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Then and Now: Fueling the Next Generation to Establish New Expectations and Traditions

Curriculum Unit 20.01.04
by Taniesha Granger

This prospectus provides access to the purpose of the curriculum unit, detailed pacing guide, supplemental texts, technology resources, reading strategies, and brief lesson summaries.

Topic Description

This unit is designed to help eighth grade students build a working definition of identity, first by exploring their own identities. Deepening awareness of identity, students will identify different internal and external characteristics to heighten their understanding. This is intended to be a simple way to parse the complex topic of identity. For many students, family and cultural expectations have already predetermined their future. Depending on the structure of their family, these expectations may be based on outdated traditions that may need to be abandoned because they are a mismatch for young generations. Therefore, the priority goal for this unit is to fuel the next generation to maintain and establish expectations that best suit them. Instead of losing their sense of self, in an effort to satisfy and please their family, students will learn self-advocacy.

At the core of the curriculum and educational mission of King Robinson Interdistrict Magnet: An International Baccalaureate STEM School are certain ubiquitous goals which drive all aspects of this unit. Among these goals is to integrate units and individual lessons with the two magnet themes. When done successfully, students become empowered to be responsible, productive and engaged 21st-century global citizens, who are respectful, open-minded, and reflective students with positive attitudes. Through inquiry-based learning, students will use their skills to take actions that lead to positive contributions to the world.

Unit and Task Pacing Guide

This unit is designed for six to eight weeks of instruction. The outline follows forty-five minutes of instruction that is systematic, explicit, and structured for five consecutive days each week.

Purpose of Core Text Selection

An examination of internal and external characteristics will serve as a means of analyzing the transformation and evolution of Esperanza, the main character in *The House on Mango Street,* by Sandra Cisneros. Although the novel was written in 1984, it is a timeless work of fiction that illustrates a coming-of-age journey that students will find believable and real. *The House on Mango Street* is full of women who are trapped by their husbands, fathers, children, or their own insecurities. Within the vignettes, Cisneros uses a variety of symbols to epitomize and highlight relevant themes. One of the recurring themes that will be flawlessly woven throughout the unit is the window. The symbolic use of the window is used quite often to portray the confinement that various women feel due to family and cultural expectations that have already predetermined their future. A mentor text, students will cite and record examples from the text that illustrate women being hindered by the identity they inherited from their culture, family, and home territory. Students will also cite examples of the expectations that men have for women by identifying whether the expectations are high or low, before defending their opinions with relevant evidence.

Reflection on personal identity will enable students to identify, confront, analyze, and critique gender stereotypes in the core novel. The characters represent an assortment of struggles and past experiences that will naturally foster personal connections and engage students in student-led discussions. Each lesson in this unit will serve as a checkpoint for students to continuously work toward their own concept of what identity is. Connecting the reading to students' embeddedness in family will help them see the importance of being thankful, despite adversity. Most favorably, students will learn how to give back, beginning with those who have helped them.

Students' personal connections to the unit will be honored in a reflective essay. Students will use the notes collected in their identity journals to build and defend their final definition of identity. They will use the core novel and at least three supplemental texts to cite relevant evidence. Students will reflect on the following guiding questions in their essay, providing a thorough explanation for each:

- What have you inherited from your parents, close relatives, friends, and school? These things can be tangible or intangible.
- As you grow up, which family expectations will you continue to meet?
- As you grow up, which family expectations will you let go of? Why?
- As you grow up, which cultural traditions will you continue to honor?
- As you grow up, which cultural traditions will you let go of? Why?
- What expectations are more suitable for your current generation to follow?
- What expectations are not suitable for your current generation to follow?
- What advice do you have for the next generation?

Vignette Selection

The following vignettes from *The House on Mango Street* are important. Each vignette is directly related to critical lessons to be emphasized consistently throughout the unit. As outlined in the lesson summaries, the vignettes will be followed by activities that will provide connections between the novel and the students' personal experiences:

Vignette #1: "The House on Mango Street" (3)

Vignette #2: "Boys and Girls" (8)

Vignette #3: "Alicia Who Sees Mice" (31)

Vignette #4: "Born Bad" (59)

Vignette #5: "Sire" (72)

Vignette #6: "Minerva Writes Poems" (84)

Vignette #7: "Beautiful and Cruel" (88)

Vignette #8: "What Sally Said" (92)

Vignette #9: "A House of My Own" (108)

Vignette #10: "Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes" (109)

Developing Student-Led Discourse

While the reading material is not complex, the discussions are aimed at students who are learning how to actively participate in student-led discourse using the gradual-release method. Students who can learn best from listening and discussing will benefit. Students in this class usually have short attention spans and prefer instant gratification. The classes must move quickly. Immediate feedback and response to each student is necessary. The following list provides examples of protocols and techniques to facilitate student discourse:

Jigsaw Groups

Jigsaw is a well-established method for encouraging group sharing and learning of specific content. This technique can be used as an instructional activity across several days and is best to use when there is a large amount of content to teach. First, introduce the technique and the topic to be studied. Then, assign each student to a "home group" of 3-5 participants who reflect a range of reading abilities. Determine a set of reading selections and assign one selection to each student. Then, create "expert groups" that consist of participants across "home groups" who will read the same selection. Give all participants a framework for managing their time on the various parts of the jigsaw task. It is important to provide key questions to help the "expert groups" gather information in their particular area. In the end, the goal is to prepare a summary to organize the most important information discussed.

