected to Turkish culture and language, especially since at the time of my study, he had been away from Turkey for four years. Furthermore, he used English language materials for linguistic growth in preparation for starting community college in the fall.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, over the course of my semester long engagement in Mr. Denker's class, I did not observe a single instance where youth were encouraged to use languages they knew other than English to critique media at school. Ultimately this reinforced messages about what kinds of languages, and therefore what types of students belong in schools. By reinforcing the primacy of English in classroom spaces, students' valuable linguistic and cultural resources went unnoticed. In Mena's case, specifically, this led to a greater sense of isolation at school. Therefore, while youth are likely to encounter monolingual orientations in school and society (García & Leiva, 2014), the focal youth in my study were able to transcend monoglossic orientations privileging monolingualism over multilingualism when interacting online. Moreover, accessing non-English media supported youths' critical inquiry through raised awareness. For instance, as Mena and Albarko used languages other than English to access non-Western sources, they gained additional perspectives in support of more robust assessment and critique of sources. For example, Mena seemed to clearly position herself as a knowledgeable insider to localized forms of knowledge gained from her interactions with other Arabic speakers. While Albarko consumed movies and television shows in support of linguistic and cultural knowledge aligned with his transnational identity, he also used language to critique media representations. He used the term *daeish* to label individuals who aligned with extremist views of Islam. Furthermore, his assessment of Adam Selah's removal from a Delta flight demonstrated

his evaluation of language policing in public spaces (Blommaert, Kelly-Holmes, Lane, Laeppen, Moriarty, Pietikainen, Piirainen-Marsh, 2009). While I used English to interact with all three youth, the findings of my study reveal the important role of multilingualism in assisting youth as they encounter, assess, and critique online media sources. In fact, I wonder if Leah, Albarko, and Mena's monolingual classmates would have been able to engage in the same level of critique given their ability to only speak one language.

Youths' Identities and Critical Media Literacies

Use of Mihailidis's (2014) framework provided me with language to analyze and discuss the focal youths' engagement and participation across mediated spaces. Building on their already-present understandings and linguistic repertoires, Leah, Albarko, and Mena offered timely critiques of current events signifying responsiveness and demonstrating a form of civic engagement (Jenkins et. al., 2016). In this section, I organize my discussion by placing Leah, Mena, and Albarko's intersecting identities in conversation with Mihaildis's (2014) 5A framework. In my analysis of the findings, I discovered that, while the focal youth moved across Mihailidis's 5A continuum regarding notions of access, awareness, assessment, and appreciation for a diversity of media perspectives, they encountered barriers to action, which resulted in forms of civic engagement different from what might be expected.

Access. Despite concerns about access, or digital divides for individuals from immigrant populations, my findings demonstrate that youth used technology to a seek out "diverse messages that help to inform, engage, and provide varied viewpoints" (Mihailidis, 2014, p. 131). Living in the United States allowed all the three focal students access to reliable internet connectivity and resources that enabled them to purchase up-to-date cell phones with their attendant mobility. In this way, Leah, Albarko, and Mena seemed to subvert some of the

boundaries and barriers felt by transnational youth living in less resourced areas (Darvin &

Norton, 2017). Based on living in locations outside of the United States, Ablarko and Mena

called upon their international experiences to critique media sources in ways that might differ

from those without transnational connections. That is, their understanding of places and cultures

outside of the U.S. seemed to provide them access to localized knowledge and information not

immediately available to most individuals born and raised in a single location. For example, in

reflecting on Hollywood's representation of the Israeli and Palestinian conflict in *Munich,* Mena

called for a historicized understanding of the struggle over contested land rights and the resulting

tensions between Jews and Muslims following the establishment of Israel as a modern nation-

state in 1948. While Mr. Denker supported geopolitical awareness in the multicultural studies

class, for Mena the topic aligned with actual experience living in the region. Therefore, while

classmates discussed the conflict theoretically, Mena had a direct and personal connection to the

ongoing struggles in the region. Likewise, in response to Somali piracy as depicted in *Captain*

Phillips, Albarko acknowledged the systemic, social inequalities between shipping routes

operated by multinational corporations and the local fishing industry that the film overlooked. He

also demonstrated contextualized understanding of the local and the global by reflecting on the

TEDx talks filmed on location in Mogadishu. Albarko shared situated knowledge about the death

of Minister Siraji to highlight the Somali's concern about security in response to widespread

violence from car bombings and the lack of coverage given to the crisis by the global media.

Therefore, while youth were not able to control media messages or make specific choices about

content distribution (Mihailidis, 2014), they took responsibility to shift reception of media

messages. In this way, youth attempted to change social orders and not maintain them (Janks,

2018). They did this by accessing localized and historical information from their cross-cultural

experiences to provide additional context, enhancing their analysis of media messages for themselves and others. Collectively, Albarko and Mena critiqued how media represents certain events, but does not always attend to the larger social and civic contexts of such events (Mihaildis, 2014). The youths' understanding of such framing creates possibilities to engage social change (Janks, 2018).

Awareness. As Leah, Albarko, and Mena engaged in the critical inquiry process, they seemed most sensitive to the notion of awareness. Rather than uncritically and passively following a dominant view of the world constructed by media (Kelner, 1995), Leah, Albarko, and Mena remained committed to looking outside of the U.S. to raise awareness for issues mainstream U.S. media overlooked and to provide additional context for international topics covered by Western media. This approach aligned with Mihailidis (2014) who noted, "awareness challenges the tendency of mainstream media to reflect dominant social and cultural ideologies by consistent questioning and inquiry" (p. 134). For example, Albarko shared, "some people never watch another perspective and just believe what they hear from the news they know." Albarko called for broader understanding by talking "with people from that country, like me, people [should] ask me how I see things." The issue of representational awareness mattered to Albarko because the implications for how Muslims were positioned broadly across media affected how the public received Muslims in their daily social interactions.

Because of her transnational identity, Mena had access to diverse information and desired the same for others. However, her call for people to look for perspectives outside the U.S. might have been influenced by her own ease in gaining multiple perspectives. The ability for others to "travel and go talk to different people…really different people" would certainly challenge those lacking transnational connections. Nevertheless, Mena's experience with the substitute teacher

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who stereotypically positioned her based his understanding of Jordan reinforced for Mena the importance of gaining multiple viewpoints. Mena's concern about people's lack of awareness for issues happening outside of their immediate spheres of influence connected to the idea that media messages are composed to carry certain information to specific audiences (Mihailidis, 2014). Perhaps most importantly, Mena's call for a diversity of perspectives revealed her underlying desire to understand people across difference, a commitment grounded by her own experiences. She seemed to profoundly want others to care about issues, such as the gassing of children in Syria, even if it did not directly affect them. That is, Mena desired to raise awareness to push back against indifference.

Similar to Mena and Albarko, Leah shared that she liked to get outside perspectives from "people on the ground, not just CNN or NBC or MSNBC, different people on the ground and you know, different points of view" because she knew that the local and national news did not always cover events that she cared about. She noted, "there is nothing in the [name of local paper], you won't see some of this stuff on CNN, it's not breaking news" Leah then showed me a video on her Twitter feed of air strikes, stating "What was it? 10 airstrikes in 30 seconds, it's not news for them." Leah's call for a comprehensive awareness of terror events was contextualized by her own transnational positionality. She recounted to me, "some people say immigrants are the problem…my parents, coming here from Somalia, that was one of the countries that was banned, what we came here for, we were coming here to get away from war, a tyrant, not to start problems." Leah's concern for accurate representation and movement beyond stereotypes and negative profiling echoed concerns raised by her peers. Collectively, all three youths' attentiveness to context and representation reinforces awareness gained from cross-cultural experiences.

Assessment. Leah, Albarko, and Mena's transnational experiences allowed them to take up comparative stances as they assessed media sources. For example, Ablarko critiqued media specifically by calling upon multiple points of view gained from cross-cultural experience. He gave examples of incongruence in Somali media reports, yet extended the same level of criticism to news coming from the White House Communications Director to demonstrate critical analysis for issues of credibility. He also reflected on discussions with his mother about news reporting in support of a comparative approach. Even though he relied upon his mother for her contextual and historical knowledge of events in Somalia, he critiqued her for not watching news beyond the Somali channels on the family's international cable box. Albarko, in his own practices, looked across sources and mediums to assess the accuracy of media reporting both at home and in school. Likewise, Mena used eyewitness testimony from her friend in Palestine in her attempt to verify the accuracy of reporting about the region and demonstrated a willingness to reach out to sources in localized contexts, such as Syrian students at Hallandale, to generate a balanced understanding of events transpiring abroad.

In her assessment of media, Leah proactively made choices about what sources she called upon, in alignment with her family's transnational background, noting,

> I don't agree with what Fox News says, so I don't want to get my news from them no matter how trustworthy they say they are. I don't want anything to do with them or news that, you know, has a history of being biased, like Breitbart.

In dismissing Fox and Breitbart, Leah was self-reflexive about her own biases and critical of the angles both far-right news organizations applied to their news coverage. Leah noted, "they obviously have an audience they want to entertain and I'm not that person, so I won't get news from there." As the child of refugees, Leah questioned the credibility of balanced coverage from

Fox and Breitbart. When assessing news sources, Leah further reflected on news reporting from different angles, "say a terrorist attack happened, CNN, or Breitbart, or a certain news that's more known, is going to have a different way of talking about it." Regarding representation, Leah noted, "so as people we go for things that suit our opinions – like we are the audience for it." Taken together, Leah, Albarko, and Mena drew upon their transnational experiences to assess media through comparison of sources, to acknowledge personal biases when selecting media, and to highlight the benefits of eyewitness testimony in verifying the accuracy of news accounts.

Appreciation. Because of their transnational backgrounds, Leah, Albarko, and Mena's lived experiences and transnational affiliations allowed for multiple perspectives that supported a more vibrant media environment (Mihailidis, 2014). This included Leah's following of overseas Twitter accounts to gain perspectives from people living in different countries, Albarko's excitement over the TED Talks and the contribution they would make in supporting diverse perspectives, and Mena's appreciation for how multiple perspectives could create a more robust understanding of geopolitical events, such as those depicted in the film *Munich*. Next to awareness, appreciation factored most prominently in the critical media literacy work Leah, Albarko, and Mena engaged in online. Collectively, the youth sought to challenge long-held stereotypes and create greater understanding to the ways media positioned and portrayed Muslims, immigrants, and refugees in alignment with Mihaidis's (2014) call for a diversity of media perspectives.

(In)Action. Despite the various ways that Leah, Albarko, and Mena's transnational identities allowed them to meaningfully critique media, they took action on their own terms. I found this aspect of my learning with the focal youth both challenging regarding current understandings of civic engagement and fascinating given the focal youths' position within

society. While each of the focal youth actively participated in conversations with me about their media literacy practices, they seemed less comfortable expressing themselves in broader public forums. Leah used a protected Twitter account to make her tweets visible only to the users she approved of as followers. Additionally, she noted, "on Twitter, I don't post pictures of my face." Given her experiences with discrimination, one possibility is that Leah hesitated to take stances that would raise her profile and lead to further marginalization. Retweeting to raise a tweet's prominence is different than posting and publishing a personal set of opinions on a blogging platform that all users of the internet have the capacity to see. Leah's desire to wait until she was older to start blogging meant a delay in the contribution that her voice could make to the broader digital media culture; however, it did not negate her thoughtful and reflexive engagement in other ways. Based on the conversations we had, I see how Leah's use of social media and reading across sources on Twitter supported idea generation and initial learning towards concepts she shared with me in her prospective blog post. For example, Leah shared,

> Someone made a tweet that said, 'since the 1980s, the U.S. has invaded occupied and or bombed at least 14 countries.' Also someone says, 'since the 1980s, the U.S. has supposedly been wondering why so many Muslims are resentful towards it.' It just doesn't make any sense; somehow people still think it is the Muslim world at war with the West.

The ideas expressed in this tweet, her reflections about the tweet, and the composition she shared with me demonstrate the ways Leah's engagement on Twitter is contributing to her sociopolitical formation. Leah's desire to wait until college to begin blogging, aligns with Jenkins, Ford, and Green (2013) who argued that even those who only listen, read, or watch still recognize their potential to contribute to ongoing conversations and are not necessarily barred from meaningful

participation. While not yet taking civic action in overtly public ways, Leah's practices are indicative of her overall investment and commitment to civic engagement.

Like Leah, Mena was protective of her identity online. Her inclination to lurk on social media demonstrated a desire to remain aware of the online interactions among peers and others without exposing additional personal details about herself that would increase her online profile. Similar to Leah's alignment with Jenkins, Ford, and Green (2013), Mena's inclination to observing online (in particular, conversations taking place between Sunni and Shia Muslims in the comments section on Facebook) without commenting demonstrated a desire to remain aware of the online interactions among peers and others without making personal expressions or details about herself public. Furthermore, as participants and audience members to conversations across Facebook and Twitter, Leah through her favoriting and retweeting of other posts, and Mena through her interactions with Nour, potentially emboldened and motivated others to carry on their equity and justice-oriented posting (Jenkins et. al., 2013).

Although Albarko followed the attempted coup in Turkey with his community of friends as it unfolded in real-time, he expressed hesitancy to engage in other issues that mattered to him, such as protesting Trump's travel ban. Albarko discussed a friend from the local Somali community who uploaded a video to Snapchat of a rally against the executive order in Detroit. When I asked if Albarko would do something similar, he responded, "I would consider it, but my mom, she says, no, still, I am younger. In college, I might go and protest something." Therefore, like Leah, Albarko positioned himself as taking more direct action in the future. At the same time, Albarko drew upon his transnational affiliations to support others taking action. In alignment with his earlier reference to Ben Stiller using his celebrity to amplify the voice of Blair Imani, Albarko shared his excitement for the work that a French social media personality Jerome

Jaree, who he followed on Twitter, did on behalf of Somalia. He noted, "I saw him on Twitter like saying, 'let's help Somalia.' I follow him on Twitter. He helps Somalia a lot. See, here is one of his pictures." Although Albarko did not use his own voice, he supported the action his friend took to protest and that Jaree enacted in Somali, in relation to Mihailidis (2014) who noted "genuine civic action comes from enabling voices and ideas to engage where they best feel positioned to make positive contributions and changes in to the world." (p. 141). That is, despite not taking direct action, the focal youths' media habits and critical literacy practices both contributed to and added value to their communities.

