

Taking Down Walls:

Countering Dominant Narratives of the Immigrant Experience through the Teaching of *Enrique's Journey*

Published in 2010 and adopted widely nationwide in 2012, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010a) have dramatically altered the landscape of the English Language Arts (ELA) classroom. In 2016, the hotly contested unfunded mandate, which divides ELA into four strands—reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language—serves as the standard course of study in 42 states, the District of Columbia, and four territories (Standards, 2016). The CCSS's Text Exemplars (commonly referred to as Appendix B), a collection of recommended readings chosen for their perceived quality, breadth, and text complexity, have garnered critique for their allegiance to canonical titles, their absence of contemporary issues, and their paucity of young adult literature (Moss, 2013; Schieble, 2014). These shifts in standards offer a new iteration of what Applebee (1992) aptly referred to as the “stability and change” of the secondary English classroom. While many of the texts recommended in Appendix B reflect the voices and authorship that have long marked the secondary English classroom, its promotion of informational texts—culminating with an expectation that 70% of students' reading be classified as such by 12th grade—reflects a radical shift in instructional realities.

How teachers negotiate the demands of the CCSS with their attempts to teach in culturally responsive ways poses another instructional intersection and a moral conundrum worthy of examination. Long have

teachers experienced hardships incorporating multicultural literature into their classrooms, with many teachers admitting their preferences for and comfort with canonical and required curricula (Macaluso, 2013). Resources, expertise, and time limitations also influence teachers' willingness and ability to infuse multicultural literature into their classrooms (Stallworth & Gibbons, 2006). Recent scholarship (e.g., Watkins & Ostenson, 2015) suggests that the nonfiction demands of the CCSS, coupled with the influence of Appendix B over teachers' practices, only serve to exacerbate the difficulties teachers already experience in trying to weave in the stories of people, voices, and experiences positioned on the margins of the secondary English canon.

In order to properly prepare and equip preservice teachers (PSTs) with the tools required to navigate these dilemmas, teacher educators must recognize, and respond to, the changing realities of the secondary ELA classroom. We agree with Watkins and Ostenson (2015) that:

[Teacher educators] must be attuned in our instruction to such reform efforts as the CCSS, given that these efforts are likely to shift the nature of some of these challenges, altering the real and perceived autonomy of teachers. Students who leave our programs clearly aware of the challenges they will face and equipped with some strategies for dealing with those challenges . . . will hopefully be less frustrated and more effective in the choices they make. (p. 264)

As teacher educators, ours is an orientation toward pedagogy driven by our commitment to social justice

and agency; we fervently believe in the importance of using classrooms as spaces in which to reorient preservice teachers' prejudices, biases, and socialized assumptions in order to combat the inequities that

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As such, while we respect teacher educators' various perceptions of the Standards, we espouse the importance of teacher educators learning the nuances of the CCSS so that they can help equip PSTs with strategies for pushing back against their constraints. Thus, we recognize and work to disrupt the ideologies that imbue the CCSS, Appendix B, and other elements of the ELA classroom that may marginalize secondary students. Yet, we simultaneously main-

tain that this work should not preclude our attempts to foster explicit discussion and design of lessons that help our PSTs satisfy the very system we oppose.

We hold with Stallworth, Gibbons, and Fauber (2006) who posit, "English teacher educators must expose pre-service and in-service teachers to diverse literature appropriate to the secondary classroom and facilitate their abilities to create curricula where diverse stories and voices are mainstreamed rather than marginalized" (p. 487). Yet as pedagogical realists, we understand, too, that teachers must negotiate the constraints placed on them by their administration, curriculum, curricular standards, and the court of public opinion that might perceive the incorporation of multicultural, equity-oriented literature as agenda-driven (Bissonnette, 2016). Thus, what we propose here is one strategy for preparing PSTs to deliver multicultural, CCSS-aligned instruction in social-justice-oriented ways, though other powerful possibilities exist (e.g., Bissonnette & Glazier, 2015). Like Sams and Allman (2015), we share our experience using young adult literature to disrupt PSTs' normalized assumptions and deficit narratives of immigration, tending particularly to Central American immigration. We fostered this discussion by incorporating Sonia Nazario's (2007)

nonfiction text *Enrique's Journey*, a harrowing account of one Honduran boy's journey from Central America to the United States, into our classroom teaching.