Tea Party

Pose a question to start the discussion. Questions and responses are addressed to the group, not the teacher. The teacher or identified student tracks main points. After the discussion, debrief the process as a

whole class.

Socratic Seminar

Prior to the discussion, students read the text and engage in activities or record notes to check initial understanding. During the discussion, students are assigned prompts or tasks to begin to explore. The teacher is the facilitator, allowing the students to navigate the discussion with limited teacher support.

Reading Strategies

Instead of recalling surface-level information, students will be expected to engage deeply with the content by:

Finding Organizational Patterns

Students will be able to make connections between reading and writing tasks, learn to read the text more independently, and use graphic organizers (such as timelines, flow charts, and mind maps) to "see" the relationship(s) among ideas more clearly.

Anticipation Guides

An Anticipation Guide is a series of questions or statements related to the topic or point of view of a particular text. Students work silently to read and then agree or disagree with each statement. This purpose is for students to activate their prior knowledge and experience by thinking about the ideas they will be reading about. Students should be encouraged to make personal connections so that they can integrate new knowledge with their background experience and prior knowledge.

Extending Vocabulary (Word Wall)

The class will find key vocabulary in the assigned text, and will help each other to understand and spell the key vocabulary by creating a "word wall" in the classroom that they can refer to for the duration of that particular topic. This will strengthen student discourse and writing by using content specific, academic vocabulary.

Drawing Conclusions

Students will actively use prior knowledge and experiences while reading and responding to important concepts and issues, in order to make inferences and draw conclusions. Students will develop content and opinions for their writing and become thoughtful speakers during whole-class and small-group discussions.

The Role of Technology

This unit is designed to integrate technology with daily access to Google Chromebooks and an interactive SMART Board. Students must have knowledge of Google Classroom and can functionally operate the online platform independently in order to access resources and engage in discussions during class and at home. Electronic resources will also be accessed using Google Chromebooks. Hard copies of all resources should be available to provide differentiated learning strategies.

Digital Writing Portfolio

Students will rely heavily on Google Classroom to access digital resources. Additionally, they will create and submit formative and summative tasks, as outlined by the activity summaries.

Activity Summaries

Activity #1: Identity Journal

The identity journal is an ongoing interactive writing activity that allows students to make personal connections with the texts and the topics in the unit. It is intended to be the formal space for "text to self" connections, since students will generally be eager to connect this topic to their own personal identities and identity formation. It will be essential to honor these connections wherever possible, in order to help students build and defend their working definitions of identity continuously throughout the unit. Students will spend time decorating their journals using magazines to create a collage cover that illustrates their identity, the different things that make them who they are.

Activity #2: Anticipation Guide

Students will activate their prior knowledge and experience by thinking about the ideas they will be reading about. Students should be encouraged to make personal connections so that they can integrate new knowledge with their prior knowledge.

Activity #3: Double Entry Journal

Students will complete and submit a dialectical journal after reading each vignette. For each entry, students will pull one quote that reveals something about the characters, setting, plot, conflict, or theme. Being sure to follow the quotes with the page numbers on which they were found, the quotes must have a clear significance or importance to the novel. On the response side of the entry, students will write their thoughts, questions, or reactions to the quote. Then, they will reflect on the importance of what was written, the significance of the quote in terms of the plot development, or what the author might have been communicating to the reader. Students will be expected to react to what a character says, respond to an event, and share connections between the passage and perhaps another novel, historical or current event, or a personal experience.

Activity #4: Break-Out Mentor

After analyzing the symbolism in THOMS, students will identify a "break-out" mentor by researching a notable historical figure that has broken into a place they want to be in the future. Students will capture their mentor's influence using a technological platform of their choice.

Student will identify community mentors that inspire personal growth and deepen their understanding of how accepting ownership for decisions affects relationships and nurtures personal growth. The goal is to have students research community mentors that have broken into a place they want to be in the future (ie., career, education, lifestyle, etc.). Students will capture their mentor's influence in a presentation using a technological platform. Encourage students to research local newspaper articles and videos, interview family

and other community members, or even try to contact the community member directly. To support the visual component, students will write a short reflection that answers the following guiding questions:

- Why do admire this community member?
- What experiences shaped their values and beliefs?
- How does family play a role in their success?
- How did failure promote change in their life?
- Who was included in your mentor's support system? How did this impact their life?
- How does your research help you prepare for the future goals you want to accomplish?