Ultimately, youth's hesitancy might be related to hierarchies of power, especially as some cultural forms of knowing are granted legitimacy and value while others are relegated to the periphery, perpetuating inequity (Albers, 2018). From my findings, it appears that youth used their individual agency for participating and taking action to the best of their abilities. However, their agentive stances only reached a certain level of capacity given their limited agency in the broader society. That is, youth worked to develop confidence to extend their opinions, values, and ideas in comfortable spaces. However, they needed assistance with operating in uncomfortable spaces before they could "help guide public debate into more insightful and meaningful spaces" (Mihailidis, 2014, p. 155).

Conclusion: Using Critical Media Literacies to Push Past Perceptions

As reported across this discussion section, Leah, Albarko, and Mena engaged in critical media literacy practices, across networked communities, to publicly deliberate on issues of social importance to them and their broader communities, their voices amplified through technology (Arshad-Ayaz, 2015; Gamber-Thompson & Zimmerman, 2016; Mihailidis, 2014). Collectively, youth's engagement across mediated spaces demonstrated their shared interest in reshaping

representations about immigrants, refugees and Muslims. That is, as youth shared with me, they asserted their values and understandings toward social change (Jenkins et. al., 2009). While youths' agency appeared limited by the marginalization they faced in school and society, they nonetheless made valuable contributions to their respective online communities.

In this chapter, I argued that youth called upon their multiple and intersecting identities, including their status as transnational citizens, Muslims, and multilingual speakers of languages other than English, to analyze, critique, and reframe negative discourse about immigrants, refugees, and Muslims. I also demonstrated the various approaches they took to enact critical media literacy. In the next chapter, I discuss how Mr. Denker, the focal youths' teacher, attempted to support, develop, and enhance his students' critical media literacies in his multicultural education class.

CHAPTER 5: MR. DENKER AND THE MULTICULTURAL STUDIES CLASS

"I have always had this mantra that I want students to be critical consumers of information,

so that is at the heart of part of what I believe in teaching." -Mr. Denker

In the previous chapter, I discussed Leah, Ablarko, and Mena's use of critical media literacies within and beyond school. While the focal youth shared more widely about their personal use of media outside of school, Leah, Ablarko, and Mena were all students in Mr. Denker's multicultural studies class. In this chapter, the focal youth largely disappear from the narrative even though Mr. Denker's classroom and instruction provided additional context for our conversations. Therefore, while Leah, Albarko, and Mena's critical media literacy practices were informed by their transnational identities, their religious faith, and their multilingual abilities, their practices were not largely taken up by Mr. Denker at school. This disconnect between the focal youths' critical media literacies and what Mr. Denker did in class is part of the tension around belonging I noted in the opening prologue. In this chapter, the space of school is where students should feel belonging and where, in some ways, but not all, Mr. Denker is attempting to instill that belonging. However, there are a number of problematic assumptions associated with his stances that likely impact students' experiences in his classroom. Therefore, this chapter may feel disconnected from the previous chapter, the implications of which I will discuss in the closing chapter.

In this chapter, I focus on Mr. Denker's instruction in the multicultural studies class to answer the following research question and sub question: What internal and external factors influence how a teacher supports his students' critical media literacies? How do these factors relate to the teacher's pedagogy? By support, I mean how Mr. Denker both nurtures and attempts to enhance what is already present, as well as how he attempts to develop new skills. I begin by

discussing internal factors and then direct my focus to the external factors. Table 1 below summarizes the internal and external factors. As I share about each factor, I first situate the factor within its broader context and then, through lesson examples and anecdotes of classroom practice, discuss how the factor manifested in Mr. Denker's pedagogy.

Table 1.

Internal and External Factors Influencing Mr. Denker's Pedagogy

Internal Factor	External Factors
Personal and Professional Trajectory	School and District Wide Policies
Philosophy about Technology	Curricular Freedom
Reflections on Teaching Practice	Limited Resources
	Multicultural Composition of the Class
	Changes in Technology and Remediation

Internal Factors

Just as Leah, Albarko, and Mena's critical media literacies were informed by their lived experience, a variety of personal factors shaped Mr. Denker's teaching and impacted the ways that he enacted, or not, pedagogy in support of students' critical media literacies. Some of these factors were internal in nature. That is, they were specific to Mr. Denker's own position as a person and would not necessarily influence or shape the practice of other teachers. In the section that follows, I analyze three internal factors: (1) his personal and professional trajectory; (2) his philosophy about technology; and (3) his reflections on his teaching practice.

Mr. Denker's Personal and Professional Trajectory

Mr. Denker taught the multicultural studies class by drawing upon his lived experiences. As the child of a German immigrant, Mr. Denker shared a point of connection with students in

the class also coming from migrant backgrounds. During the opening minutes of class one day, Mr. Denker shared his father's immigration story with students. Specifically, Mr. Denker noted how his father left Germany during the time of Hitler's rise to prominence. His goals for recounting his father's immigration experienced connected more broadly to supporting students' critical media literacies. When Mr. Denker finished telling about his father's journey from Europe to the United States, he asked students to write down everything they remembered about the story. Mr. Denker noted,

> The whole idea was this notion of how oral tradition passes down a story from one generation to the next, but like anything, things are left off, lost or mistranslated. What is important about that? Why do we need to stop and think about that?... And if things are left out of the story, is there an agenda? Who's behind it?

Mr. Denker found the idea for this lesson on PBS Frontline's webpage during a unit on Christianity as students were considering the historical Jesus across various textual and media accounts of Jesus's life. In reflecting on this activity, Mr. Denker noted the revitalization of the oral tradition through the remediation of the form. He shared "it doesn't have to be written down anymore because it can be performed on Facebook Live or Periscope" and passed on to others.

Mr. Denker also called upon his background as a former photographer to shape his practice and develop students' critical media literacies. He shared his appreciation for the artistic and creative process that lesson planning provided for him as a teacher and credited his background in the arts with giving him flexibility as he designed instruction. He shared, "I have this conceptual thing about this multicultural studies class and where I want it to go." A lesson based on a series of images Mr. Denker encountered on social media reinforces how his background shaped his practice. He found work by a conceptual illustrator, John Holcroft, while

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drinking tea one morning before school. Holcroft's art critiqued social media use through a series

of grotesque and fantastical images, which Mr. Denker thought would make a good lesson for his

class. Therefore, later that day, Mr. Denker showed his students Holcroft's images, including "a

white guy on the computer who is overweight but has a different persona online, [and] a person

pouring the Facebook 'like' emblem thumbs up into a dog's dish that says Ego on the outside."

Together, the class assessed the images and discussed their possible meaning. Specifically, Mr.

Denker wanted students in the multicultural studies class to talk about "the cultural stereotypes in

some of it." He believed the lesson was worth doing because of the varying perspectives

presented in Holcroft's work. With an eye towards the arts, Mr. Denker connected his personal

interests to a lesson supporting students' critical media literacies. In addition to his background

in photography, Mr. Denker held an MA in educational technology, which also informed his

practice.

Philosophy about Technology

Despite his degree in educational technology, rapid technological changes across society

and the subsequent movement from analog to digital orientations challenged Mr. Denker's

expertise. Consequently, Mr. Denker admitted his need for additional support and instruction "on

how to use the phone to my advantage as a teacher." He questioned, "How do you use this

distraction as a tool verses seeing it as a negative?" and noted, "if I could make one change, it

would be to have the ability to shut down Wi-Fi… to block the signal so [students] couldn't sit

and be distracted." While the assumption that turning off Wi-Fi would inhibit cell phone use, and

that phone use itself was a distraction, the broader issue for Mr. Denker was controlling when

students used their devices to access media outside of the subject matter for the day's lesson. Mr.

Denker shared about the use of portable cell phone lockers in some schools: "put your phone in

your locker please. It's secure for the hour and, if we are going to do an activity, go get your

phone out of your locker," suggesting he might use some of his department funds to purchase

one for his room. However, even though Mr. Denker wished for some sort of barrier to cut off

students' access to their phones and WiFi, he noted:

> I don't want to block the use of technology in my classroom; in fact, I want to embrace it
>
> more. I just want it to be done at the appropriate time because there is an appropriate time
>
> to take out your phone and use it for an educational purpose...I wish that I could control
>
> that better.

As the above reflection demonstrates, Mr. Denker felt a tension over his need for continual

growth as a teacher embracing technology, without which it would be difficult to support

students' critical media literacies, and his desire to maintain control over his students and direct

their phone use toward educative ends. Mr. Denker questioned, "how do we find a solution that

is subversive. You can have your phone out, but you are going to use it to learn?" and shared his

need for additional professional development on the topic.

Although the contested use of cell phones continued across my semester long

engagement with the class, in late spring, Mr. Denker demonstrated promise toward integrating

phone use to support students' critical media literacies. Specifically, he applied a recent approach

modeled for him in a professional development meeting. During a series of lessons on Tibetan

Buddhism, students watched the movie *Kundun* to analyze the disputed relationship and between

The People's Republic of China and Tibet, including disagreements over governance between

Beijing and Lhasa. In class, students searched for images to represent the teachings of the Dali

Lama, some of which were contested by the Chinese government. Students then uploaded their

pictures to the multimodal repository Padlet, which Mr. Denker had projected on a smartboard at

the front of the classroom. In reflecting on the lesson, Mr. Denker shared, "if you are not willing to embrace [media and technology] in the 21st century, you are going to be miserable." By situating the teachings of the Dali Lama within the broader contested relationship between The People's Republic of China and the Tibetan Autonomous Region, Mr. Denker reconciled his tension over phone use in support of students' critical media literacies.

Mr. Denker's protectionist stance toward technology use was an additional factor influencing his practice and ability to support students' critical media literacies. For instance, Mr. Denker shared his assumption that "technology is not doing us any favors in our discourse." Although he desired to promote courteous, civil classroom conversations, Mr. Denker noted, "students are being exposed to 'it's okay to yell at each other' because look at here, electronically it is." He shared, "in social media it's okay to insult people because that's what they see." Mr. Denker then compared current online interactions to the days of tabloid television talk shows such as *The Jerry Springer Show*, "The internet has been Springerized." In alignment with this opinion, Mr. Denker shared that he missed the days when online discussion boards were moderated, "if things were not kosher or respectful, the moderators job was to be, you're done…you're being rude or you're being threatening or insulting." Therefore, to maintain a sense of ownership and control over his classroom environment, it seemed Mr. Denker wanted to mediate and moderate students' interactions both face to face and when students went online in class. However, Mr. Denker's stance limited students' agency, engagement, and voice in online spaces. By seeking to control students' online interactions in class, he potentially limited and took away incentive for students to consider the types of behaviors that would build a more diverse, tolerant, and inclusive media culture (Mihailidis, 2014). Mr. Denker also taught from the assumption the he needed to get his students "more engaged in news and information instead of

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silly memes on Facebook and mindless drivel that's out there." Ultimately, Mr. Denker seemed to compete for students' attention, viewing their phones as taking away attention from his instruction in class.

Reflection on Teaching Practice

Across our interviews, Mr. Denker expressed a concern for making his teaching more effective in the future. His reflection on the ways he might make changes to his lessons to further support students' critical media literacies was unprompted. That is, Mr. Denker's considerations for how he might revise lessons for future use was independent of my asking him about revisions. For example, in reflecting on the lesson where he used John Holcroft's images, Mr. Denker noted, "I have to figure out how to grab those images and make a condensed PowerPoint. The other thing would be to get them all printed and do a gallery walk or small groups and throw that out to the kids." Additionally, following the lessons associated with Henrich Harrer's life in which students compared multiple media sources, Mr. Denker recounted, "taking it apart was good and it was an interesting rabbit hole to go down. In a perfect world, I would have put together a questionnaire and gotten feedback." Mr. Denker also envisioned future lesson ideas he might enact in support of students' critical media literacies, "I would have liked to have students in a lab situation or with laptops, or a way to push out links to their phones to have them go to fake web pages, read things, have them react to them, go 'true or not true?'" By reflecting on his teaching practice with attention to changes he might make in the future, Mr. Denker demonstrated a willingness to grow in his abilities to support students' crucial media literacies. He desired to engage students in worthwhile lessons by getting them to question things and "giving them knowledge so they can go, 'I never knew that before.'" Collectively, these

examples demonstrate Mr. Denker's commitment to shaping his future practice to better support students' critical media literacies.

Summary. Several internal factors shaped Mr. Denker's attempts to support, develop, and enhance his students' critical media literacy practices. These included his personal background and experience as a photographer; his appreciation for the creative, artistic process of lesson planning; and his studies in the field of educational technology. Mr. Denker's philosophy about technology, his views on protecting students from harmful online discourse, and his desire to mediate their online interactions also shaped his instruction and development of students' critical media literacies, although not always to productive ends. Finally, Mr. Denker's commitment to reflecting on his practice to identify changes he could make in his instruction influenced his ability to potentially enhance students' critical media literacies in the future.

External Factors

In the section that follows, I turn my attention to the external factors that influenced how Mr. Denker supported, developed, and enhanced his students' critical media literacy practices. While I have separated the internal and external factors in this chapter and present them as discrete, across this section, the themes I discuss suggest an interconnectedness between factors. That is, some of the internal factors influencing Mr. Denker's support of his students' critical media literacies were further shaped and complicated by external factors.