A History and Contextualization of Central American Immigration in the United States

Enrique's perilous journey is but one experience of immigration to the United States. The Latin@ immigrant population makes up approximately 16% of the nation's immigrant population (Gutiérrez, 2013). The United States' Latin@ population grew to at least 14.6 million by 1980, to 22.4 million in 1990, to 35.3 million in 2000, and approached 50 million by 2010 (Kent, Pollard, Haaga, & Mather, 2001; Passel & D'Vera Cohn, 2011). With a combined 75.7%, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans comprise the majority of the US Latin@ population (Gutiérrez, 2013).

But other ethnic subgroups are steadily growing their US presence. The US Census reported that in 2013, 3.2 million Central American immigrants had relocated to the United States, reflecting 7% of the nation's total immigrant population. Though the 1950s and 1960s saw a small Central American immigrant population, a series of civil wars in the 1970s spurred a mass exodus from Central American countries. Displaced by a succession of natural disasters in the 1990s, undocumented Salvadorans, Hondurans, and Nicaraguans entered the US in large numbers. From 2003–2013, the population of Central Americans in the United States grew by more than 56%. Other culprits, such as extreme poverty, hunger, violence, and poor/inaccessible healthcare, have also spurred immigration (Zong & Batalova, 2015). From 2000–2010, the population of Honduran immigrants alone increased by 191% (Gutiérrez, 2013).

How to best respond to the influx of Latin@ immigrants has engendered passionate debate across political parties. In December of 2015, President Obama ordered the deportation of all Central Americans who had not complied with his removal orders. Republican presidential candidates, as part of their platforms for election, promised to end the Obama administration's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which allows certain immigrants who entered the country prior to the age of sixteen an opportunity to apply for temporary legal status (Starr, 2015). Don-

ald Trump’s now infamous allegation that Mexican immigrants are “murderers and rapists” who would be kept out of the United States by a large wall he promised to erect upon election pleased many voters and catapulted him to the front of his party. Immigration has perhaps never been more contested than it is at present.

Our understanding of the CCSS and its incongruence with social-justice-oriented pedagogies, as well as our conception that immigration is a timely, salient issue for PSTs, teachers, and secondary students alike, compelled us to craft an assignment that would synergize—and humanize—these conversations. In crafting the assignment, we had a two-fold purpose. First, given that approximately 6% of Central American immigrants identify as 18 years of age or younger (Zong & Batalova, 2015), teachers must develop an awareness of these issues if they are to sensitively approach immigrant students’ realities. Second, secondary students for whom immigration is not an experienced reality need help in developing a critical awareness of this social justice issue in order to develop their empathy and social consciousness.

Ultimately, opening up these channels for conversation provides a means through which students can contribute to a participatory democracy that balances both individual and common interests, with all parties working to better understand the perspectives of others (Liggett, 2014). However, to effect these goals in their future classrooms, PSTs first need spaces to engage with these timely issues as well as opportunities to consider the ways in which they may invite their own future students to do the same. Using nonfiction young adult literature, we present one such possibility for engaging PSTs in the immigration conversation.

Enrique’s Journey: Defying the Dominant Immigrant Narrative

In 2002, journalist Sonia Nazario published a six-part series in the *Los Angeles Times* titled *Enrique’s Journey*. In 2007, she fashioned her work into a book bearing the same title, and in 2013, the book was adapted for young adult readers. Having spent her career as an activist and journalist dedicated to reporting on social issues, attending specifically to immigration, Nazario has enjoyed great acclaim for her account of a young boy facing formidable obstacles as he travels from Honduras to reunite with his mother in the

United States. Among the myriad awards for her work, Nazario was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing. Her book is used for study in high school and university classrooms across the nation, appearing as one of the most frequently chosen texts for college freshmen common reading programs (Thomsen, 2015). Nazario frequently speaks in political arenas, appears on popular media outlets, and delivers addresses to schools nationwide, urging for a deeper consideration of global immigration issues.

