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Teaching And Designing Culturally Responsive Experiences Using Cross-Media Film in Higher Education

Keywords

Cross-media, culturally responsive teaching, empathy, pedagogy, social justice



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Abstract

This paper examined the pedagogical use of cross-media film in higher education, as it highlighted cross-media in implementing a Culturally Responsive approach to enhance social justice learning in the classroom. The findings demonstrated the potential of cross-media film to engage learners through cultural relevance for the 21st century. The findings also considered that the Culturally Responsive approach may constitute a fourth pillar of the three epistemologies through research and suggestions for culturally responsive teaching practices.

Keywords: cross-media, culturally responsive teaching, empathy, pedagogy, social justice

Introduction

This paper combines education research in the use of cross-media film with practical considerations in designing culturally responsive classroom experiences to enhance social justice learning in higher education. Since ancient times, educators have used the art of storytelling to share experiences and build social communities (Raines, 2010). Digital audio-visual media that blended image, sound, and print began to be used in education during the Second World War to motivate learning (Cruse, 2007). Cross-media is composed of stories produced for non-digital media such as print in the form of books that may be produced and told using digital media, commonly in the form of film. Divergence resulting from cultural change over time, and factors

such as viewer demographics in the production of movies, may adapt the cultural relevance of the stories being told to reflect issues of gender, ethnicity, and social identity. Cross-media stories assist learners to conceptualize cultural experiences and to develop and express personal identities through social activities in the classroom (Davis, 2004; Holland et al., 1998).

The three pillars, also known as the three epistemic ways of knowing or the 3E's, guide the synthesis and analysis of a cross-media story (Selman & Testa, 2021). The three epistemologies of aesthetics, academics, and ethics have been considered a cross-epistemology of constructing meaning in a humanistic story as described in the progressive movement by John Dewey (1934/2005, Selman & Testa, 2021). Within the 3E's, social and moral perspectives are included with the ethical examples portrayed in the story. Based on inclusive education pedagogy, this paper posits that cultural relevance and the design of culturally responsive experiences in education are necessary to stimulate depth of understanding and to enhance learning. This paper considers that cultural relevance and culturally responsive pedagogy may constitute a fourth pillar of the three epistemologies.

While reviewing culturally responsive teaching practices in the use of cross-media, this paper will look at the growing digital divide and equitable access to cross-media and technology resources. Cross-media as a method of teaching social justice and critical thinking skills will be investigated. It will consider creating educational communities, the cultivation of empathy, and the construction of diverse perspectives through teaching with cross-media. The paper reviews issues involving the adaptation and viability of cross-media stories based on traditional books that have been interpreted into a film. It also reviews both good and bad teaching practices with cross-media in the classroom. In addition, this paper intends to include theories and practices for designing inclusive classroom experiences using cross-media that engage learners in meaningful activities which motivate complex reasoning, creative thinking abilities, and social-emotional learning.

Cross-Media

Through the growing availability of technology, learners can increasingly use cross-media film to view stories told initially in print (Selman & Testa, 2021). Cross-media is

composed of stories that have been adapted from one platform, such as books, to another platform, usually film. Cross-media allows both the book and film versions of stories to be used in educational settings to cultivate the holistic growth of learners in learning critical analysis and promoting social and emotional development (2021). When given the freedom and responsibility to design projects using diverse media, digital storytelling may become a two-way form of communication through which learners are able to express social identities creatively and share lived experiences (Holland et al., 1998; Nixon, 2012). Cross-media stories are cultural artifacts that will influence our social activities and the way we view the world and help to shape our cognitive development (Cole & Derry, 2005). In the context of education, this is particularly important in designing culturally responsive classroom experiences and curricula that will generate student interest and create socially relevant activities that foster intellectual and ethical learning. Culturally responsive teaching practices combined with cross-media provide a medium through which learners may gain exposure to alternative ideas and learn respect for human diversity. Cross-media as a method of digital expression may provide creative ways for gifted and special education learners to communicate unique social identities and ideas through shared culturally relevant forms of expression, activities, and experience.

Determining the viability of cross-media film for classroom lesson planning has long been a concern of teachers. The ultimate test for viability is if the cross-media fits into the pedagogical approach inclusive of the academic, aesthetic, and ethical epistemic ethos of the classroom experience (Selman & Testa, 2021). However, student interest and learning are promoted when cross-media activities are taught in socially relevant ways using culturally responsive teaching methods. In a multicultural society that is becoming increasingly integrated globally, culturally responsive teaching practices make learning relevant to learners and develop the critical thinking skills that lead to respect for diversity, alternative ideas, and the ethical values associated with social equality.