School and District Wide Policies

Hallandale High School had a school-wide policy on cell phone use during class. Each teacher was issued a two-sided poster that read "electronics on" on one side and "electronics off and away" on the other. To enforce the policy, the school's administration expected teachers to use the sign during daily instruction. However, as Mr. Denker recounted to me, "not everyone is

on the same page. [There are] inconsistencies, so the kids are confused." In his own classroom, Mr. Denker not only flipped the sign each day, he also rang a small, dome shaped bell at the start of class to alert students they needed to store their devices. Inevitably, at various times during instruction, cell phones reappeared, either because students used them to support their learning, or because they were checking on text messages or notifications they had received. Often, the contested struggle to manage in-class cell phone use resulted in Mr. Denker providing a running meta-commentary: "I'm seeing some phones out"; "Put your phones away so the devil doesn't tempt you!" Therefore, Hallandale's cell phone policy, when coupled with Mr. Denker's personal philosophy about the appropriate use of cell phones in class (discussed above in the Internal Factors section), presented a challenge. At times, students lost opportunities to meaningfully engage in critical media literacies because of Mr. Denker's stringent enforcement of the policy.

In addition to the school-wide policy on cell phone use, mid-way through the semester, Mr. Denker received a district-wide e-mail with a statement about teaching controversial issues in the classroom. The communication reminded teachers, "in the discussion of any issue, a teacher may not express a personal opinion." Mr. Denker responded to the missive in annoyance, sharing, "I got to the part about no personal opinions and I went 'no way, that's a bunch of crap. That violates the First Amendment in my opinion.'" Given Mr. Denker's commitment to engaging students in issues that connected to their backgrounds and lived experiences, he was not afraid to express his own beliefs. For example, Mr. Denker referenced the class's ongoing discussion and investigation of media materials associated with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Mr. Denker noted, "That's a controversial issue. should Israel exist? Should Palestine exist? Is a two-state solution the way to go or a one state or just in that itself, right? The student asks, 'why

is there a conflict?' That is a deep question." Therefore, despite the potential limitation of the policy as a barrier to expressing his opinion, Mr. Denker ignored the policy because he believed discussions about controversial issues belonged in the social studies classroom and curriculum.

His refusal to accept the policy led to some of the most powerful instruction I witnessed in the classroom, including a lesson involving various films about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. For example, as the class was finishing their unit on the Middle East, Mr. Denker invited a small sub-set of students to select a film to watch as a culminating event. That is, Mr. Denker chose ten documentaries and movies from his personal collection of DVDs as possible options for viewing. He asked students to go to the websites Internet Movie Database (imdb.com) and the movie review site aggregator, Rotten Tomatoes (rottentomatoes.com), to compare user ratings, reviews, and scores across the two sites. Students wrote results from their research about the movies on Post-It notes that they later stuck on each film's DVD box. Then, the class chose four finalists based on the top reviews for in-class viewing about conflict in the region: *Six Days in June: The War that Redefined the Middle East; Jerusalem: Center of the World; Amreeka; and Death In Gaza.* Students presented the merits for watching the selected films based on their online investigations, ultimately choosing, via in-class vote, to watch the film *Death in Gaza,* a documentary about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict told from the perspective of three Palestinian youth in the West Bank and Gaza. By providing students with agency to select which film they wanted to watch at the culmination of the unit, Mr. Denker supported students' critical literacies as they analyzed online resources and considered their peers as the intended audience for viewing the film.

Curricular Freedom

The elective nature of the multicultural studies class meant that Mr. Denker did not have to follow a pre-determined pacing guide or teach the class in alignment with fixed curriculum standards. Mr. Denker shared, "I can do whatever I want, and I am going to because it's my class." Mr. Denker enjoyed taking time to seize "teachable moments" and "teach the hell out of something; there is depth verses breadth." Accordingly, Mr. Denker used his autonomy to determine the amount of time the class spent studying each topic, and the sources of information he presented. Mr. Denker had previously used his curricular freedom to build the course around "hot spots" in the world to raise students' social and geopolitical awareness of current events in the news. However, Mr. Denker also wanted to consider students' interests in shaping the direction of the class. To foster democratic participation, at the beginning of the spring semester when new students joined the course, he had students write down their ideas for what they wanted to study on individual sticky notes. Overwhelmingly, students stated they wanted to organize the class through the lens of comparative religion. Therefore, in response to the students' request, Mr. Denker structured the class around the five major world religions Islam, Hinduism. Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity and focused on the people, places, and practices associated with each one. To build the curriculum, Mr. Denker curated news articles and texts from different sources, including a handbook on religion. He supplemented his instruction with media in a variety of modalities, such as movies, political cartoons, viral video clips, interactive graphics, and maps.

Because of his curricular freedom, when Mr. Denker received "The Islamic Truth Project" materials from the Christian Seniors Association (CSA) in the mail, he thought it would turn into a productive series of lessons in support of students' critical media literacies. I share

this lesson anecdote here as a way that Mr. Denker used the external factor of curricular freedom to his and his students' advantage. However, I also seek to trouble his choice, as the materials he used were inflammatory and potentially hurtful to the nine Muslim-identifying youth in class.

In reflecting on the series of lessons in an interview, Mr. Denker told me, "I wanted to see how students would react to it and especially how my Muslim students would react to it… the goal of it being, like who are these people? What are they about? What are some skills we should be using to question whether or not there is legitimacy in this organization?" Based on students' sustained engagement on the first day of class, Mr. Denker extended the class's investigation of the materials over four days (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Lesson Sequence for The Islamic Truth Project

Lesson One	Lesson Two	Lesson Three	Lesson Four
-Students read and annotated a letter and survey sent by the CSA

-Students engaged in discussion about the letter and survey

-Students wrote on sticky notes one word and one sentence for how the materials made them feel

-Students affixed their reflections to a large sheet of poster paper as they left class | -Students continued their discussion about the letter and survey, extending upon ideas presented in the previous class

-Students used the internet to research the CSA, sources cited, and the people behind "The Islamic Truth Project" materials | -Imam Hakim from a local mosque came as a guest speaker to the class

-Imam Hakim responded to claims made in the letter and survey

-Students asked Imam Hakim questions about Islam | -Students wrapped up discussion, including comments made across the three prior lessons

-Students completed a worksheet that helped them synthesize their learning across the series of lessons |

To support students' critical media literacies across the sequence of lessons, Mr. Denker asked questions and drew students' attention to textual features. He encouraged his students to

read and annotate the letter and survey the CSA sent, stating, "Look at it and think about what features stand out to you? What features of this text jump off at you? What is purposeful? What does the author want you to notice?" The letter and survey itself contained a variety of such features, including bold, underlined, and italicized texts in different fonts and font sizes. For example, a donation reply page at the end of the letter had a response box with the following information:

I also look forward to you distributing information in this booklet via <u>print</u> <u>advertisements</u>, <u>TV</u>, <u>radio,</u> the <u>Internet</u>, **YouTube**, and <u>social media</u>… so that every American will understand how dangerous Islam really is to America. And please send me your *Jihad Alert Newsletter.* (emphasis original)

In addition to soliciting students' ideas regarding what stood out to them in the text, Mr. Denker directed the class's attention to the textual features that stood out to him. He asked students, "Did you notice that I have a voter ID number listed?" Mr. Denker clarified for students that such a number was "meaningless" because "I [already] have a voter ID; it's called my driver's license." Here, Mr. Denker identified how the CSA's attempt to add legitimacy to their mailer by listing his 'voter number' should be met with skepticism. Since most students in the class were not of legal voting age, Mr. Denker purposefully and helpfully raised students' awareness of attention-grabbing features that were ultimately false.

Discussion around the fictitious voter ID number subsequently revealed Mr. Denker's commitment to building students' ability to engage in the assessment of media sources by focusing on their accuracy. For example, during the lesson, Leah demonstrated her own awareness of textual features. She referenced this part of the CSA's letter in her critique:

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The truth is Islam's holy book, the ***Koran*** repeatedly commands Muslims to wage a

perpetual war against non-Muslims (infidels) until the entire world is governed by Islam:

"I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore, strike off their

heads and strike off every finger tip of them (*Koran* 8:12) (emphasis original).

Leah shared with her classmates, "I searched it, right, in the Quran where it's talking about it in

non-believers in general, and in battle, not just every disbeliever in general." Later, when Imam

Hakim visited the class to share about Islam and respond to claims made in the CSA's letter and

survey, he cautioned students about a "copy and paste" approach to sources. He noted the

tendency for anti-Islamic groups to quote from the Quran without revealing the context of the

verse:

> They won't tell you the verse before or after. They won't tell you this took place in the
>
> city of Medina where the Muslims were under attack. This came in the context: you can
>
> attack them if they attack you. They are in the context of oppression. They are not general
>
> in nature; you cannot apply this anywhere you like.

Since both Mr. Denker and Imam Hakim noted the importance of assessing sources in their full

context, they reinforced the need for students to consider how the accuracy of a text is changed

when certain information is intentionally left out of the message (Mihailidis, 2014). During his

visit, Imam Hakim also shared with students, "There is a 55 million dollar industry called the

Islamophobia industry. It's spent each year to make Islam look bad. They sit on evening TV and

they have radio shows against Islam. They publish articles against Islam." His comments

revealed to students the influence of money on media messages.

With this series of lessons, Mr. Denker called upon his curricular freedom and the

expertise of a guest visitor, Imam Hakim, who could speak with authority on matters related to

Islam, to raise students' awareness about the techniques used to shape media messages. By asking a series of questions and drawing their attention to textual features in the CSA's materials, Mr. Denker helped students assess the claims made by the CSA to "see that people can manipulate information to serve a purpose…and to get them to understand this concept of what propaganda is." As students' investigation moved from the printed materials to an online examination of the CSA, Mr. Denker hoped to show students how technology made it much easier and cheaper "to put bad information in front of people now," in support of their critical media literacies. Although students' engagement across the four days of instruction supported their critical media literacies, there are some concerns about the appropriateness of his choice, which I will elaborate on in the Discussion section.

Limited Resources

Despite the freedom of a class like this, there were also some constraints. Resource-oriented challenges influenced Mr. Denker's ability to support his students' critical media literacies. For example, Mr. Denker received only two days of paid release time to plan for his elective course and did not get a daily planning period. Mr. Denker shared, "I don't have time [to plan]. I feel so overwhelmed in not having time; that it is detrimental to creativity." Given his background in educational technology, Mr. Denker envisioned trying to "head towards a more blended learning environment" balancing out-of-class media and technology use with in-class learning. However, he felt **"**left out of the time, to have the creativity, and thus the energy to [do it]."

Connected to the lack of time was a lack of instructional materials. Mr. Denker continually looked for materials and resources to support students' learning as he prepared for class. The multicultural studies class did not have a textbook and Mr. Denker could not locate an

already published one for use at the high school level and wondered "where do you begin there?" Therefore, developing the course was particularly challenging. Mr. Denker recounted, "You are building it as it's moving down the track…I'm trying to figure out how to facilitate it all and make it meaningful." Focusing on current events at the start of class was one approach Mr. Denker took to make the class meaningful and help the students "grow their literacy abilities." To discuss issues and topics that would encourage class-wide participation, one day Mr. Denker displayed articles from Google News highlighting changes in Trump's travel ban that reduced the number of countries included in the ban from seven to six. When deliberating on the topic with his students, Mr. Denker asked: "Why is Iraq not on this updated list?" This question supported students' analysis of the underlying assertions which factored into the change in countries included in the ban.

Furthermore, since Mr. Denker was not recycling lessons from the previous time he taught the course, there were some instances where his lack of time to plan meant he enacted lessons in the moment. This included a lesson where Mr. Denker did not have time to preview a clip from Saturday Night Live's (SNL) "Weekend Update" before showing it to the class. He told the students he would "roll the dice" and let them "drive the material for the next ten minutes." As a disclaimer, Mr. Denker informed the students, "I am going to put out my liability statement. I apologize for anything that might be offensive, any bad words, sexual innuendo not appropriate for a school." As SNL's sarcastic look at the week's current events played, there were several jokes of a sexual nature in the material, along with some other inappropriate comments. When the segment was over, one student commented sarcastically, "I am so glad we watched this," while another noted, "it's a good thing you apologized beforehand." Therefore,

despite his care at different points in the semester in supporting students to interact thoughtfully with media, his lack of prior planning undermined his commitment in this instance.

Mr. Denker's limited access to professional organizations, and the professional development that accompanies membership in such orangizations, is another factor that influenced his ability to support students' critical media literacies. Referencing the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and his and his colleagues' lapsed memberships, he explained, "It has been discouraging when you have a professional organization that is out there pushing an agenda for a good social studies education, and you can't engage your organization because you can't get to conferences." Teachers were not "approved to go to their conferences that are held nationwide unless we pay for it." Therefore, despite his openness engaging in professional development to enhance his practice and his desire to grow in using technology and media in his classroom, Mr. Denker felt constrained by a lack of funding to support his growth as a teacher.

Multicultural Composition of the Class

Mr. Denker recognized the diverse composition of his class, including immigrant students who came from countries in the Middle East, and tailored his instruction in response to media narratives shaping national discourse. Specifically, Mr. Denker claimed, "We have a specialized stew that we're brewing. The current stew we are brewing is an anti-Islam and anti-Muslim stew, and anti-Latinos, and what's next?" This stance taking demonstrated Mr. Denker's awareness about broader conversations at the national level about belonging. In an interview, Mr. Denker stated his desire that the class should "compare and contrast our cultural beliefs with each other" in reinforcement of his belief that the United States should be "a multicultural pluralistic society that accepts people, hopefully, where they are at in their human experience."

At the same time, despite the heterogenous composition of the class, Mr. Denker questioned, "if the goal is to honor diversity in this country, part of the core [is] what does it mean to be an American?" The rhetorical nature of this question further suggests Mr. Denker's concerns over belonging.