Told from a third-person point of view, the story chronicles the life of Enrique, a Honduran boy who, at age five, is left behind by his mother, Lourdes, as she seeks to save her children from extreme poverty by immigrating to the United States. Weary of temporarily living with various family members and overwrought with longing for his mother, Enrique leaves his girlfriend and remaining family at home at age 17 and sets out for the United States. He attempts and fails to reach the United States seven times. Yet each defeat, accompanied by a return to Honduras, only solidifies his will to succeed. His final mission is fraught with a brutal beating, encounters with armed gangs, and dangerous rides atop trains. These horrors are balanced, however, with glimpses of humanity as Enrique is taken in by Olga, a woman who dedicates her life to nursing injured immigrants, and later by Padre Leo, a priest who forfeits his own salary in order to pay the staff of the church where he supports immigrant youth who “go for days without food, for months without resting their heads on a pillow” (p. 123). After his mother gathers enough money to pay a smuggler, Enrique at last arrives in the United States.

The story, however, does not offer a simplistic resolution. Enrique struggles to transition to a new life and to forgive his mother, whom he feels abandoned him. He battles alcohol and drug addiction as well as his own ambivalent feelings for having left his girlfriend, who bears their daughter in his absence, behind. He eventually pays to bring the two to Florida, where he has relocated with his mother. There, Enrique has a run-in with law enforcement, and his undocumented status is uncovered. Nazario intercedes on Enrique’s behalf, inserting herself into the story; she explains that the original publication of her book gained him notoriety for which he would be targeted by gangs if deported. The story ends leaving Enrique’s legal case unresolved.

Throughout the text, Nazario weaves factual information on immigration policy into the narrative, and in her afterword, she discusses the controversy at length, presenting multiple sides for consideration and including the perspectives of Enrique and his mother on related areas. Her true account grants unflinching insight into the complexities of Latin American immigration.

Classroom Practice: Cultivating Social Justice through the Elements of Nonfiction

Though not a conventional writer of young adult texts, Nazario crafts a work that holds great promise for adolescent readers; therefore, we elected to teach

it as a title likely to appeal to young adult readers.

Specifically, we adopted this text because it satisfies two purposes: it addresses requirements of the CCSS while it also relates to our broader goals as teacher educators working to stimulate and promote social justice. To achieve this two-fold aim, Ashley's students engaged in multiple critical considerations of the text, examining it as a nonfiction work while simultaneously developing understandings of Enrique's story as a counter-narrative to dominant views on immigration.

Classroom Context

The course on young adult literature described here occurred at a large, north-western university and was a required pedagogy course for secondary English

Education majors. In fall 2015, there were 22 students enrolled. Because the course was open to general English majors in addition to preservice English teach-

ers, approximately one-third of the students did not plan to teach, while the remaining two-thirds anticipated careers as middle or high school educators. The students in the class were predominantly White and female, reflective of the larger teaching population (Boser, 2014), and they encompassed a range of socioeconomic classes.

Throughout the semester, Ashley engaged students with a multitude of young adult texts that spanned varied perspectives and issues. Given that Ashley's pedagogies focused on developing students' critical literacies (Janks, 2013; Luke, 2000), the emphasis was generally on considerations of power and privilege. As Behrman (2006) explains, "Critical literacy espouses that education can foster social justice by allowing students to recognize how language is affected by and affects social relations" (p. 490). Alongside this emphasis on language, a critical literacy approach seeks to facilitate students' readings of texts for the ideologies they create and perpetuate, where texts are broadly defined to include social practices and media (Morrell, 2007). Discussion in Ashley's course during the semester therefore confronted, for example, social class inequities in Rainbow Rowell's *Eleanor & Park* (2013), racism and intertextuality in Jacqueline Woodson's *Brown Girl Dreaming* (2014), sexuality in John Green and David Levithan's *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* (2010), and representations of disabilities in Francisco Stork's *Marcelo in the Real World* (2009). Discussing oft-perceived "hot lava" (Glazier, 2003) topics—that is, those subjects deemed sensitive by society and frequently avoided in conversation—was central to the course. At the culmination of the semester, students engaged with the issue of immigration from Latin American countries to the United States through their reading of Sonia Nazario's *Enrique's Journey*.