This contrasts with the historical fear sometimes associated with cross-media in the classroom. Concerns such as the morality of film on youth, lack of rigor, and the accuracy of films interpreted from the classical stories told by books (Selman & Testa, 2021). In Selman & Testa (2021), it is suggested that Lois Lowry (1994) redefined the meaning of viable cross-media

as a film conveying a book's true spirit. However, to grasp the true essence of a story, the viewer must know the social and cultural context in which the story took place. In addition to academic, aesthetic, and ethical knowledge, learners acquire a deeper understanding of the lessons learned through cross-media when the narrative is taught in a cultural context where learners may form an experiential relationship. This may be accomplished by utilizing culturally responsive teaching practices and cross-media stories that make learning relevant to learners. For example, Fetters (2020) described how the television adaptations of *The Baby-Sitters Club* (Shukert, 2020) did not try to teach social justice. Instead, it made the characters and context relevant to the social consciousness of learners while allowing exploration of multiple sides of a story. Similarly, culturally responsive experiences in the classroom using cross-media may be designed to induce critical thinking about issues of social justice relevant to learners in secondary and higher education.

An example of culturally responsive teaching in secondary education, which is sometimes used in educator training in higher education, is shown in the cross-media film *Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese, 2007), which is based on the book *The Freedom Writers Diary* (The Freedom Writers with Erin Gruwell, 1999). In one scene, a new educator addressed an incident of racial bullying in an intense classroom discussion in which the teacher attempted to describe the Holocaust in comparison to the life experience of learners in Long Beach, California, to discover at the end of the lecture, that only one of the learners had heard of the Holocaust. However, all learners had been negatively impacted by gang violence in Los Angeles/Long Beach. The remainder of the cross-media film shows how the teacher introduced the learners to the Holocaust using activities that made the lesson culturally relevant and meaningful to the learners' experience in Long Beach.

Change is a constant and natural part of society that affects all aspects of culture and its interpretation. The images, sounds, gestures, and cross-media activities provide examples of cultural artifacts and shared experiences through which identities are formed and expressed (Holland et al., 1998; Ochs & Capps, 1996). Human interaction with the change in cultural artifacts and activities plays a significant role in determining emotional development and social perspectives (Cole & Derry, 2005; Moll, 1998). It is a common error to equate race and ethnicity

with culture, as cultural activities and artifacts may be shared and influence the formation of people of diverse groups regardless of background (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003).

Therefore, cultural change may be a primary foundation of divergence and convergence in the study of crossmedia that may be critiqued in culturally responsive classroom teaching. Divergence in the telling of a story through cross-media film may occur as the result of many different social influences, some examples being social movements and beliefs, the production and marketing of the film to meet modern expectations of consumers, changing views towards civil rights issues, demographic change, and changes in the technology used to produce cross-media and its presentation in the classroom. Divergence is the difference between the original print version of a story and the cross-media version when produced in film. These differences may be viewed through the lens of the traditional three pillars, aesthetics, ethics, and academics, and through the context of cultural change, which may be accommodated in the educational context using culturally responsive methodologies.

Learners must learn to analyze, discuss, critique, and understand the differences that emerge from cultural change, including how and why they may have occurred. Referring to the article by Fetters (2020), an example of divergence is found when comparing the adaptations made by film producers in updating the original 1982 novel and television series *The Babysitters Club* (Martin, 1986; Shukert, 2020) to portray ethnic, demographic, behavioral, and social change attempting to make the series socially relevant for children in 2020. Another example of divergence is found in the sexual roles portrayed in the original version of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868), in comparison to how the roles of women changed in each of its film adaptations from 1918, 1933, 1949, 1994, and 2019 (Acocella, 2018; Flanagan, 2020).

Convergence may also occur in interpreting the meanings of stories told initially in print when told in a contemporary film. Convergence occurs when considering how the values and concepts may converge or focus upon a common theme (Selman & Testa, 2021). The example used in the article by Selman and Testa (2021) was the book version of *The Watsons Go To Birmingham-1963*, written by Curtis in 1995, and its film adaptation in 2013. Convergence may occur in the discussion of equity in that classroom experiences may focus on the immorality of

the discrimination and segregation which occurred and is portrayed in the book and its cross-media film version (Selman & Testa, 2021).