By focusing on how media portrays certain groups in particular ways, such as the CSA's "Islamic Truth Project" materials, students considered how the framing and positioning of groups based on stereotypes and fear shaped representations of communities. Therefore, while Mr. Denker wanted to recognize cultural pluralism in society, he also helped students to see how certain media organizations resisted this view. He shared, "For a multicultural studies class, I think media literacy is important because there are so many stereotypes in media that are perpetuated by media." However, by using the CSA's materials in class, Mr. Denker might have inadvertently reified these stereotypical views, even though he sought to dismiss them. Even though Mr. Denker stated, "I apologize of the offensiveness of this," the lessons triggered emotional responses in students. On their exit slips, when asked how they felt about the CSA's materials, two students wrote the following comments: "this material made me feel sad and angry that people might feel like this," while a different student noted feeling "sad/angry, it says 'Islam is a threat to civilization.'"

Admittedly, even though Mr. Denker's students came from a variety of ethnic, cultural, religious backgrounds and experiences, he worked from an assumption that "if you don't put a different point of view or experience in front of them, they come with a mindset and a frame of mind, so how do you challenge that?" This sentiment revealed Mr. Denker's assumption that students needed his assistance to examine sources outside of those most closely aligned with the students' own affinities. Building on this supposition, Mr. Denker attempted to create learning

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experiences where students were presented with a variety of media perspectives along the ideological spectrum. To develop students' ability to analyze and critique media, Mr. Denker intentionally presented students with media sources from a variety of news organizations across the political gamut. For example, students watched video segments on Syrian refugee resettlement from two very different sources: Al-Jazeera and Alan Jones's infowars.com. Before watching either clip, Mr. Denker asked students to consider "where this is coming from, these are some questions you should ask…is it going to be pro or anti refugee?" By asking students to assess the range of sources and their potential stances on a contested issue, Mr. Denker created space for students to consider how different values and beliefs are reflected in media reporting.

Mr. Denker's comparative approach also reinforced his belief that teachers "have to expose students to strategies about how to look at different perspectives." This pedagogical commitment extended across Mr. Denker's instruction, often in direct ways. For example, during the previously mentioned unit on the Middle East as the class investigated the three monotheistic religions (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism), they read an article in *The New York Times* Upfront Magazine highlighting the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement. This agreement, written by an English and French diplomat, re-drew boundaries in the Middle East based on commercial interests, such as access to the region's oil, while overlooking the complicated histories and interests of the religious and ethnic groups dwelling in the land. To promote awareness of the contextual factors influencing the redistribution of borders, Mr. Denker had students interact with the article's accompanying graphics of two maps that compared the boundaries of Middle East territories before and after World War I.

To support their inquiry, Mr. Denker asked students, "how did the Middle East get the way it did?" and reinforced his instruction by showing a TED talk (Dorling, 2016) and presented

students with two opinion pieces centered on Middle East cartography from *The New York Times* (Wright, 2013) and Vox.com (Fisher, 2015). In alignment with his commitment to alerting students to textual features in media messages, Mr. Denker and students analyzed a different map on a PowerPoint slide with the nation of Israel highlighted in blue. Mr. Denker directed students' attention to smaller print at the bottom of left hand corner of the image that stated, "*adapted from map by Israel Information Center.*" While the map showed modern-day Israel, it erased any presence of the Palestinian State. By directly drawing the students' attention to the small print, Mr. Denker attempted to highlight the values and ideologies behind the Israel Information Center's representation of the region, allowing students to make further connections about the contested nature of land-rights in modern-day Israel and Palestine. Therefore, while Mr. Denker expressed that he "tried not to disrupt the context [of sources] too much," his actual classroom practice revealed a mix between directly informing students about approaches they could use to assess media sources with letting them to draw their own conclusions. Notably, while Mr. Denker directed students' attention to think critically about the hegemonic redistribution of land and territories in the Middle East, he only tacitly examined the power structures at work without directly calling students to consider how those inequalities might be challenged.

Additionally, while Mr. Denker was attentive to his students' lived experiences and tried to build upon their previously developed critical media literacy skills, he also made assumptions that were sometimes less generous of their expertise. For the final exam, students were asked to write a two-voice poem, a format that represents the views of two people by alternating verses to share the perspectives of each speaker. In introducing the assignment, he stated:

For the final exam, let's consider how do the different parts of your identity manifest themselves across the day? How has your worldview been shaped by your background, your

family, where you have lived? Why are perspectives so important? Why does it matter? We can learn from other people because their perspectives are not our own.

However, he followed up those statements with the following, somewhat contradictory, comments:

This notion of you learning about different cultures and cultural traditions, especially those steeped in religion. We don't seem to know a lot about it, but we are stereotypical about it, so let's dive in and get some depth and not just breadth. The final exam will come down to perspectives.

The above examples demonstrate ways Mr. Denker simultaneously positioned the class as drawing upon their lived experiences and as lacking knowledge about religion. Mr. Denker's problematic stance assumed that students needed more depth of understanding to move beyond stereotypical assumptions about religion, even though the class had determined they wanted to study the topic across the semester and participated in extensive learning about religion by comparing the five major belief systems across the semester.

Changes in Technology and Remediation

Given shifts in the way information is created, shared, and distributed, Mr. Denker attempted to address these changes in his instruction. For example, he noted, "I suppose newspapers have been out there, bogus newspapers full of crap, and we had to teach people how to be literate with television" to recognize the new challenge of media literacy in supporting students to critique online sources. Mr. Denker discussed a well-designed web page with deceptive ends that he asked students to critique. The site hawked dehydrated water and included contact information with an address where people could send money to purchase the product. In this instance, a hoax advertisement was remediated from a traditional print source to an online format. Additionally,

Mr. Denker's earlier comments about the shift away from internet moderators and the movement of rhetoric that resembled television tabloid talk shows taking place online in the comments sections of web-based media pages, including social media, further suggest a teacher trying to grapple with remediation. However, as messages and interactions among people were remediated, Mr. Denker recognized some of the skills needed to critique media remained the same. During a different point in the semester, Mr. Denker and students discussed fake news. Specifically, he asked students to consider, "where is this perspective coming from?" To demonstrate that widespread misbeliefs were not necessarily a new phenomenon, he asked the students, "How many people think we never landed on the moon?" In summarizing his approach in supporting students as they critically analyzed media, Mr. Denker stated:

> I really hope [one thing] that kids will take from making them stop and pause and wonder if something is accurate or true is that just having that warning light going off in their head, going 'wait a minute could this be wrong, could this be inaccurate, should I maybe look for something that tells me if this is true or not?;... How do we know how we can trust information from these sources?

Put more bluntly, Mr. Denker shared, "I think the thing to do with fake news and information that is not true is how do we convince students to develop good critical thinking skills to go, 'that is a bunch of bullshit.'" In this instance, Mr. Denker again referenced the need for students' development of critical thinking skills; however he did not challenge students to consider how "fake news" might be a means to dismiss discourses that sought to address issues of power or inequality.

Summary. A number of external factors shaped Mr. Denker's ability to support his students' critical media literacy practices. School- and district-wide policies on phone use and controversial issues served as a potential barrier to developing students' critical media literacies. Additionally, the lack of a dedicated planning period, textbook, and professional development opportunities influenced the types of lessons Mr. Denker enacted. While Mr. Denker used his curricular freedom to create lessons based on his own and students' interests, some of his assumptions about what he thought students needed to learn about critical media literacies overlooked practices they were already enacting when critiquing media. Finally, given shifts in technology, Mr. Denker understood the need for teachers to sustain critical media literacy skills across media formats. He also demonstrated concern about "fake news" to engage in conversations about the veracity, or not, of information presented, by the news media.

Discussion

In this section, I reflect upon my learning as a participant observer in Mr. Denker's class. I begin by attesting to the challenges I faced as a collaborator and colleague in my partnership with Mr. Denker. That is, while his approaches to support students' critical media literacies showed promise, they also included a number of problematic assumptions and approaches. Similar to the prior chapter, I discuss my findings through the lens of Mihailidis's (2014) theoretical frame. I align my discussion with the literature base on critical media literacies to demonstrate points of connection and difference from existing scholarship in the field of multicultural education and close by discussing what might be done to better integrate instructional practice in support of critical media literacies with students' existing practices.

Personal Tensions Over My Findings

Since Mr. Denker welcomed me into his classroom space to participate in mutual learning and we had partnered together in supporting the learning and development of both high school students and student-teaching interns' across four years of sustained interaction, I find parts of this discussion section challenging to write. In reflecting on the above findings, I feel tension over what I observed. First, Mr. Denker had no obligation to address critical media literacies. Both the C3 Framework for Social Studies and the Common Core State Standards do not specifically guide teachers to address the topic in their instruction (Gallagher, 2014; Jolls & Wilson, 2014). Moreover, the elective nature of the multicultural studies class provided additional freedom from standards-based curricular oversight. However, across my observations, it seemed that whenever possible Mr. Denker attempted to integrate components of critical media literacies into his instruction. Therefore, my presence in the class likely served as an additional external factor shaping his practice. Second, my findings show that Mr. Denker took critical stances with students and made connections between students' personal and cultural resources (Beach, 2018), but not always in generous ways. Mr. Denker's lack of criticality over some of the choices he made, such as his decision to use the CSA's materials in class, appear steeped in privilege and unawareness. For example, Mr. Denker expressed his desire to see how his Muslim students would react to the CSA's materials without fully considering what he was asking students to take on emotionally. This is especially worrisome since Mr. Denker shared with me, "in America, groups get picked on, unfortunately the cycle is now in the Arab world for Muslim and Middle Eastern immigrants." While Mr. Denker showed interest in students' emotional responses to the materials, as demonstrated by responses he asked them to write on an exit slip about how the materials made them feel, he did not temper the harm that could come to them by

asking them to engage in this task. Therefore, acknowledging a cycle of discrimination and then choosing materials for a lesson that could reinforce such views is concerning, especially since the lessons did not go far enough to explicitly redress issues of oppression and power. While I originally viewed the sequence of lessons a powerful approach to support students' critical media literacies, my own privilege obscured me from fully recognizing the problematic nature of the "Islamic Truth Project" materials. Pressed to consider the nature of these lessons regarding their potential to further marginalized already marginalized students and their sense of belonging, I came to realize how some of Mr. Denker's choices did not align with my commitments as a teacher educator and researcher. This demonstrates my own need for the continued insights of fellow educators committed to equity and justice who can help me to see beyond my own limitations.

In the opening chapter, I discussed my assumption that students called upon their already-present literacy practices (Watson, 2018) and abilities in their use and critique of media. However, I am not sure that Mr. Denker always held those same commitments especially since the assumptions Mr. Denker made about his students overlooked their funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), such as his conflicting comments over the role of students' backgrounds and experiences in writing the two voice poems. Ultimately, as I attempt to synthesize my learning and the understandings I gained from Mr. Denker, I feel conflicted. Perhaps the word paradox best approximates the inconsistencies I encountered during my investigation of critical media literacies in Mr. Denker's multicultural studies class. That is, while Mr. Denker used a variety of pedagogical approaches to clearly support students' critical media literacies, his approaches were not without harm. The work he did appears to have held an emotional cost that students should not have had to bear.

Mr. Denker's Pedagogy and Critical Media Literacies

In the previous chapter, I used Mihailidis's (2014) framework to support my synthesis of the focal youths' critical media literacy practices. In this section, I follow a similar approach by aligning the internal and external factors influencing Mr. Denker's pedagogy with Mihaildis's (2014) 5A framework. Discussion of my findings in comparison to Mihaildis's frame helps to draw out some of the disconnected tension between the two findings chapters.

Access. Since students were entering Mr. Denker's class, "with super computers on their phones," and the consideration of access "in media literacy classrooms revolve around who controls the information and how that influences content" (Mihailidis, 2014, p. 131), the tensions I encountered over phone use were likely connected to ownership, authority and competition between Mr. Denker and his students. Because students could use their phones to join participatory networks (Jenkins et. al., 2009) and gain access to knowledge sources beyond their teacher and the immediate classroom community, Mr. Denker likely viewed students' phone use as influencing their engagement in class. That is, the potential of phones to mediate students' interactions served as an affront to Mr. Denker's authority as a teacher and his role of engaging students in support of their learning. Therefore, it appears that, while Mr. Denker understood the efficacy of phones in developing students' critical media literacies, loss of control over the class and competition from screens to mediate students' learning shaped his daily practice.

Mr. Denker also expressed protectionist stances about classroom discourse and conversations in relation to technology (Buckingham, 2005). He shared his desire to protect students from the inflammatory rhetoric they might encounter online (Khane, Hodgin, & Eidman-Aadahl, 2016), because he believed the types of unregulated discourse students experienced across social media might carry over into classroom exchanges. In other words, this

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approach could have been an attempt by Mr. Denker to establish himself as the arbiter of classroom discourse. Consequently, the controlling stances Mr. Denker took over cell phone use could be antithetical to one of the goals of media literacy- questioning authority (Janks 2010; Mihailidis, 2014), especially as students did not have an opportunity to negotiate in-class cell phone use (Fry, 2014; Krutka & Milton, 2013). Based on these considerations, it seems that Mr. Denker potentially used the cell phone policy first, to promote classroom community and second to foster what he believed was appropriate civic discourse. Despite the tensions I experienced over access to outside media and sources of information across my observations, I am encouraged by Mr. Denker's willingness to seek out professional development. He used the Padlet application in his lesson on the Dali Lama to reconcile his contested relationship with in-class cell phone use. With future support from professional learning, my findings suggest Mr. Denker might move beyond his rigid approach of controlling access to phone use in the classroom and expand the scope of the class's learning. However, as my findings also suggest, limited resources to support Mr. Denker's professional development might further constrain his ability to enact phone use more purposefully in class.