Activity #5: Book Dedication

Students will dedicate a vignette to someone in their family. They will provide a detailed explanation of why they chose the vignette and the reason why they chose to dedicate the vignette to their family member.

Activities #6-10: These activities are designed to give students choice in the completion of their summative task. Students must complete one activity along with a reflective essay.

Activity #6: Scrapbook

Students will create a scrapbook that illustrates their family expectations and cultural traditions. For each visual, students must explain the impact it has on their personal identity.

Activity #7: Create a Vignette

After reading the ten carefully selected vignettes, students will write one of their own. They must pay careful attention to Sandra Cisneros' writing style and the elements of a vignette. The purpose of this activity is for students to make connections to the STEM field. They will be tasked with writing the vignette as if Esperanza had a job in the STEM field, instead of being a writer. She would have access to more opportunities, a greater academic return, and increased income earning.

Activity #8: Vlog

Students choose a symbol that represents who they are. They must discuss the meaning behind the symbol and their personal connection in a vlog.

Activity #9: Vision Board

Students will display their twenty-year transformation on their vision board. Students will think about the guiding question: *Twenty years from now, where do you see yourself?* The purpose of your vision board is to bring everything on it to life. First, students will think about what their goals are in the following areas: relationships, career and finances, home, travel, personal growth (including spirituality, social life, education) and health. The vision board is the place to store anything that inspires and motivates them to achieve their greatest success in the next twenty years.

Activity #10: Reflective Essay

Students' personal connections to the unit will be honored in a reflective essay. Students will use the notes collected in their identity journals to build and defend their final definition of identity. They will use the core

novel and at least three supplemental texts to cite relevant evidence. Students will reflect on the following guiding questions in their essay, providing a thorough explanation for each:

- What have you inherited from your parents, close relatives, friends, and school? These things can be tangible or intangible.
- As you grow up, which family expectations will you continue to meet?
- As you grow up, which family expectations will you let go of? Why?
- As you grow up, which cultural traditions will you continue to honor?
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Materials

1. Google Chromebooks
2. Google Classroom invitation codes
3. Electronic folders for all digital resources
4. Digital and print copies of pre-selected vignettes from *The House on Mango Street*
5. Composition Notebooks
6. Anchor Chart Paper

Teacher Bibliography

Brackett, M. & Divecha, D. (2020). Sorry, There's No Easy Toolkit for Social-Emotional Learning. *Education Week, 39*(19), 28.

This resource breaks down the process of building and maintaining social-emotional learning and making explicit connections to students' personal lives, curriculum, and areas of need.

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994.

Cisneros weaves together the experiences of her Latina childhood in a series of interrelated, fictional, coming of age stories. Students will use pre-selected vignettes to identify traditions and cultural expectations before analyzing which to abandon and which to commit to.

Grafwallner, P (2017). Keeping Learning Real, Relevant, and Relatable. Edutopia.

A list of helpful reading and writing exercises designed to tap into students' interests and experiences.

Harris, V. J. (2007). In Praise of a Scholarly Force: Rudine Sims Bishop. *National Council of Teachers of English*, *85*(2), 152-153.

Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors are used as symbols to help students analyze multiple perspectives using text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections.

MacCann, C., Jiang, Y., Brown, L. E. R., Double, K.S., Bucich, M.M & Minbashian, A. (2020). Emotional Intelligence Predicts Academic Performance: A Meta-Analysis. *American Psychological Association, 146*(2), 150-186.

The Hierarchical Model of Emotional Skills are thoroughly explained in order to build and maintain a culture of trust within the classroom.

Reuben, R. C. (2012). Bringing Mindfulness into the Classroom: A Personal Journey. *Association of American Law Schools, 61*(4), 674-682.

This resource provides concrete examples of incorporating mindfulness practices into the classroom in order to help activate students' compassion and positivity.

Manela, T. (2016). Gratitude and Appreciation. *American Philosophical Quarterly, 53*(3), 281-294.

There is a difference between having gratitude and appreciation for someone or something. This resource will demonstrate for students when each selfless act is appropriate to employ in their everyday lives.

Minahan, J. (2019). Trauma-Informed Teaching Strategies. *Educational Leadership: Making Schools a Safe Place, 77*(2), 30-35.

As we learn how to recover from pandemic-related trauma, this resource equips educators with a toolbox of strategies to avoid turning students' trauma into punishments.

King, M.L. (2010). *Strength to Love*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

A tribute to non-violent resistance, this historical resource will build authentic, timely connections to Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King's vision of tough mindedness and tenderheartedness.