The adaptations made to cross-media to produce the film versions of classic books and stories result in divergence and convergence between the original story and the narrative of the modern film presentation. The adaptations are made to make the stories culturally relevant to the social experience of modern viewers.

Through social experience with the cultural artifacts and activities with which we live, our identities are formed. Therefore, cultural relevance is an essential consideration, a fourth pillar, in analyzing cross-media in an educational context. This may be accomplished through culturally responsive teaching practices that address diversity in society and in the classroom and make learning relevant to learners.

Digital Divide and Equity

While cross-media film and literature may provide teachers and learners with experiential learning that may be adapted for culturally responsive teaching to give meaningfulness that motivates learners, the student's ability to access digital technology may be limited. The research mentioned in Holland (2019) by the Pew Research Center; Schools, Libraries, and Health Coalition; and Microsoft suggested that a digital divide exists in the US. Lack of access due to excessive costs, connectivity issues, and inequity may exclude learners in poor rural and urban areas, ethnic minorities, and emotionally and physically challenged learners (Brzezinska & Cromarty, 2022; Javeri, 2021; Vignare et al., 2020).

Educational institutions must also consider the growing homework gap due to learners not having access to the internet or digital devices at home (Holland, 2019). The ACT Center for Equity found that 19% of learners had access to only one device at home, usually a smartphone, of which a disproportionate number, 85%, were underserved learners (2019). In 2016, 20% of dependent learners and 42% of independent learners were poverty affected (Vignare et al., 2020). Working and unemployed learners may find the prohibitive costs of internet connectivity and technology prohibitive. This lack of access to technology may result in deficiencies of skills

and experience in learners having financial inequities (Brzezinska & Cromarty, 2022). Specific to cross-media are issues of access to the film and print media itself, in that the rising cost of books and pay-per-view television formats may further inequity of access. Children having disabilities may be disproportionately excluded from cross-media access. It is estimated that 100 million children with intellectual disabilities globally suffer from disproportionate poverty, discrimination, and inequity, resulting in a lack of access to quality programs such as cross-media (Anderson, 2019; UNESCO, 2017).

Educational institutions must realize that the digital divide is about more than a lack of access to digital devices and connectivity. It is about equitable access to information, learning opportunities, and society (Holland, 2019). That standardized and one-size-fits-all learning excludes learners from equitable access to learning as it does not allow for social and human diversity and inequities (Vignare et al., 2020). Culturally responsive teaching allows teachers to adapt potential classroom experiences and learning materials to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations. Doing so makes learning meaningful to learners by accommodating teaching methodology and materials situationally for social change and personalizing classroom experiences for learners' diverse and unique needs.

Developing Social Justice Education and Empathy through Cross-Media

The use of cross-media as a pedagogical tool in the classroom brings social justice lessons to life by helping learners share the visual and aural experiences of historical events and the meanings inherent in literary narratives. Digital multimedia provides learners with multiple forms of sensory learning through visual, auditory, and tactile representations (Cruse, 2007; Mayer, 2001). The combination of visual, auditory, and tactile learning offers holistic concepts which may be processed through visualization as whole threedimensional concepts, auditorily through words and processes, and kinesthetically through demonstration and explanation (Cruse, 2007; Silverman, 2006). The development of empathy requires the ability to share and understand another person's feelings (Guarisco & Freeman, 2015). The sharing of sensory experiences as holistic concepts aids learners in comprehending the experiences and the feelings associated with an event or narrative story. According to (Kidd & Castano, 2013; Mar et al.,

2006; Mar et al., 2008), there is growing empirical evidence among psychologists that narrative stories aid the development of both empathy and the theory of mind.

Cross-media films can be used to teach social justice, kindness, and respect for human uniqueness. While the educational emphasis is sometimes placed on teaching respect for human diversity, cross-media can also be used to teach empathy, as people of diverse backgrounds may have similar feelings and desires that are emotionally and physically human. Everyone may share similar needs, such as love, sorrow, and wanting to belong to a social group. It should be noted that human feelings involve actions that we have felt emotionally and tactilely in response to various stimuli.