When considering notions of access, my findings also suggested a tension around engaging the digital domain. Mr. Denker's reliance upon print-based materials over digital texts influenced his pedagogy and, subsequently, his ability to enhance students' critical media literacies. Mihailidis (2014) argued, "the digital arena acknowledges the role of technology in how we access information" (p. 132). Accordingly, Mr. Denker's freedom in choosing course texts could have taken on a predominantly digital form in alignment with the increasing shift of media to this modality (Livingston, 2004; Ito, 2010). However, apart from discussing current events through Google News and SNL clips, and the series of films he showed across the

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semester, Mr. Denker often began lessons in print or analog form before moving to digital. For example, students read about the Sykes-Picot agreement in *The New York Times* Upfront magazine before looking at online videos and interactive infographics regarding border redistribution in the Middle East. For the lessons on "The Islamic Truth Project," use of phones as digital resources to critique the CSA's materials did not happen until the second day. Since "literacy associated with the new media, especially the Internet, differs significantly from that of print" (Livingston, 2004, p. 12) and students need to cultivate literacy skills to simultaneously critique the abundance of information presented to them in digital form, Mr. Denker's dependence on print-based texts were an isolating factor. Therefore, while critical literacy practices can be used to assess texts in any modality (Garcia, 2013), collectively, Mr. Denker's cell phone policy and his reliance upon print-based texts sometimes limited the access his students had to analyze and critique digital media. Consequently, the prospect of extending students' literate practices in the fullest sense, in the digital realm, went unrealized (Watulak & Kinzer, 2013).

Awareness. While students entered Mr. Denker's classroom with their own sense of awareness, Mr. Denker demonstrated his commitment to directing students' consideration to issues that mattered to him and the broader classroom community. Specifically, his instruction built on the subject matter of the course to direct students' attention to the ways media framed cultural, social, and geographical issues (Mihailidis, 2014). By staring class with a discussion of current events, Mr. Denker supported students' contextualized understanding of social and geopolitical events. For example, students' investigation of Syrian refugee resettlement from two different sources allowed them to consider the values and worldviews "inherently tied to the origination of the message" (Mihailidis, 2014, p. 134). This approach also helped students

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consider potential biases connected to the ideological orientations of the news sources, including those from websites they might not visit otherwise. Even though problematic, lessons associated with "The Islamic Truth Project" promoted student inquiry, revealing the ideology of the CSA which positioned Islam as a religion of violence. Collectively, these lessons required that students confront inaccurate representations of Muslims, reinforcing Mihailidis's (2014) belief that "media literate awareness is about identifying the representation in the message" (p. 134). Finally, the class's investigation of the redistribution of Middle East borders before and after World War I supported awareness for contextual factors influencing unrest in region (Mihailidis, 2014). Overall, Mr. Denker's pedagogical approaches supported students' critical inquiry as they moved beyond passive consumption of news related to current and historical events to make meaning and reinterpret media messages (Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013). However, missing from Mr. Denker's attempts in raising awareness was explicit instruction for how to take that awareness as a form of critical consciousness and make changes toward social change and the dismantling of inequalities (Freire, 1970).

Similar to the tensions over access discussed above, Mr. Denker's statement that he needed to expose students to multiple points of view is worth further discussion. As my previous findings chapter demonstrated, Leah, Mena, and Albarko called upon various media to cultivate awareness about current events. They also drew from a variety of sources and encouraged others to do the same. Therefore, while Mr. Denker rightfully claimed a responsibility to "expose students to strategies about how to look at different perspectives," it appears from my conversations that Leah, Albarko, and Mena were already committed to this aspect of media literacy. At the same time, Leah did credit Mr. Denker's class with raising awareness to issues she had not previously considered, such as Donald Trump's support of Marine Le Pen. Leah

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knew of Le Pen's strong anti-Muslim positions from watching YouTube videos of the far-right National Front party leader sharing her political views. However, she told me an in-class discussion of the upcoming French election raised her awareness to connections between Le Pen and Trump, specifically as Mr. Denker pointed out the two leaders' shared desire for stronger borders in support of anti-immigrant, nationalist orientations.

Despite the diverse composition of students in the multicultural studies class, I believe Mr. Denker might have done more to engage in conversations with students that acknowledged their own critical media literacies with work being done in the classroom. For example, even though Leah made her own connection between out-of-school learning and a current event discussed in class, the chance for students to share about conversations they were having on social media or other participatory networks in relation to course subject matter was limited. Instead of providing the opportunity for students to co-construct discussions about current events with Mr. Denker, he often relied on Google News to mediate those interactions. Therefore, just as literacy scholars have long sought to address the seeming disconnect between students' out-of-school and in-school literacy practices (Hull & Schultz, 2001; Moje, 2017), it seems that considerations are needed for how youth and teachers can support the travel of critical media literacies across informal and formal learning environments (Avila & Pandya, 2013).

Assessment. Mr. Denker provided many opportunities for students to assess media in alignment with the internal and external factors influencing his teaching practice. Mr. Denker's background as a photographer and his interest in art informed the lesson where students analyzed the symbolic representations of media and social media use in John Holcroft's illustrations. As students' assessed the image of the thumbs-up 'like' symbol, they evaluated the symbolic meaning of the image in relationship to the ways individuals seek recognition, or not, on social

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media. Therefore, this activity allowed for a critical deconstruction of media symbols and how they were positioned for a certain affect (Mihailidis, 2014).

In addition to analyzing symbols, Mr. Denker seemed very committed to having students assess the accuracy of sources. This included the lesson where Mr. Denker recounted his father's immigration story. Students assessed how media messages change when information is left out of the narrative and how that changes the message's accuracy (Mihailidis, 2014). A similar approach was used in the lesson featuring the Israel Information Center's map of Israel that overlooked land belonging to the Palestinian State, and in the lesson where Leah and Imam Hakim discussed presenting verses from the Quran out of context.

Building upon his curricular freedom and students' backgrounds, Mr. Denker used the series of lessons associated with the CSA's "Islamic Truth Project" materials to specifically focus on assessment of audience, sources, purpose, and accuracy (Mihailidis, 2014). This series of lessons, more than any other I observed, featured a variety of pedagogical approaches to support students' critical media literacies. For example, students spent an entire class period engaged in a web-based research to investigate the individuals behind the CSA's materials. Students had difficulty locating online sources of information about the CSA, suggesting the need for concern about the accuracy of organization based on discrepancies in the group's online presence. Mr. Denker also challenged students to assess the purpose behind the CSA's attention-grabbing techniques, such as the listing of his fictitious voter ID number.

The "Islamic Truth Project" lessons also provided students with the opportunity to consider media audiences and how appeals to emotion shape media messages (Mihailidis, 2014), although as I noted in the findings section above, this was not without issue for students. For example, the CSA appealed to "American Patriots" who they hoped shared the organization's

concern about the ways Islam was represented as a "religion of peace" by the mainstream media. Using emotionally charged language, the CSA's letter noted, "Because of corrupt media, most American's are only vaguely aware of the world's #1 threat to civilization. That threat is Islam. Not just "radical" Islam. Islam." Therefore, the pedagogical approaches Mr. Denker used across the series of lessons allowed students to assess the legitimacy of the CSA in alignment with the four sub-domains for assessment in Mihaildis's (2014) framework. For example, Mena's exit slip at the end of the unit demonstrate integration of the four tenets for assessment. She stated, "As a Muslim, it was sad to see someone who hates Islam lie and say that ISIS/Extremist = TRUE ISLAM and that 1.6 Billion people must not know the true teaching and are just 'Muslim by name.'" Collectively, Mr. Denker drew upon the internal and external factors influencing his practice to develop students' abilities to assess media. He overcame resource-oriented challenges and used the CSA's direct-mailer to create a powerful, yet problematic sequence of lessons that sustained students' assessment of media messages.

All media related content deserves to be vetted before its introduced in class, and teachers should be given the time needed to plan and prepare. As the example where Mr. Denker showed the clip from SNL without previewing it first suggests, his criticality in assessing the acceptability of sources for classroom use was limited due to a lack of time. Furthermore, while Mr. Denker reflected upon his practice to suggest changes he might make in the future, given more time, he might be able to develop lessons that would further support students' assessment of media texts. For example, for the lesson in which students analyzed Holcroft's illustrations, Mr. Denker and students discussed images randomly pulled from his Facebook feed. Provided with additional time, Mr. Denker could have followed through with his proposed change to curating the images and share them with students in a PowerPoint presentation or through a

gallery walk, making the assessment of symbols, sources, and images more accessible to students. There were also missed opportunities for critique and assessment of sources during certain curricular components. For example, the viewing of *Munich* presented problems for students like Mena and Leah because less space was provided for students to critique how Palestinians were positioned in the film. Without opportunities for broader conversations, Spielberg's framing of Israel and Islam in the film potentially reified a one-sided point of view about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

  Appreciation. Vasquez, Stacie, Tate, and Harste (2013) argued that identity and positioning are essential components of agency and foundational elements for what it means to take up critical stances, an approach Mr. Denker seemed to honor in his teaching. For example, across the semester, Mr. Denker noted students had multiple opportunities "to compare and contrast our cultural beliefs with each other." This included their viewing of different films, like *Death in Gaza, Munich,* and *Kundun*, in addition to guest visitors. For example, during his visit Imam Hakim, spoke about the Islamaphobia industry. At a different point in the semester, Mr. Dyson, a former journalist now working at a local federal credit union, addressed the class. He provided students with perspectives on the trustworthiness of certain news sources over others building upon his background and training in the industry. Additionally, students' field trip to the Arab American National Museum and their interactions in the gallery focusing on media stereotypes supported their appreciation for diversity and accurate cultural expressions (Miahilidis, 2014). These approaches were in response to Mr. Denker's self-stated commitment to "putting a different point of view or experience" in front of students. Students' ability to orient the class through the lens of comparative religion provided additional opportunities for appreciation of interacting with media texts and gave them space "to learn about culture, to

engage in wide-ranging dialog and discussion, to voice opinions, [and] to embrace civic dialog"

(Mihailidis, 2014, p. 137) in accordance with media literacy approaches to appreciation.

Despite his appreciation of students' diversity, Mr. Denker also held problematic views about his students, such as the conflicting way he positioned them as both having knowledge and experience, yet lacking understanding about religion when introducing the two-voice poem. Because Leah, Albako, and Mena already struggled, in different ways, with a sense of belonging at school, Mr. Denker's contradictory positioning likely affected the support students felt. In trying to honor "a multicultural pluralistic society that accepts people, hopefully, where they are at in their human experience" Mr. Denker appears to have missed his goal. For example, during our final interview, Mr. Denker expressed his concerns about the emergent bilingual students in his class. He wondered if he engaged and reached these students, and also questioned their ability to take away media literacy skills from the class. He asked, "how do they know what to believe? I would be interested in what are they considering newsworthy sources in American media." Therefore, while I understood the varied, rich, and meaningful ways emergent bilingual students like Albarko and Mena engaged in critical media literacies through my ongoing conversations with the youth, these skills and dispositions were largely invisible to Mr. Denker. He underestimated students' ability to critique media sources using a variety of languages, even if they were less proficient doing so using English.

(In)Action. If, as Mihailidis (2014) argued, "media literacy teaches critical inquiry and critical expression to build stronger relationships between citizens, institutions, and communities" (p. 154), did Mr. Denker meet this ideal? In his practice, Mr. Denker asked questions and drew students' attention to textual features to support students' critical thinking about media messages. However, across my observations, less opportunity was given for critical

expression that challenged students to engage beyond the classroom. Mr. Denker instead seemed fixated on getting students to think. He shared with me in an interview, "I think the role of schools is to develop kids' ability to think. That's it. To me, it's that simple of a mission: teach people how to think, because I think there is a lot of evidence that people are not thinking in society." Mr. Denker's assumption that he was cultivating students' critical thinking skills and therefore their critical media literacies demonstrated a misunderstanding of the fundamental goal of critical literacies. For example, B. Yoon (2016) noted that higher-order thinking skills, such as making inferences and reasoning, are not necessarily synonymous with critical literacies. What was missing from Mr. Denker's approach was a desire to send forth justice-oriented citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) who could raise critical consciousness with a movement toward social action (Freire, 1970; 1997). In other words, while Mr. Denker expressed his concern for assisting students to "stand up against some of [the] silliness" they were encountering online, he positioned them as being "vocal about it in the future." I noted a sense of delayed action was reinforced in Mr. Denker's teaching. For example, during the first lesson for "The Islamic Truth Project" Mr. Denker told students, "I thought we would call the phone number," listed by the CSA and interact with them about their materials. However, two days later, instead of calling the organization, Mr. Denker framed the action hypothetically during class, stating "If we were going to call this organization, think about what you would like to ask them. Turn to a partner and tell them what you might say." After a few minutes of discussion in pairs, students shared with the whole class the questions they might ask the CSA. For example, one student noted, "I would say, 'where are you getting all the data you cite?'" Another student stated, "I would say, 'if you are such Christians, why are you so hateful to [Muslims]? That's not what Christians do.'" Later in the same lesson, students suggested further action they might take to push back

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against the CSA's framing of Islam. When the class searched on Google to learn more about the origins and affiliations of the organization, a student suggested, "we should buy their domain name and make it a pro-Islam website." As these examples demonstrate, Mr. Denker's approach for supporting students to take action led to mixed results. Instead of moving students towards actual engagement with members of the CSA by having them call the organization, the activity remained theoretical in orientation. While the opportunity for students to take up activist-oriented roles in class was limited, the student who suggested purchasing the domain name to establish a pro- Islamic website demonstrated promise for enacting critical media literacies toward social action. In reflecting back on each of the lessons I featured in the findings section above, I recognize that one of the most important aspects in supporting students' critical media literacies, addressing issues of power, privilege, inequities, and oppression (Janks 2010; Luke, 2014; B. Yoon, 2016) was never explicitly encouraged. Therefore, when considering Mihailidis's 5As as a continuum from access to action, much of the work that Mr. Denker did to move students along the continuum ended at appreciation, leaving students' ability to take action unrealized. My findings chapter with Leah, Albarko, and Mena revealed that the focal youth had trouble taking action out of school. When this finding is coupled with my discovery that Mr. Denker did not provide additional school-based support toward action, youth's inaction is contextualized. That is, if the focal youth had been supported for action taking in school, their actions within and beyond school may have been different.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined what internal and external factors influenced the ways Mr. Denker supported his students' critical media literacy practices. I also described the various pedagogical approaches he took in supporting students' critical media literacies, such as asking

questions, making comparisons, drawing students' attention to textual features, interpreting symbols, noticing what is intentionally left out of media messages and so forth. In the next chapter, I summarize both findings chapters and discuss implications for what researchers, teacher educators, and policy makers might learn from the case of Mr. Denker's class and the participants.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the relationship between critical media literacies, civic engagement, and immigrant youths' sense of belonging. I asked two research questions and sub questions.