Blogging with *Enrique's Journey*

To acquaint students with the book's background, Ashley first shared information on Sonia Nazario's career trajectory and provided a brief overview of immigration policy and history in the United States. Students were required to keep a blog throughout the semester where they offered initial, personal reflections on the texts read in class. Each was roughly 500 words, and instructions for blog responses were:

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First, provide an analysis of the text, thinking about traditional literary elements, such as theme, character development, plot, etc. Second, critique the text in terms of what or who it leaves out, what it might reveal about cultural or gender stereotypes, or what social issue it treats and how. Then, answer the following questions: How does this text position adolescents? Why would this text appeal to adolescents? Finally, give the text a rating on an A–F scale based on your personal reading preferences, and justify your answer.

Students in the young adult literature course had a choice of works on which to blog; they were required to complete 10 entries for the semester. In response to *Enrique's Journey*, 15 students wrote blog entries. Ashley made it a point to read students' responses before class; doing so allowed her insight into the students' reactions to the text prior to course discussions. Consequently, she was able to navigate and prompt conversations by referencing anonymously opinions they shared or questions they raised in this forum. Ashley conceptualized this assignment as a form of hybrid pedagogy (Stommel, 2012), seeing blogging as a veritable "third space" that opened up new dialogic opportunities during which students could learn, even when not situated in the physical classroom. As she read, Ashley was first struck by how many of her students stated that they *enjoyed* the text, despite it being a nonfiction work. One student shared, "I was hesitant about reading a nonfiction novel. I have honestly never read that many nonfiction books before. However, I really loved this book!"

Analyzing Students' Reflections

While we were interested in these comments, this study sought to unravel the ways nonfiction young adult literature could facilitate deeper, more critical understandings of immigration. With those goals, we employed the qualitative data analysis software HyperResearch® to code the content of the students' blogs and to construct themes and broader categories from their responses (Saldaña, 2012). In an effort to ensure the accuracy of our findings, we coded approximately half of the blog posts together. This allowed us to make sense of the themes that emerged from the data in a cohesive, consistent way. We began our analysis process by first coding in isolation and keeping analytic memos (Boeije, 2002); we met periodically to discuss our findings, reconciling any incongruence in our analyses. Then, we recoded the data to reflect our understanding of the processes at work, which

ultimately allowed us to identify the general findings of the study. Once these were established, we delved into each category with a discourse analytic lens (Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 1996) to examine *how* the students were discussing particular aspects within themes, noting, for example, word choices and patterns in the ways they constructed responses.

In what follows, we share how the students' responses spoke to Ashley's pedagogical purposes; the discussion illustrates the potential of students reading nonfiction young adult literature for achieving social justice goals. This potential is evidenced by students' development of critical consciousness and their reflection on positionalities that counter deficit, stereotypical perspectives of Latin@ immigrants.

The Development of Critical Consciousness through *Enrique's Journey*

Overall, PSTs demonstrated that reading a nonfiction informational text helped position them to consider issues in more dynamic, complicated, socially just ways. With regard to this advancement, four themes emerged: the text's power to help PSTs rethink "reality," humanize immigration, develop and apply additive frameworks, and engage in social critique.