Learning is usually achieved as a social activity and as part of a social group. Research shows (Guarisco & Freeman, 2015) that active engagement enhances the connection between fictional stories and the ability to understand and empathize with different viewpoints. Palacio remarked in a presentation at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (Walsh, 2013) that empathy can be inspired in children but is challenging to teach. Inspiration involves active learning and social experience. Culturally relevant activities provide the meaningfulness and significance that heighten their value to the learner.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960, p. 39), Atticus Finch teaches his daughter that “you can never understand a person until you consider their point of view, until you climb into their skin and walk around in it.” The presence of the human body in cross-media films, when used in age-appropriate circumstances, may assist in the development of empathy, teaching that all people have bodies and feelings, and everyone deserves to be respected. It is not possible to separate the physical from the emotional. Gaut (2010, p. 137-138) stated that people “frequently imaginatively project themselves into characters’ minds and respond emotionally,” which is known as “imagining from the inside” while engaged in film-viewing.

Through the holistic blending of the physical, emotional, and intellectual, it becomes possible, through the use of cross-media, to teach an intellectual concept with respect for each person’s life. The realization of each person as a balanced being assists in developing empathy, sharing, forming relationships, and the ability to partake in group activities.

Foreign language cross-media films offer a tremendous opportunity to teach culturally relevant experiential learning focusing on social justice, multiculturalism, and bilingualism and improving language learning skills. An excellent example of a cross-media film for higher education that can motivate the development of empathy, social justice, multiculturalism, and language learning in Spanish/English language courses is the award-winning film *La Novia* (The Bride), directed by Paula Ortiz (2015). *La Novia* is based on the 1931 romantic tragedy *Bodas de Sangre* (Blood Wedding) written and published by Federico Garcia Lorca (1931), first performed in the Madrid and Buenos Aires theater in 1933. The 2015 film version, directed by a woman, Paula Ortiz, provides a unique female interpretation of the original 1931 written version towards relationships and marriage in Spanish culture.

The beautifully realistic Spanish scenery and cultural portrayals in the modern film version illustrate the changes that have taken place in social viewpoints toward women and marriage in Spanish society. It raises questions about the dual nature of masculine morality, social justice, and gender equality in Spanish culture. The clarity of the spoken Spanish language and the superb aesthetic imagery of Spain and Spanish culture not only provide an inclusively active environment that cultivates multicultural language learning but brings focus to the underlying narrative, which through its cultural relevance, provides a theme that leads the viewer to think critically about issues of gender equality, social justice, and creates empathy with the characters victimized by the dualities of inequality and injustice. When planning a lesson, the educator must select cross-media films appropriate for the topic, developmental needs, and maturity level of the learners.

The Three Epistemologies of Cross Media and Culturally Responsive Teaching

Raines (2010) explained that storytelling had been a social and educational mental process since prehistoric times that invokes critical and creative thinking and encourages the listener to question and draw conclusions. The three epistemologies of cross-media stories can be traced from ancient Greece through the progressive education movement and John Dewey (Selman & Testa, 2021). However, we must consider that John Dewey, and similar progressive educators of the early 1900s, were products of their time, culture, and the educational and social concepts in practice in their era.

The three epistemologies of a cross-media story are its aesthetic, academic, and ethical aspects. According to Selman & Testa (2021), the aesthetic includes understanding the difference between the visual and narrative, how stories use their form to convey meaning, the relationship between storyteller and audience, and why aspects of a story may be appealing or unappealing to the viewer or viewers. The academic includes the process of knowing, deep comprehension, drawing conclusions and inferences, synthesis and analysis, and vocabulary. The ethical lens is exemplified by social and moral reflection, empathy, fairness, social practice and perspectivetaking, and how to conduct oneself in social relationships and decision-making (Selman & Testa, 2021).

Selman and Testa (2021) suggested that a close comparison of humanistic stories provides an integrative core that helps to fuse the three epistemologies. While integrative consideration of cross-media stories may improve learners' depth and learning experience, the three epistemologies still do not consider the cultural relevance of the story to the learner or how culturally responsive teaching practices may assist in nurturing student motivation and experientially based understanding. Selman and Testa (2021) acknowledged that educators and learners inhabit vastly different social worlds. This represents a cultural gap between learners and educators. Further examination of the educational philosophy of John Dewey and the educational beliefs of the early 1900s, when the majority of Dewey's educational writings occurred (Fallace, 2010a), help to provide a glimpse as to why cultural relevance and culturally responsive teaching practices were not included in the three epistemologies.