RQ1: What identities do three immigrant and refugee youth in a multicultural studies class draw upon to enact critical media literacies within and beyond school? How do they do this?

RQ2: What internal and external factors influence how a teacher supports his students' critical media literacies? How do these factors relate to the teacher's pedagogy?

Below, I summarize my findings on how Leah, Albarko, and Mena enacted critical media literacies within and beyond school in support of their transnational, religious, and multilingual identities. I also discuss how internal and external factors influenced Mr. Denker's pedagogy in support of developing students' critical media literacies. Following a discussion of the major findings, I draw conclusions from this research and suggest how my study might further contribute to the knowledge base of researchers and educators working to understand and support transnational youths' critical media literacies.This discussion is followed by my recommendations for further research and a final reflection on this study.

Summary of Main Findings for Focal Youth

Leah, Albarko, and Mena's identities shaped their interactions and responses to media. Collectively, youth called upon their transnational experiences, their religious affiliation, and the languages they knew other than English to critique and re-frame public narratives about immigrants, refugees, and Muslims. While I do not seek to generalize the focal youths' approaches and apply them broadly, in drawing conclusions, I recognize the ways my findings

might resonate (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) to other students, especially those coming from transnational backgrounds. That is, researchers might apply learning from my study to their work with youth from similar backgrounds in their contexts.

Leah, Albarko, and Mena's transnational experiences allowed them to take up comparative stances as they assessed media sources. For example, Leah joined a community of transnational Muslim youth interacting with one another on mvslim.com to gain perspectives and participate in ongoing conversations about her faith. Similarly, Mena relied upon her online companion Nour, as a confidante to gain information about events happening in the Middle East which might not be covered by the Western media. Albarko relied upon a suite of applications to stay connected to friends in both Turkey and Somalia, and was able to interact with them across distance, gaining eyewitness testimony to events transpiring in real-time, such as the attempted coup in summer 2016. A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that transnational youth will draw upon a network of individuals from around the globe, including people from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, to support them as they analyze and critique media.

Leah, Albarko, and Mena used critical media literacies to challenge long-held stereotypes and create greater understanding of the ways media positioned and portrayed Muslims, immigrants, and refugees. Leah called for accurate representation of Islam by tweeting, retweeting, and entering conversations in which Muslim identity was being debated, such as her responses to the ongoing Twitter discussion around (mis)representation of the hijab. Albarko cross-checked sources and called for accuracy and precision in reporting, reflecting his desire to avoid the consequences associated with the religious and linguistic profiling of Muslims. He used Twitter's trending topics feature and followed dedicated Facebook pages, such as the TEDx Mogadishu page, to stay informed about current events and reposition the ways Muslims and

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Somalis were viewed across the media. Mena appealed for individuals to seek diverse media

perspectives and challenge reporting that resulted in one-sided or biased representations of

people groups. She also called for individuals to seek understanding across differences. Mena

hoped that broader understanding about global events causing harm to others would result in

greater compassion and care for people regardless of their backgrounds. A conclusion that can be

drawn from this finding is that transnational youth will use the perspectives they gain from these

transnational participatory communities to challenge single story narratives told by dominant

groups (Adichie, 2009). A further and related conclusion I can draw is that, based on

transnational youths' ability to call upon a number of sources beyond their local context, they

will want others to also seek additional resources. In other words, since these youths'

experiences provide them with global perspectives, they will encourage and, in some ways,

expect others to try and do the same.

As bilingual and multilingual youth, Leah, Mena, and Abarko accessed media in

languages other than English in support of their critical media literacies. For Mena, this approach

also assisted her to overcome feelings of isolation she experienced at school. In comparison to

their monolingual peers at school, Leah, Mena, and Albarko's knowledge of languages other

than English provided them with additional perspectives. Moreover, in Leah's case, the learning

of an additional language supported her to better refute claims made against the Quran.

Collectively, I can conclude from my language-related finding that youths' multilingualism plays

a significant role in supporting their critical media literacies. That is, youths' knowledge of

languages other than English allowed them to access and engage with additional sources because

they were not limited to English-only websites. This, in turn, allowed them to assess, compare,

and critique various online media sources, perspectives, and knowledge that would not available to individuals knowing only one language.

While Leah, Albarko, and Mena demonstrated their abilities to purposefully engage in critical media literacies, their immigrant status at school and in society resulted in their taking cautionary and, at times, self-preserving stances when using social media. Therefore, while youths' engagement across mediated spaces demonstrated their shared interest in reshaping representations about immigrants, refugees, and Muslims, their agency appeared limited by the marginalization they faced in school and society. I conclude that, in the absence of supportive society that accepts transnational youth for their experiences and funds of knowledge, further protectionist stances will be enacted. While Leah, Ablarko, and Mena made valuable contributions to their respective online communities, their ability to make the same impact in their local communities seemed limited. My hope is that society's views on transnational immigrant youth would shift to be a more welcoming and inclusive space so that youth could feel a sense of belonging in both face to face and virtual encounters.

Summary of Main Findings for Mr. Denker

Beyond my learning with and from Leah, Albarko, and Mena, the results of my study and the conclusions I can draw were informed by Mr. Denker's instructional practice in the multicultural studies class. While some of the factors contributing to Mr. Denker's support of students' critical media literacies are not as easily replicable, such as his leadership role as department chair and the autonomy given to him in creating his own elective course, many situational and contextual factors do align with teachers in similar settings. As referenced in the previous findings chapter, a series of three internal factors shaped Mr. Denker's attempts to support his students' critical media literacy practices. My first finding was that Mr. Denker's

practice was shaped by his personal background and experience as a photographer; his appreciation for the creative, artistic process of lesson planning; and his studies in the field of educational technology. I conclude that any areas of interest that a teacher believes aligns with critical media literacies should be cultivated. While other teachers might not have a background in photography or journalism, fields closely related to media literacies, they should draw upon other components of their personal and professional trajectories in support of students' critical media literacies.

My second finding was that Mr. Denker's philosophy about technology, including his protectionist views about shielding students from harmful online discourse and his desire to mediate students' online interactions, impacted his support of students' critical media literacies. I conclude that, while Mr. Denker was well-intentioned in these actions, he ultimately took away students' agency to engage sources in class without some outside interference. While a teacher plays an important role in supporting students' critical media literacies, it would be more productive for teachers to take on a facilitative role instead of acting as an arbitrator.

My third finding suggests that a teacher's commitment to reflect on practice has the potential to further support students' critical media literacies. While I do not know if Mr. Denker implemented the changes he suggested to me in his future teaching, I conclude that any attempt to revisit lessons in an effort to refine them with an eye towards further supporting students' critical media literacies is promising. Teachers' ability to reflect upon their practice is transferable, as in replicable, across contexts.

Mr. Denker's ability to support his students' critical media literacy practices was also shaped by four external factors. First, school- and district-wide policies on phone use and controversial issues served as potential barriers to developing students' critical media literacies.

While teachers in varying contexts will have different policies that affect their practice I

conclude that policies over cell phone and technology use are not likely to change soon.

Therefore, all teachers should decide how they can best work within the systems shaping their

practice. I respect Mr. Denker's decision to ignore the controversial issues policy and hope that

more teachers operating under similar policy enactments might find meaningful ways to engage

students in conversation about controversial issues, as such approaches seem to enhance

students' development of their critical media literacies. At the same time, Mr. Denker's

zealousness over the in- class cell phone policy seemed to take away important opportunities for

student to use their devices in support of their critical media literacies. I conclude the need for a

better balance of phone use in schools. While the flipping of the electronics sign was an attempt

at some sort of equilibrium over phone use, it became a stumbling block for Mr. Denker.

Therefore, a further and related conclusion is that schools need to evaluate the effectiveness of

their cell phone policies and make necessary changes based on the efficacy of their use.

The lack of a dedicated planning period, textbook, and professional development

opportunities influenced the types of lessons Mr. Denker enacted and applies to many other

teachers who carry out instruction in under-resourced settings. A foregone conclusion from this

finding is that teachers need resources to do their jobs effectively. Supporting students' critical

media literacies will only be more effective when teachers have professional development,

curricular materials, and time to plan lessons and instruction.

Third, Mr. Denker's elective course provided curricular freedom and the ability to create

lessons based on his own and students' interests. Since the curricular standards do not directly

outline how teachers should teach critical media literacies, a conclusion I can make from this

finding is two-fold. First, teachers should be both trusted and expected to build in opportunities

for students to critique media across their practice in alignment with the curricula at hand. Second, to support teachers' integration of critical media literacies into their practice, especially for those who feel less able to do so on their own, a developed set of nationwide standards informing the instruction of critical media literacies may prove helpful.

Finally, given shifts in technology and the tendency for traditional media forms to be remediated, Mr. Denker understood, although he was not always successful, at shifting his practice to address the changing media landscape. From this finding, I can conclude that most teachers will need additional support for keeping up to date with the rapid changes in technology and the impact that has on their pedagogy and practice. I believe swift changes in technology are likely to continue in the coming years, especially with the advent of artificial intelligence and augmented reality.

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Implications

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The findings, analysis, and conclusions of my study raise several important considerations for research and teaching, including possible changes for Mihailidis's framework and the areas of, teaching and teacher education, policy, and curriculum. In the section that follows, I provide recommendations across these four different areas with the hope that learning from my study can further support students' enactment of critical media literacies within and beyond school. I also suggest areas for future research within each section.

Mihailidis's Media Literacy Framework

Use of Mihailidis's ecology provided a comprehensive means for analyzing data. I utilized different parts of the framework to make sense of the information that the focal youth and Mr. Denker shared with me. However, as I applied different parts of the framework, I realized certain limitations. Overall, Mihaildis's framework was more productive for analyzing

what Leah, Albarko, and Mena's shared with me across our conversations than in analyzing Mr. Denker's classroom practice. That is, since I was not analyzing Mr. Denker's personal media literacy practices, the framework was less robust when applied to analyzing Mr. Denker's pedagogical approaches and actions.

Furthermore, despite the framework's efficacy in helping me to analyze youths' sharing, I question the ways that the Western and European origin of the framework limited a more nuanced and culturally relevant understanding for the focal youth in my study. That is, Leah, Albarko, and Mena came from Somali and Middle Eastern backgrounds, so their ways of knowing, being, and understanding, their ontological commitments, were not necessarily inherently present in Mihailidis's framework. While the 5A's were comprehensive, one way to extend the framework would be to bring in additional voices of youth from non-Western countries to see how their knowledge and understanding might further enhance the framework.

In seeking to build upon Mihailidis's work, another way to extend the framework would be adding in consideration for the autonomous individual in keeping with Mihailidis's "A" theme. That is, the framework might become even more robust by placing the individual at the center of the ecology to attend to how a person's lived experiences and funds of knowledge shapes their interactions with media. As currently configured, the framework draws implicit connections between the individual and media, but the framework would benefit from foregrounding the autonomous individual in relation to the other 5A's. Since my study is one of the first that I know of to use Mihailidis's framework, additional studies should consider how use of the framework could support the analysis of youths' critical media literacies to further determine the affordances and constraints of the 5A's approach to analyzing media.

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Teaching and Teacher Education

Given the ubiquity of media use across society, teacher preparation programs must address the issue of media literacy with their pre-service teachers. However, as noted in a preceding chapters, media literacy is not widely taught as part of teacher preparation programs (Jolls & Wilson 2014). The findings of my study suggest that teacher education overall needs to do more to holistically integrate critical media literacies into teacher preparation programs. As the research base suggests, media literacy is often embedded within existing core curriculum (Stein & Prewett, 2009). However, I argue that more should be done to explicitly direct teacher candidates' attention to the ways media literacies is being infused into existing courses. Teacher educators seeking ways for how they might better support pre-service teachers' critical media literacies should establish what already-present practices their students enact. By inventorying and building upon what is already-present in pre-service teachers' practices, teacher educators effectively model an approach for honoring and centering the pre-service teachers' future students' experiences and knowledge as valid expertise. Additionally, since Leah, Ablarko, Mena, and Mr. Denker all enacted critical media literacies in alignment with their lived experiences, students might understand more explicitly how their own varying identities shape their practices. For example, a bilingual teacher education candidate might understand how his ability to draw upon multiple languages shapes his own critical media literacies and then consider what this could mean for his future students who know languages other than English. More research is needed that examines the outcomes of preparing preservice teaches to enact critical media literacies in their instruction, across grade bands and contexts. This includes research that accounts for the ways preservice teachers build upon their already-present practices to support, develop, and enhance students' critical media literacies.