Rethinking Reality

Of the 15 students who read the text, 7 offered a rating of the book; of those 7, 5 awarded the book an "A." Part of the reason for their affinity seemed to be the fact that Nazario shared *actual* events. One student whose writing reflected this sentiment noted, "The book reports on very real issues (such as the deportation process of Enrique, and Jasmin's own fear

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of her parents being deported one day).” There was an urgency experienced through reading the narrative because of its factual nature. As seen in another student’s words, “This one [book] makes me feel anger and unrest toward a very real problem rather than an imaginary one.” This aspect of “being real” pervaded students’ responses, as there was something about knowing that the hardships faced by Enrique

actually happened that resonated with students. In fact, a variation of the word “real,” such as in the term “reality,” arose at least 30 times in the students’ blogs. Students also highlighted Nazario’s involvement as a legitimizing aspect of the text; one student expressed, “She just wanted to be able to deliver Enrique’s story in the most authentic way in hopes to bring light to immigration and how hard it is for people to obtain a happy life.” Many students remarked on Nazario’s bravery and commitment, as demonstrated by her undertaking and replicating the journey so that the story would feel credible.

Beyond emphasis on the content of the text, students also commented

on Nazario’s style and how it allowed them to draw connections to the work. In their discussion of evaluative components of nonfiction, Keifer and Williams (2011) suggest focusing on traditional elements such as “accuracy and authenticity, content and perspective, style, organization, and illustrations and format” (p. 294), but they also challenge us to consider how nonfiction is actually like literature, with aesthetic qualities such as style, and how works can represent not only facts but also open up conversations. Similar to the types of analysis proposed for informational texts in the CCSS, Keifer and Williams (2011) encourage readers to conceptualize nonfiction as more than

mere presentations of facts or information, and the students’ blogs offered comments that spoke to these aspects throughout. Assessments of Nazario’s writing style arose in remarks such as, “The word choice is very specific and she is using a form of pathos to appeal to the emotions of the readers,” and “Making me feel those emotions was something that Nazario succeeded at in her writing.” These ruminations defied the latter student’s worry that “Nonfiction novels have a harder time drawing [readers] in because they aren’t able to connect with the main character.” Students’ evaluations related to style thus reflected their affective responses, and these emotions allied them with the social justice issue of immigration.

In addition to the inherent qualities of authenticity and style that students emphasized, other elements of nonfiction generally include visual components such as photographs or charts (Kerper, 2003). These items are meant to provide a deeper understanding of text and require students to employ visual literacies, which Seglem and Witte (2009) argue “must be included within all school curricula if teachers want to adequately prepare students for a world that is surrounded by and driven by images” (p. 224). Analyzing supplemental images, therefore, is crucial to a study of the whole text in which they are present. Even further, Schieble (2014) purports the import of *critical visual literacy*, a combination of concepts borrowed from semiotics and critical theory, whereby students read visual texts to interpret “how power relations among people, places, and events flow through the placement of details in an image”; she states that such an activity “provides robust opportunities for building academic skills and articulating ideas about race and justice” (p. 50).

These notions of visual literacy in nonfiction hold true for *Enrique’s Journey* and arose in the students’ blogs. There is a series of photographs within the book that portrays Enrique as a young boy at the age when his mother left for the United States. In other images, we see Enrique’s girlfriend and daughter. Perhaps the most potent pictures, however, are of train jumpers and the encampment on the Rio Grande that is emblematic of where Enrique would have stayed during his journey. This series of depictions is particularly powerful in terms of critical visual literacy, as examining the clothing of the youth in the photos, their age, gender, and conditions of existence aug-

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ments the story in ways that presenting the facts in prose cannot. Demonstrating the value of the images, one student blogged, “I really loved the pictures . . . because humans crave images to reference when trying to imagine a place or person and it was cool to see what the places and people actually look like.” Bolstering this point, other students shared how the images helped them visualize a topic or area about which they had little knowledge or experience. The illustrative component therefore contributed to the text and to conceptualizing the characters in affirming, rather than deficit, ways.