In early career, Dewey had been sensitized to the causes of racism, which he described as a social disease (Cohan & Howlett, 2017). It is also true that Dewey engaged in the founding of the NAACP, was an active advocate for peace, and was a seminal progenitor of progressive socialist educational philosophy. However, prior to 1916, Dewey could be described, like most American educators of the era, as an ethnocentrist who considered Americans of color to be biologically equal to white Americans but to be socially deficient and therefore ignored the cultural contributions of non-white cultures (Fallace, 2010a). It should be noted that following the First World War, in the post-1916 era, Dewey showed greater awareness of cultural plurality in educational and social theory. However, most of Dewey's educational philosophy was written

before 1916, when Dewey's conceptual foundations were based on linear historicism and genetic psychology.

Linear historicism believes that all societies and cultures follow a linear continuum of social development from primitive to civilized and that the stages of social growth correspond with the psychological stages of child development (Fallace, 2010a). In addition, in Dewey & Tufts (1908/1978), James Tufts implied that understanding the origin of ethics is necessary to understand primitive society. Genetic psychology infers that the human mind progresses through sequential hierarchical stages of psychological development that correspond with human society's intellectual growth (Dewey, 1900/1976; Fallace, 2010a).

The educational writings and philosophy of Dewey and cohorts Mayhew, Edwards, Runyon, Tufts, and Dopp at the University of Chicago, were based on the belief that child development corresponded with the development of western society, which they felt was ethically superior to non-western cultures, and that culture was singular and linear (Fallace, 2010a). Prior to 1916, for Dewey and his educational peers, there was only one culture, which was linear and hierarchical. Non-Western societies were viewed as deficient and having nothing to contribute to the social advancement of western culture (Fallace, 2010a). This ethnocentric pedagogy was a basis for Dewey's early educational philosophy and writings. After the First World War, Dewey's educational vision expanded to include a pluralistic society. However, Dewey's educational writings before the First World War remained the most influential (2010a). Considering the basic early premise and historical influence of Dewey's educational philosophy, it is possible to conceptualize why the three epistemologies avoid the issue of cultural relevance and culturally responsive teaching practices in a multicultural American society that repressed its non-Western cultural attributes.

Making classroom experiences culturally responsive in teaching practice is different from recognizing cultural pluralism. The recognition of cultural pluralism is an intellectual activity that does not involve social participation and active learning. Culturally responsive teaching practices involve classroom experiences that are socially relevant, and which foster social and emotional learning, activity-based learning, and student participation. The term culture does not mean ethnicity alone, and it involves the creation of positive learning environments that are

inclusive of all types of social and emotional cultures and sensitive to all human differences, abilities, and disabilities.

Designing Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Classroom Experiences

The manner in which classroom experiences are designed using cross-media may include many variables depending on factors such as course content, objectives, student maturity level and age, class environment, motivation of student interests, and the physical and emotional traits of learners. It is not intended to offer a plan or model on how to design a class lesson, as that is a highly diverse topic that may differ with every class and each student. Instead, the authors provide a few flexible concepts which may assist well-intentioned teachers in designing culturally responsive classroom experiences that are inclusive of student diversity and help to inspire student learning, critical thinking abilities, and development as human beings.

Cross-media films can be viewed as more than entertainment. It is an artistic means of transferring knowledge and new perspectives through the eyes of another. Movies can engage learners to explore and interpret the historical, cultural, and social meanings of stories and emphasize deep learning and critical thinking as part of a class curriculum. Film director Martin Scorsese suggested in the Story of Movies educational curriculum for teachers that young people need to learn to differentiate between moving images that engage their humanity and intelligence and movies that are just selling something (The Film Foundation, n.d.).

Research by Perry et al. (2011) showed that Artistic Pedagogical Technologies (APTs) could be melded with the creative arts to enhance student motivation and social connectedness and create positive learning environments. The use of cross-media technologies in education can capture the attention and motivate student learning, provide a tool to nurture creative abilities, foster discussion, and offer experiences and memories that promote new ways of thinking about educational concepts (Frie et al., 2010; Janzen et al., 2017).

The selection of which cross-media films to use in a class will depend on the pedagogy being utilized in the class, the motivational and developmental needs of the learners, and the activities being taught. It is the educators' responsibility to choose cross-media appropriate for the learners' maturity level and to assist the lesson's objectives. In doing so, flexibility is

essential, as in inclusive teaching, the teacher may adjust the lesson to meet the differences of every class and the individual diversity of each student.