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Directors of teacher preparation programs, content based subject area leaders, and program instructors across methods courses, foundations courses, and other teacher preparation classes should look at each required course to identify what aspects of their courses address media literacy. In cases where media literacy is not infused into the program of studies, considerations for points of integration should be discussed and enacted wherever possible. That is, course objectives should clearly delineate learning outcomes associated with media literacy. Moreover, beyond teaching media literacy, courses should include specific instruction on the ways that critical media literacy differs from media literacy. The findings of my study show that more work is needed to help teachers move beyond a general critique of media to addressing issues of power (Janks, 2010). In this way, the goal of critical media literacies to not only acknowledge injustices, but to confront them and make changes to systems and structures in support of justice and equity is needed (Mihailidis, 2014). Additional research might consider what barriers make addressing issues of inequality challenging in school-based contexts to better support teachers to fully realize the goals of critical media literacies.

In their courses, teacher educators might share Mihaildis's 5A's framework, or other models that support critical media literacies, with their pre-service teachers. For example, using Mihailidis's (2014) frame, a class could discuss the media literacy continuum from access to action, and students could apply their own lived experiences to the model. This approach would help pre-service teachers to identify ways that their own practices align with, or need further development, to take action and address issues of power, privilege, inequities, and oppression (Janks 2010; Luke, 2014; B. Yoon, 2016). Teacher educators might also consider showing pre-service teachers videos of classroom practice centered on media and critical media literacies and use the videos as case studies for pre-service teachers to interact with and evaluate. As they view

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classroom instruction, pre-service teachers could apply Mihailidis's framework or a similar framework to the instruction and identify areas where teachers' practice and instruction did or did not meet the ideals associated with critical media literacies. Teacher educators could also share how their own positionality affects their enactment of critical media literacies. Since Mr. Denker demonstrated a struggle with identifying issues of privilege in his own practice, teacher educators should model self-reflection for pre-service teachers so that pre-service teachers would enact future instruction with higher degree of self-awareness for how their own positionality and subjectivities shapes their practice. Additionally, since the series of lessons for "The Islamic Truth Project" contained content that was problematic for Muslim identifying youth, teacher preparation programs should help pre-service teachers to consider the ethical aspects of curricular materials. Just because teachers have access to resources that would support students' critical media literacies does not mean that they should use the materials in class. While teacher educators should avoid promoting overly protectionist stances (Fry, 2014; Krutka & Milton, 2013) they should engage in a debate what types of materials are appropriate for use, or not, and the consequences of using such media resources in class. This is especially important given the focal youths' sense of marginalization at school and their concerns about belonging. More research could examine teachers' pedagogical practices in support of students' sense of belonging and citizenship to determine what approaches open or close opportunities for transnational youths' sense of belonging in school. The results of my study also suggest a need to further support pre-service teachers as they consider and select curricular materials. For example course assignments and projects with a literacy focus in any content area should include required elements that address multiliteracies to help pre-service teachers move beyond print-based texts. Such approaches might better support the integration of media texts in pre-service

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teachers' future lesson planning and instruction. If teacher candidates are encouraged to integrate non-print-based texts in their coursework, they will likely feel greater confidence in using those approaches in schools that are still heavily dependent upon textbooks and other print-dominant curricula. By assisting teachers to integrate media into their instruction, additional opportunities become available for supporting students' critique of media. Furthermore, the results of my study also raise considerations for supporting preservice teachers to consider ways for how they too could push back or resist school and district-wide policies, (i.e. the technology and controversial issues policies) that do not align with what the field recognizes are successful practices for teaching and learning. Teacher educators must therefore intentionally and specifically acknowledge the ways media and critical media literacies are being infused into existing courses. By modeling varying approaches in support of pre-service teachers' critical media literacies, there is less chance that teacher candidates will miss the important knowledge and pedagogical approaches needed for their effective integration into their own future teaching.

Further research might also identify current best-practice approaches for supporting pre-service teachers' critical media literacies and compile these understandings into an edited volume for teacher educators to reference and use in their teaching. Additionally, research might investigate the ways in which teacher preparation programs are effectively equipping, or not, their pre-service teachers' to use critical media literacies in their instruction. Findings from this research might suggest ways programs can reform the scope and sequence of their critical media literacies instruction for pre-service teachers.

Teacher Professional Development

While Mr. Denker clearly supported his students' media literacy development, his lack of attention to issues of power, privilege, inequities, and oppression (Janks 2010; Luke, 2014; B.

Yoon, 2016) across his instruction demonstrate the importance of professional development that specifically highlights this important aspect of media literacy education. Mr. Denker's assumption that he was cultivating students' critical thinking skills and therefore their critical media literacies reveal the need to distinguish between the two. For example, B. Yoon (2016) noted that higher-order thinking skills, such as making inferences and reasoning, are not necessarily synonymous with critical literacies. Therefore, teacher education and professional development must both explicitly draw connections to social action and critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) as essential aspects of critical media literacies instruction. Moreover, all professional training for both in-service and pre-service teachers should view supporting students' critical media literacies not as an added task or extra responsibility to attend to within existing curriculum, but as a holistically integrated matter for every aspect of instruction.

Mr. Denker's call for professional development on how to use the phone more meaningfully in his instruction suggests that more work can be done to address the ways teachers might harness students' personal devices in the classroom. However, this approach also carries with it several ethical considerations. While supporting students use of personal devices and media in the classroom is a noble idea, Burnett (2014) argued that use of digital texts in schools differs from their engagement in other contexts. While students might read a variety of digital texts out of personal interest, if the same texts are used in school, they take on different meanings. Therefore, when teachers frame the use of digital texts toward a specific curricular outcome, they need to be aware of the changed nature of interaction for students (Burnett, 2014). For example, in cases where teachers want students to share about news, events, and conversations they are encountering across their personal social media feeds, they need to be aware of the trade-offs for such approaches, or whether such considerations are even appropriate

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in the first place. Students might understand teachers' requests to engage them in meaningful and culturally sustaining instruction (Paris & Alim, 2014), or they may view the act as a means of surveillance. For example, Leah, Mena, and Albarko were already cautious about increased visibility from their social media use and may have resisted teachers making public something that is intended to be private. For all youth, cumulative exposure to a broader audience beyond a protected online space could be unwanted and unwelcoming. However, because this issue is being taken up more widely as a suggested policy change asking individuals seeking visas to enter the United States to supply their social media identifiers, the matter is increasingly significant for students from transnational backgrounds (Mahdawi, 2018) with the potential to impact their families and extended communities. Future research might investigate the topic of surveillance and social media use in school as this topic has not received broad attention in the literature base.

Because educational institutions have a difficult time keeping up with broad changes taking place across digital culture (Rheingold, 2012), school leaders should make resources available for supporting teachers' professional development for all matters related to technology. Schools should also help teachers to consider how their experiences with technology are shaping their practice. In my study, Mr. Denker's background in photography, his appreciation for the creative process of lesson planning, and his MA in educational technology seemed to influence the way he engaged in critical media literacies. Therefore, schools should help teachers to consider natural affinities between their own lived experiences and their support of students' critical media literacies. In situations where resources are limited to provide training for all teachers, instructional coaches or curriculum leaders in the school should be given opportunities for training with the expectation that they share technology-related learning with faculty and

staff and coach teachers about the ways they can used their already-present experiences with technology to shape their practice. While the three focal youth in my study had access to devices that supported their critical media literacies within and beyond schools, the field as a whole must continue to contend with notions of access (Kazt & Gonzalez, 2016; Matsaganis & Katz, 2016), especially in schools that are under-resourced. To avoid perpetuating future opportunity gaps additional research might further consider a baseline for what considerations, financial or otherwise, are needed to assist schools and communities in better supporting access to educational resources in marginalized communities (Jenkins et. al., 2016).

Policy

Results of my investigation also carry implications for policy-related matters. First, although Hallandale High School's cell phone policy was not consistently enforced school-wide, in Mr. Denker's class, the rule resulted in hardline stances over phone use. While schools and teachers have every right to promote the types of instructional environments they feel are most conducive to students' learning, it might be more productive if they took specific action to address the underlying beliefs inherent in these policies. For example, RobbGrecio (2014) outlined the two main stances in media literacy education: protectionism and empowerment. By making explicit the trade-offs for both approaches, which RobbGrecio advances through the metaphor of a circus tent as a model, the potential for acceptance of both approaches might lead to a more integrated approach in schools. Second, in cases where schools seek to project students from the harmful effects of the internet (Fry, 2014; Krutka & Milton, 2013), they should directly state that belief and inform parents of that stance. Involving important stakeholders, such as students and families, in the conversation over the potential risks of internet use would seem less paternalistic and allow the community, and not just schools, to decide about the risks of

internet use in schools. Likewise, teachers might consider entering conversations with students about acceptable use of phones in class. Third, the assumption that students are using personal devices solely as a means of distraction or escape from the learning process should continually be challenged. Instead, teachers and students might co-construct phone use policies that recognize the potential of the devices for their value in supporting students' critical media literacies and other forms of learning. Future research could investigate the role of policy on students' critical media literacy practices. For instance, comparative studies could investigate the difference between protectionist and empowerment stances to technology use in schools (RobbGrieco, 2014) and which policies or approaches better supports students' critical media literacies. Other policy implications include the ability for Mr, Denker to teach the multicultural studies course as an elective. While each school district has self-governance over what courses are offered, the important learning that took place in Mr. Denker's classroom suggests that schools should increasingly consider the importance of offering multicultural studies courses in their schools. While state and federal level policies continue to threaten the lives and livelihoods of immigrant and refugees based on their transnational backgrounds, religion, language, and other identity factors, the results of my study suggest ways to address and speak back to negative and deficit-oriented positionings. I am cautiously optimistic that through further recognition, understanding, and exultation of immigrant and refugee youths' strengths and contributions to society, civic engagement, and public discourse (Gutiérrez, 2014; Knight & Watson, 2014) policymakers might shift their perspectives and enact more just legislation in support of these individuals and communities.

Curriculum

The findings of my study suggest five possible curricular implications. First, youth leading transitional lives benefited from the multicultural studies elective because it provided them with opportunities to learn and engage with curricula that directly related to their cultures, countries, religion, and backgrounds. While Mr. Denker's pedagogical approaches and instruction clearly included problematic elements, the class overall gave focal youth the opportunity to have their experiences and identities validated. For transnational youth, a multicultural studies course in school might support their learning in similar ways to ethnic studies for U.S.-born youth who hold specific connections with cultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups (O'Leary & Romero; 2011; Sleeter, 2011), or for U.S.-born youth like Leah who live a transnational life. That is, the results of my study add to the current body of knowledge by suggesting the efficacy of a multicultural studies courses for affirming transnational youths' identities. Further research should investigate the benefits of multicultural studies classes for transnational youth, as such studies have the possibilities to shape and inform policy at the state and national level and increase the likelihood that more schools would provide course offerings in multicultural studies.

Second, Mr. Denker followed the students' request to orient the course through the lens of comparative religion. This resulted in a semester's worth of sustained lessons and student engagement. Although the concept of religion is often excluded from in educational settings (Aronson, Amatullah, Laughter, 2016; White, 2009), there is a growing consensus that addressing religion in the context of public schools promotes a diversity of thought and supports the ability for participation in a diverse democratic society (White, 2009). Teachers should, therefore, seek to include units about religion into their multicultural studies curricula and

instruction. For example, while the focal youth in my study enacted clear distinctions between their private and public lives on social media, especially in relation to school, they were more open about their religious identities. Overlooking this important aspect of students' lived experiences over confusion for the metaphorical separation of church and state (White, 2009) might take away valuable opportunities for meaningful learning. At the same time, finding the time, space, and resource to address this need among everything else teachers are called upon to do presents a continual challenge (Aronson, Amatullah, & Laughter, 2016). Since the concept of teaching comparative religion has not yet been widely researched in the disciplines of the social studies, additional work is also needed in this area.

Third, teachers concerned with finding specific genres or types of media for students to assess, critique, and analyze likely have many choices. However, as noted across the findings and discussion section, teachers should consider the ethical ramifications of the materials they choose. Just because a topic is engaging does not mean there are not consequences for its inclusion. While Mr. Denker was unafraid to address controversial issues in his classroom in alignment with the research literature (Byford, Lennon, & Russell, 2009), the CSA's materials might have been one controversy not worth taking up because of the potential to make students who identified as Muslims feel further maligned. As Mihailidis (2014) noted, educators must carefully consider the media they use inside the bounds of the classroom. While there is risk associated with exposing students to learning experiences that are detached from youth's daily civic engagement across media platforms (Mihailidis, 2014), greater harm might come from including certain content. My study suggests that teachers should pay close attention to their students' identities and select materials that affirm rather than denigrate students' positionality.

Fourth, while Leah, Albarko, and Mena used languages other than English outside of school, within the classroom, their ability to use these languages was not taken up by Mr. Denker. More work should be done to support authentic use of languages other than English in the classroom. The theory of translanguaging is one possible way forward (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging is based on the idea of dynamic bilingualism which argues that students call upon their full linguistic repertoires to support their learning, and that language is not separated but integrated (Garcia & Wei, 2014). For example, García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) described how translanguaging pedagogies can be implemented in teaching practice to leverage students' language practices and cultural backgrounds as resources for learning, creating democratic spaces where teachers and learners co-construct knowledge, and critique social hierarchies of power. Had Mr. Denker encouraged use of languages other than English, there is a possibility that his classroom space might have been more inclusive, and Mena could have experienced a greater sense of belonging in school. Additional research might further investigate the affordances that youths' multilingualism has on their critical media literacies. Furthermore, since my study was carried out in English, additional studies may benefit from being conducted in students' mother tongues so that languages other than English are centered. In this way, the corresponding linguistic knowledge and cultural understandings for languages other than English used in critical media literacies can be foregrounded.