Humanizing Latin Immigration

In terms of the text allowing for deeper connections beyond those of style, much as literature does, students highlighted various themes and points to which a wider audience could relate. Of those broader categories discussed, family was a focal point throughout. Poverty, drug abuse, love, and abandonment were others. These themes were not limited to Enrique; rather, as the readers determined, they reflect a lived reality of many secondary students. For instance, one responder commented, “A lot of children have single mothers who have to work all day to support their children. They may not be in a different country, but are still rarely seen by their children.” Another offered, “I also liked the way the author portrayed drug abuse and addiction. This is something many young people go through or have seen firsthand.” Finally, one student drew connections to the parental love in the story, writing, “This story would show students how much their parents love them and the lengths they would go to to take care of them.”

Many responders observed how “relatable” Enrique and his story are because of Nazario’s depiction of his humanity; she represents him as having both strengths and weaknesses as well as a desire to have a better and more complete and safe life. While perhaps not conventionally identified as elements of nonfiction, it was these characteristics upon which students focused, as opposed to a strict recount of facts and information. And yet it is the story’s basis in reality that prompted these affective readings. While the students’ blogs did illustrate perspectives on *Enrique’s Journey* as nonfiction in a traditional sense—they discussed themes, evaluated the author’s style, and conjectured possibilities for making connections—they also moved beyond these surface readings to reveal how nonfic-

tion can be a mechanism for facilitating the learning of social justice content and developing language that counters deficit perspectives.

The same consideration given to Enrique was extended to Lourdes in examining her motivation to leave her children. As one student writes, Lourdes “remembers too well the pain of her childhood poverty, and so refuses to let her children suffer it. As a result, she ironically must abandon them to take care of them; she sees no other option.” There is a keen insight in this student’s statement, as with others who noted the “disastrous poverty,” “death and drugs every day,” and “hardships faced by many Central American families” that would lead to the *necessity* to seek a safe existence; these people did not make their decisions lightly, and they were not motivated by a desire simply to have more *things*. In these blog reflections, the Other is positioned in a humane light as a person forced to take action. Taken together, the students’ responses form a cohesive counter to the dominant portrayal of Latin American immigrants in the United States who, as one student described, “are viewed as . . . threats, as dangers to society, our American jobs, and our American way of life.” After reading the text, the construction of “normal” vs. “other” was no longer allowed because “the Other” had been rendered transparent.

Developing and Applying Additive Frameworks

Students’ general framing of the issue of immigration continued to show how the text prompted discourse that was counter to deficit articulations. Kumashiro

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(2012) explains, “Frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world In politics, our frames shape our social practices and the institutions we form to carry out policies” (p. 3). Thus, the way students conceptualized their frames around immigration is critical to justice-based understandings and to their development as citizens in a democracy. In their blogs, they located the specific sources of

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conflicts regarding immigration within government structures, inequality, and poverty, rather than engaging in victim-blaming or shunning of the individuals who seek residency in the United States. As one student stated, “I think oftentimes people and situations, especially immigration and immigrants, are dehumanized and generalized into something that is seen as a problem

rather than to actually recognize what is happening.” What is happening, others said, is “the desire to escape poverty,” and “mass amounts of racism.” These narratives concluded with statements such as, “If people were able to see and understand others’ points of view, then there might be a lot less xenophobia in today’s world.” Not only did the text humanize immigrants, but it prompted students to see how the issue of immigration has systemic implications and to analyze it on a macro scale.

Students consistently connected their framing to the nonfiction aspect of the text. As one student observed, “Having a real account of a person’s journey coming across the border was very eye opening. I think that overall this novel portrays adolescents in a positive light. It shows that they are able to overcome extreme obstacles and are able to take care of themselves.” Others noted that the “book places adolescents in a very uplifting light,” and they discursively defined the individuals in the text as “dedicated,” “strong,” “vulnerable,” “brave,” and “diligent.” These word choices are in stark contrast to those often associated with immigrant youth who are characterized as drains on society or troublemakers. As one student stated, “It goes to show that not everyone who crosses

the border is going with cocaine in their trunk; that desperation more times than not tends to fuel the decision to migrate north.” The attention to “desperation” here was key to exploring and recognizing character motivations for actions. Comments demonstrated consistently an understanding for and consideration of the Other—generally implied to mean not White—that is often excluded from discourse on immigration.