Traditionally, teachers address cross-media using the 3 E's, aesthetic, academic, and ethical epistemologies. Using the descriptions provided by Selman and Testa (2021), the aesthetic involves understanding how stories convey meaning through visual, audio, artistic, and narrative words to form a relationship with the audience and teach activities implied in an aesthetic sense. The academic is used to provide a deep understanding and comprehension of the knowledge and meaning implied in a story, create synthesis and analysis, and draw conclusions that improve critical thinking abilities and enhance vocabulary. Ethical epistemology conveys the development of social and moral inner awareness about civil issues and stimulates the growth of empathy and respect for new perspectives (2021).

However, the three epistemologies based on the educational concepts of Dewey, which educators traditionally use, do not directly address the multicultural environments of modern American society and education. This is especially apparent in the growing diversity of American schools. This avoidance harkens back to the linear historical and genetic psychology utilized in educators' early educational writings, including Dewey in the preWWI era (Fallace, 2010b). This difference can be seen in practice when viewing the adaptations of films such as the *Baby-Sitters Club* (Shukert, 2020) for present-day audiences portraying a diverse cultural array of characters and themes, and in the modern rendition of classical films, for example, the 2022 Disney interpretation of *Peter Pan* in which Tinkerbell is portrayed as a black woman (Lowery, 2022). It must be remembered that these are fictional films in which producers want to relate to the audience and may be used to teach social equality.

Similarly, an inclusive, open-minded viewpoint toward using cross-media to provide classroom experiences that are culturally responsive will create relevant classroom experiences and help motivate student participation. Participation may be accomplished in separate ways such as activities, class discussions, and artistic and narrative projects as the teacher and learners feel is appropriate.

According to Vignare et al. (2020), the characteristics of culturally responsive teaching are 1) acknowledging the legitimacy of the cultures of diverse student ethnic groups, 2) developing meaningfulness between home and school and academic abstractions of social realities, 3) using a variety of instructional strategies to relate with different learning styles 4) teach learners to learn and respect their own culture and the heritage of classmates 5) include multicultural resources, materials, subjects, and skills in school. Hutchinson and McAllister-Shields in Vignare et al. (2020) suggested that culturally responsive teaching practices should be a foundation in higher education in which faculty offer the experiences and knowledge to scaffold student growth. Therefore, it is logical that culturally responsive teaching practices and inclusive learning be incorporated as a fourth pillar of the epistemologies as applied to cross-media.

It should be mentioned that the above discussion refers primarily to fictional adaptations of cross-media stories into film. Historical works may become complex as it is essential to maintain accuracy and validity when discussing past events. If we distort or lose the facts relating to historical events, no matter how distasteful they may be, we risk losing the moral experiential learning from those actions. In this case, age-appropriate historical interpretations of the factual events may be used to teach moral lessons that help learners learn to make ethical, social decisions that foster the development of responsible and kind human beings.

Conclusion

Cross-media film is not just entertainment; it may be seen as an artistic method of transferring and building knowledge. The use of cross-media film in education is shown to be valuable in allowing learners to view stories in a mode other than on the page and therefore access deeper modes of understanding not only of content but of cultural identities. Cross-media affords opportunities for learners to view and interpret the changing world, think critically, construct meaning through Dewey's 3E's, and engage in learning through cultural relevance and change. Cross-media is shown to aid in different learning modes, including inspiring the development of empathy and the understanding of social justice and, therefore, may be considered in the realm of cultural relevance.

Cultural relevance, consequently, becomes an essential fourth pillar in the analysis of cross-media and its pedagogical use in the context of education in the 21st century. Culturally responsive teaching practices should be considered as those that involve classroom experiences that are socially relevant, and which foster socialemotional learning, activity-based learning, and student participation. Such pedagogy requires the teacher to legitimize diverse cultures and develop meaningful and differentiated instructional practices that promote multiculturalism and teach and inspire both content knowledge and social awareness. The digital divide in the United States must be considered along with other special needs of learners, and teachers should adapt viable classroom experiences to meet the needs of their learners. Educators are therefore encouraged to use professional discretion in selecting cross-media films and other pedagogical practices that will best aid learning in their student population.

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