Fifth, teachers might benefit from inventorying their students' already-present critical media literacy practices, especially since some of Mr. Denker's assumptions about what he thought students needed to learn about critical media literacies overlooked practices youth were already enacting when critiquing media. Practically speaking, an inventorying of students' critical media literacy practices could include students sharing about ways they have used social

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media or technology to address issues of power, privilege, inequities, or oppression (Janks 2010; Luke, 2014; B. Yoon, 2016). If students shared about approaches they engaged in, then a space for mutual learning and further sharing could be established. Taking an inventory of students' practices might also help teachers to know what work needs to be done to assist students in addressing issues of criticality they might be overlooking. That is, if students critique media, but do not seek transformational approaches, a teacher can support students to see steps they might further take to address issues of power, privilege, inequities, or oppression (Janks 2010; Luke, 2014; B. Yoon, 2016).

An additional implication that is not easily bound by the above three categories is the need to reconcile, however possible, the potential that youth have for leading the way forward regarding critical media literacies. Because of the ways school and society are structured, youths' abilities to upend power differentials are limited by the ways these systems are designed to reinforce inequalities. Therefore, while youth seek to show more productive, inclusive, and just ways forward through their critical media literacies, their agency often gets thwarted by systems of dominance. Teachers and teacher educators committed to justice must continue to open up spaces so that youth know and believe their voices matter to the broader conversations taking place across society. For example, as I was writing up the final parts of this dissertation one of the deadliest mass school shootings took place at Marjory Stoneman Douglass High School in Parkland, Florida. Seventeen students were killed and another seventeen were seriously injured (Laughland, Luscombe, & Yuhas, 2018) when a former student entered the school with an AK-15 assault rifle and opened fire on teachers and students. In response to the incident, students at Stoneman Douglas began the #NeverAgain campaign, largely promulgated through Twitter, against gun violence (Alter, 2018). Youths' advocacy was swift, widespread, and recognized as

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legitimate, leading to nation-wide March For Our Lives and National School Walkout (Gray, 2018). At the same time, youths' emboldened action has caused some segments of society and members of the media to retaliate with hostility (Ebbs, 2018). Thankfully, such responses were met with resistance, leading to a boycott of one conservative TV show host's program, and another to lose his television program and his job (Rosenberg, 2018; Wang, Chiu, & Jang, 2018). Further complicating the Parkland youths' advocacy is the recognition over what types of activism—and activism led by whom—are supported by the media and general public and which kinds are ignored (Lockhart, 2018; Wong, 2018). Since the Parkland youth movement started in a more affluent community and was led by a predominately White group of students, issues of class and race are shaping conversation around whose voices belong in the movement but are being overlooked. This reverberates with my findings about Leah, Albarko, and Mena, whose ability to take action was limited by their positionality within society. Obviously, reconciling these conflicting realities suggests there is more important work to be done in the field of critical media literacies. Regardless, we should trust youth to help lead the way forward toward change. Therefore, those committed to equity and justice must continue to advocate for and create more inclusive spaces so the critical media literacies of all youth, especially transnational, multilingual, Muslim youth, can be realized.

Epilogue

In closing this dissertation, I want to reflect on the important learning that took place across the process. I noted at the outset that this dissertation was a story about belonging, and as I come to the finish, I remain committed to that view. In many ways, this dissertation was also a realization of my limitations. In earlier drafts of my Findings chapters, I included far too many additional pieces of data and evidence that I thought belonged as part of the larger story I was

attempting to tell. However, these examples ultimately ended up confusing the narrative and got in the way of directly answering my research questions. In fact, one of my favorite anecdotes about Leah creating a female-only Snapchat account to show herself preparing for Eid during Ramadan, which I felt certain should be included in the dissertation, got cut. Several other very compelling, to me at least, pieces of data were also excluded from the final manuscript. While these additional stories were not a part of the dissertation story, I am compelled to help share the multiplicity of stories (Adiche, 2009) beyond the one I chose to tell in this manuscript. Therefore, I look forward to helping these additional stories to find their way into journal articles published beyond this dissertation.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of my work, my journey across the dissertation in many ways reflected my own attempt take part in broader conversation across different fields and place them in closer conversation with one another. In some ways, I feel like I was successful. Yet, I recognize the need for further growth in support of my membership as part of these scholarly communities. Furthermore, as much as I wish that the Findings chapter on Leah, Ablarko, and Mena's critical media literacies would have better fit with my Findings chapter on Mr. Denker, I had to be content that a disconnect existed. While the data I collected would not let me reconcile the disconnect, the disconnect itself suggested the need for better ways to align students' and teachers' critical media literacies moving forward. Ultimately, my greatest concern about belonging is not my own, but for Leah, Albarko, and Mena. My hope is that the important work these youth have done, are doing, and will continue to do can shape and transform the landscape and rhetoric about transnational youth so that future youth will never have to question their sense of belonging in the first place.

APPENDICES

First Interview Protocol for Immigrant Youth

The purpose of this first interview is to get to know you better and to get a better understanding of how you analyze and critique things you encounter on social media.

1. Can you tell me about how school is going for you this semester?
2. What class are you enjoying the most?
3. Can you share with me how long you have lived in the United States?
   a. What country/ies did you live in before coming to the United States?
4. What is your home language?
   a. What other languages d you speak?
5. Can you tell me more about your use of social media?
6. How do you access social media?
7. What differences are there in your social media use before and after you came to the United States?
8. How does your use of social media support connections to your home country or culture?
9. When you engage on social media, what does that do for you personally?
10. Can you tell me how your teachers use social media to help support your learning at school?
11. Where are some of the places that you get your news?
12. How has social media changed the way you get news?
13. How do you make decisions about who or what you can trust on social media?
14. Can you tell me about a time when you analyzed or critiqued something you came across or read on social media because you didn't trust what it said?
15. There has been discussion lately about 'fake news.' I am wondering if you can tell me what that term means to you.
16. Can you give me an example of any 'fake news' you've encountered on social media or elsewhere?
    a. How did you respond?
    b. Can you tell me about a lesson you had where teachers taught you to how to critique 'fake news' or how to be more critical of media?

APPENDIX B

First Interview Protocol for Teacher

1. Can you tell me about your personal use of social media?

2. How has social media influenced news or the way you get news? How does this shape your teaching?

3. How has social media influenced the relationships you have with your students?

4. Can you tell me about some ways you use social media in your daily instruction?

5. How do school policies affect the use of technology in your teaching?

6. Can you tell me more about your immigrant students' participation across mediated spaces?

7. In what was does immigrant students participation across mediated spaces provide opportunities for civic engagement that otherwise might be denied to non-naturalized citizens?

    a. Can you give examples for how you've seen this to be true for your students?

APPENDIX C

Core Questions for Cultivating Media Literacy for Youth

Access
- Where does the information originate?
- Who owns the information?
- Who controls access to the information?
- What are the barriers to access?
- What different types of information can be accessed?
- How do different media technologies alter the types of access I have to information?
- How does access differ from national, religious, ethnic, racial, gender, and sexual orientation backgrounds?

Awareness
- What is the meaning of the information provided in larger social & civic contexts?
- What are the larger value systems in which media messages are constructed?
- How can we be aware of the representations media cultivate?
- How doe media messages affect values?
- What cultural, political, social, or economic representations are embedded in the information?
- What are the underlying assertions associated with the information?
- What larger ideological positions are presented in this information?
- What are the limitations to understanding culture through media

Assessment
- What is the purpose of the message?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Who is the author of the message?
- What sources are used to advance points in the messages?
- What techniques are used to grab attention?
- What symbols are used to create meaning in the message?
- What is the emotional appeal of the message and how is it triggered?
- How is authority build into the message?
- What information is not included or left out of the message?

Appreciation
- In what ways are media beneficial avenues for civil society?
- How does freedom of expression help maintain diversity?
- How can multiple perspectives build a more vibrant media environment?
- How can understanding media lead to more participation?
- How can my voice contribute to more vibrant dialog about issues, events, and hobbies?
- What responsibilities do I have to my family, friends, and acquaintances in social media spaces?
- What types of behaviors will help build a more tolerant, diverse, and inclusive media culture?

Action
- How can I use media to have voice?
- How and where can I participate in the creation of meaningful dialog?
- Who are the communities that I connect with, and what role do I have in those communities?
- What new digital avenues can I use to be active and engaged?
- How can I contribute to tolerance, diversity, and discourse in digital media culture?
- Where are my actions beneficial or detrimental to my local communities?
- How can I act to help better issues I care about, inform others on my positions or engage in more valuable dialog?

(Mihailidis, 2014)

First Round Focal Youth Interview Codes

Participant	Mihailidis's 5A	Code
Leah	Access	I wanted to make a new Twitter because I have followers from back in middle school, and high school, I am like, I am not the same person
	Awareness	You won't see some of this stuff on CNN, it's not breaking news, what was it 10 airstrikes in 30 seconds it's not news for them.
	Assessment	Has the hijab turned into everything that it's against? I said it was a good read. It was posted by the Huffington Post
	Appreciation	but I like to get other people's perspectives that are in a different country, I can't talk about what is happening in the UK or Canada cuz I don't live there
	Action	that's when I tweeted, because I was like you shouldn't be doing that
Albarko	Access	I have Facebook, news or stuff going on around, Twitter and snapchat for friends, talking, texting and I was sometimes pictures on Instagram
	Awareness	I was talking with my friend last night, we came out of the gym and he was checking his Twitter. It said that Donald Trump's new travel ban was suspended again
	Assessment	yeah, today they were saying an other name. Maybe that guy will be in trouble [from being misidentified] sometimes they use somebody's picture and it comes out they are not the person doing that stuff, so what everyone knows his face, if they see him someplace else, they will be like 'that's the bad guy' so that is very dangerous too
	Appreciation	when I heard he spoke Arabic and someone got mad to him, we all speak different languages, most people who live in the US speak one or more languages, and they teach school in Spanish or another language. I don't know how they end up throwing them out? He said, I was speaking with my mom [
	Action	[finds Tweet] from Ben Stiller, he liked it or retweeted it.
Mena	Access	the way people depend upon social media here is different than Jordan, I mean, here students are allowed to bring their phone in the school and use it in the class, but back in Jordan you can't bring your phone into school or even use it in the class. I mean they will call your parents
	Awareness	the problem is, I read it in Arabic, but in the English part, they won't post it. That's the problem to me

Assessment	And how they got article from the Quran and mistranslated it, that was like, no! A lot of people started to do that and that is a problem
Appreciation	I like to read, so I use it to read sometimes
Action	show them the truth, talk to these people, ask them questions, talk to them, ask how they got to that point

Focal Youth Second Round Coding Examples

Participant	Mihailidis's 5A	Code	Sub-domain
Leah	Access	I wanted to make a new Twitter because I have followers from back in middle school, and high school, I am like, I am not the same person	Ownership
	Awareness	You won't see some of this stuff on CNN, it's not breaking news, what was it 10 airstrikes in 30 seconds it's not news for them.	Context
	Assessment	Has the hijab turned into everything that it's against? I said it was a good read. It was posted by the Huffington Post	Accuracy
	Appreciation	but I like to get other people's perspectives that are in a different country, I can't talk about what is happening in the UK or Canada cuz I don't live there	Perspective
	Action	that's when I tweeted, because I was like you shouldn't be doing that	Voice
Albarko	Access	I have Facebook, news or stuff going on around, Twitter and snapchat for friends, talking, texting and I was sometimes pictures on Instagram	Participatoin
	Awareness	I was talking with my friend last night, we came out of the gym and he was checking his Twitter. It said that Donald Trump's new travel ban was suspended again	Context
	Assessment	yeah, today they were saying an other name. Maybe that guy will be in trouble [from being misidentified] sometimes they use somebody's picture and it comes out they are not the person doing that stuff, so what everyone knows his face, if they see him someplace else, they will be like 'that's the bad guy' so that is very dangerous too	Accuracy

	Appreciation	when I heard he spoke Arabic and someone got mad to him, we all speak different languages, most people who live in the US speak one or more languages, and they teach school in Spanish or another language. I don't know how they end up throwing them out? He said, I was speaking with my mom [	Diversity
	Action	[finds Tweet] from Ben Stiller, he liked it or retweeted it.	Community
Mena	Access	the way people depend upon social media here is different than Jordan, I mean, here students are allowed to bring their phone in the school and use it in the class, but back in Jordan you can't bring your phone into school or even use it in the class. I mean they will call your parents	Barriers
	Awareness	the problem is, I read it in Arabic, but in the English part, they won't post it. That's the problem to me	Context
	Assessment	And how they got article from the Quran and mistranslated it, that was like, no! A lot of people started to do that and that is a problem	Accuracy
	Appreciation	I like to read, so I use it to read sometimes	Perspective
	Action	show them the truth, talk to these people, ask them questions, talk to them, ask how they got to that point	Engagement

APPENDIX F

Mr. Denker Second Round Codes

Participant	Mihailidis's 5A	Code	Area subdomain
Mr. Denker	Access	If I could make one change it would be to have the ability to shut down WiFi ability in my own classrooms	Barriers
	Awareness	I wanted kids to see that people can manipulate information to serve a purpose and you know the ultimate thing is to get them to understand this concept of what propaganda is, I thin	Representation
	Assessment	I think the one thing I really hope that kids will take from making them stop, and pause and wonder if something is accurate or true is that just having that warning light going off in their head, going wait a minute could this be wrong, could this be inaccurate, should I maybe look for something that tells me if this is true or not	Accuracy
	Appreciation	To me it means that we are a multicultural pluralistic society that accepts people, hopefully, with where they are at in their human experience and they bring a little bit of their historical experiences from their history or traditions or wherever they are coming from and they get a little, it all kind of melts into the American melting part, but again it's that question are we a melting pot or a stew waiting to boil over?	Diversity
	Action	I wanted to see how students would react to it and especially how my Muslim students would react to it and I decided to copy it and give every kid a copy of it	Engage

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