The students spoke of Lourdes and Enrique and the fact that they felt compelled to leave Honduras as the only solution to a dire situation. One student argued that Enrique “feels as if he is left with no other options. He is searching for someone to love and care for him, and after being abandoned so many times, he had to find his mom in order to restore himself.” Students understood the youth’s desperation to find his mother as his catalyst, contradicting typical dominant thoughts on immigrant youth whose background stories are not considered. From a similar perspective, another student avowed, “Not all immigrants that migrate come to places for jobs. They can have various reasons for coming.” The book therefore led to a deeper sense of understanding of a complex situation, one that likely many had not delved into previously.

Engaging in Social Critique

Students’ growing understanding of additive frameworks and their engagement with social justice was further evidenced by their development of critical consciousness, which involves “accepting that ideas about what is normal, or right, or good are the products of life experience rather than universal laws” (Hinchey, 2004 p. 25). Their burgeoning critical consciousness was revealed both in honest admissions of ignorance and in how the students began to question domestic attitudes and policies. Again and again, in statements such as, “I felt like it gave me insight on a side of a topic that I had never been exposed to before,” and “The book was very informative and I learned a lot that I didn’t know before reading the novel,” students spoke of their lack of knowledge on immigration and related issues. They became impassioned about the issue and their newfound awareness, affirming that it “should get more attention” and proclaiming that it “needs to be discussed” because “many people are not educated on the issue of immigration,” or are “all too happy to ignore” it, and “this causes ignorance and falsely backed up accusations and opinions.”

Students attributed the collective silence and misunderstandings around immigration to political figures, wishing, for instance, that “Donald Trump would read this book so that he could see what is really happening to those who have to leave Mexico for a better life,” and blaming “biased news networks” that “paint immigrants as these horrible people coming to take over the country.” In their ruminations on the dearth of nuanced recognition of the issue, one student offered an interesting comparison, stating, “Many people in America, those who watch . . . news, at least, probably think of immigrants as people with knapsacks crossing the Rio Grande River; if they even know where the Rio Grande River is. What many people don’t know is that for many immigrants, it’s a life and death decision.”

In their development of critical consciousness, students also explicitly engaged in social critique around the issue of American policy and immigration. This was exemplified in such claims as, “We, as Americans, preach about the American dream and how America is the melting pot of the world, and yet when people are risking their lives, desperately trying to come to this country and find a life worth living, we want to build a wall to keep them out.” They not only admitted to questioning our policies on immigration, but also the “huge cultural stereotype in our country about immigrants,” disclosing, “It makes me sad to think that so many Americans are against people coming in to our country.” Policies designed to enhance border control and return undocumented peoples to their country of origin without regard for the situations in those lands came under fire. Students offered thoughtful questions, including “What grounds necessitate our involvement in warring countries?” and “Should people like Enrique from places like Honduras be seen as refugees or immigrants?” *Enrique’s Journey* prompted students to ask these difficult questions. It did not permit them to ignore the real and complicated conflicts in our society.

The Potential of Nonfiction to Promote Social Justice and Personal Agency

Findings from this study reveal that nonfiction young adult literature and social justice pedagogies can in fact work in synergistic ways. PSTs found value in reading the nonfiction text *Enrique’s Journey*, given

that its themes (to some students’ surprise) intimately resonated with them, helped concretize “real” issues in ways that traditional literature did not, humanized an issue with which many students had little experience, and positioned them to develop and apply additive frameworks from which to speak about the complexities of the issue. The text also helped PSTs engage in social critique, as evidenced by the responses that revealed how students began to recognize, and talk back to, the dominant narrative of Latin@ immigration that permeates the social milieu and reveals itself via news channels and political rhetoric.

In addition to PSTs in the university context, we believe this work is highly applicable to secondary teachers as well. Because Nazario’s text is adapted for young adults, middle and high school teachers could employ *Enrique’s Journey* to heighten their students’ critical consciousness, both through assignments such as the blog suggested here and through additional components of classroom discussion and historical research. Although there may be more scaffolding needed, depending on students’ familiarity with topics related to immigration and surrounding legislation, this very real social justice issue warrants exploration in students’ formative years, as they are learning about the structure of our government and growing as citizens in our society. This dialogism likewise invites students to develop their own concepts of citizenry as they begin to contribute to, and shape, a participatory democracy.

The examination of this text and its capacity to build students’ critical dispositions across a span of ages fits within the CCSS. First, *Enrique’s Journey* meets the shift toward literary nonfiction (“Standards,” 2016). The elements of craft, such as au-

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thor's style and structure, including images and the retelling of authentic events, were the very elements that prompted students' empathetic understandings. Furthermore, the Reading Standards for informational texts for Grades 9–10 ask students, for example, to: "Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010b, p. 40).

Although students reported affective responses to the material they learned, we would like to harness that energy, addressing the issue and engaging in planning with those who have future careers in teaching.

The students' comments, noting Nazario's viewpoint as a journalist as well as her appeal to their emotions, fulfilled this readily. Finally, informational text Standards for grades 11–12 emphasize "constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 40), to which this book relates as well, especially in the afterword. Therefore, reading *Enrique's Journey*, as we suggest here, can satisfy the moral

obligations of teachers who are required to adhere to state mandates, including the CCSS, but who also feel it is their ethical duty to work toward a socially just society.

This multilayered approach, however, is not without its limitations and challenges. First, we recognize that the work here is reflective of only one text and one course experience. Although Ashley found the blog assignment similarly useful in previous iterations of the course, additional endeavors by teacher educators and secondary teachers alike could be undertaken to further investigate the potential of young adult nonfiction in fostering students' critical consciousness. Second, educators and students may struggle to attain the agency necessary for developing a sophisticated sense of critical consciousness, one that moves beyond awareness and into action.

For a subsequent assignment, we are experimenting with an opportunity for students to intentionally

focus on Enrique's story as a counter-narrative and to develop materials to serve as cultural complements to the text. Such work with young adult literature—in which students are acquainted with a social justice topic and asked to connect it to broader plans for action—is on the rise (e.g., Groenke, Maples, & Henderson, 2010; Simmons, 2012; Singer & Shagoury, 2005/2006). What we envision is an explicit explanation of the concept of the counter-narrative (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) followed by instruction that will help students to locate, in media for example, how the dominant narrative is crafted and upheld. Our students named dominant perspectives in their blogs, but having them point to tangible examples would likely further their development. This would help them to discern the ways discourse and power operate in society and how ideologies pervade our daily lives. Although students reported affective responses to the material they learned, we would like to harness that energy, addressing the issue and engaging in planning with those who have future careers in teaching. We would thus not only ask students to locate pieces of media that construct and perpetuate deficit perspectives of immigrants, but also to generate potential action projects for their students that would accompany a reading of *Enrique's Journey*—actions in which students could respond to those dominant constructions, act for more just policies, and spread the awareness that Nazario cultivates.

Conclusion

PSTs need opportunities to engage with materials during their teacher education program that not only facilitate their understanding and successful execution of standards-based education, but that also work toward advancing societal equity. Accomplishing both and meeting those moral obligations is a difficult task. The challenge to teacher educators becomes how to help our candidates create lessons and assignments that provide them with opportunities to consider text types and genres as noted by the CCSS *while* working to create socially just instructional materials. By offering PSTs a multilayered approach to pedagogical instruction, we position them to develop the skills necessary for both missions. By providing the rich substance—and modeling—needed to understand how to perform both tasks in tandem, we hope to equip PSTs with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions nec-

essary to balance the duality of these missions in their own classrooms.

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