Student Reading List and Supplemental Text Selection

An advanced training is not necessary to select a rich set of readings, envisaged to engage students. The text described below will help students build a working definition of identity, using concrete evidence to support their understanding of the concept. These supplemental texts are suggestions and can be read in any order, taking a step further towards translation and relevance. The goal is for students to record evidence to build and defend their definition of identity on an on-going basis, while making connections between texts:

"I Escaped a Violent Gang" by Cate Bailey

This powerful memoir demonstrates the role that honesty, determination, and forgiveness have in Ana's life.

"Why I Teach Math Through Knitting" by Sara Jense (CommonLit)

In this informational text, Sara Jensen discusses how she uses knitting to teach math to her students.

"When Women Stopped Coding" by Steve Henn (CommonLit)

In this informational text, Steven Henn explores why fewer women are coding and pursuing careers in computer science.

"I Am Not An Inmate…I Am a Man" by Deena Prichep (CommonLit)

Students will practice using empathy while reading about how inmates experience growth and learn valuable lessons while in prison.

"This is Not Who We Are" by Naomi Shihab Nye (CommonLit)

In this personal essay, Nye reflects on her relationship with her Arab-American identity.

"Rebel with a Cause: Rebellion in Adolescence" by Dr. Carl Pickhardt (CommonLit)

According to psychologist Dr. Carl Pickhardt, adolescence is a time of rebellion. In this article, Dr. Pickhardt outlines the stages of adolescent rebellion from ages 9 to 23.

"Where Did I Come From?" by Birdbrain Science (CommonLit)

This informational text reveals how and why people have some of the traits that they do.

Appendix: Implementing District Standards

This unit is designed to incorporate the Common Core State Standards and 21st century skills which will prepare our students for college and careers.

Reading

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1

Students will cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. This CCSS will be implemented initially during the reading process. As students read and analyze pre-selected vignettes, they will be expected to react to what a character says, respond to an event, and share connections between the passage and perhaps another novel, historical or current event, or a personal experience. Additionally, as they learn to identify and understand an author's choices, they discover the underlying themes or issues during class discussion and journal writing.

Writing

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.6

Students will use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others. Additionally, they will use the notes collected in their identity journals to build and defend their final definition of identity.

Speaking & Listening

The following CCSS will be combined to establish norms and expectations for class discussions and student-to-student discourse. Each standard will be taught in isolation, and combined to foster active and collaborative discussions. Students will effectively engage in discussions with diverse partners, express their own ideas clearly, and build on others' ideas during discussions:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.A
    - Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.

- ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.B
    - Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

- ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.C
    - Pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations, and ideas.

- ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.D
    - Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.

Notes

(1) This unit requires a thoughtful plan to build and maintain a culture of trust. These three pedagogies should be utilized in conjunction with the unit in order to help students build explicit connections, engage in discussions with diverse partners, express their own ideas clearly, and build on others' ideas during discussions:

(2) Emotional intelligence fosters the following purpose: "the ultimate goal of the social emotional learning (SEL) field is to weave the teaching of social-emotional intelligence throughout children's education so lives are enhanced and crises are rare" (Brackett and Divecha, 2020, 28). But, as the authors point out, "we have a long way to go" (28). Research has shown that SEL skills can be taught when embedded with fidelity. However, in order to "enrich relationships between teachers and students, and decrease aggression" (28), a culture of trust must be established.

"Emotions often are marginalized as a woman's interest. And they're frequently viewed as someone else's issues, not one's own. When we ask people if they need help learning to regulate their emotions, few people

usually raise their hands. If we ask them if the people around them need help regulating their emotions, nearly all the hands go up" (28).

No quick fix, students will use the characters and their hardships as a shield to make personal connections. Instead of adding discomfort to their lives, strategic placement of class discussions will develop an ongoing culture of trust. Unfortunately, "many emotional challenges have roots in systemic social problems like inequality, racism, sexism, and poverty" (28). By acting on the research that proves successful for students, progress is inevitable.

(3) According to "Emotional Intelligence Predicts Academic Performance: A Meta-Analysis," the Hierarchical Model of Emotional Skills are four critical skills necessary to support resilience in school leaders and reduce burnout. The four skills are: perceiving emotions accurately, using emotions to facilitate decision-making, understanding emotions, and managing emotions to up-

regulate positive emotions and down-regulate negative emotions. Using the appropriate hierarchical order will establish a culture of trust inside of the classroom, making the unit more valuable for students.

(4) Trust, appreciation, and respect are all grounded in self-knowledge, self-love, and self-regulation. "Bringing Mindfulness into the Classroom" is a reminder that maintaining a "great awareness of the present moment, as well as an open and caring heart and a sense of receptivity [will allow students] to learn something from others" (Reuben, 2012, 657). While these qualities are innate in some students, it is important to teach mindfulness in an authentic context. "Among other things, mindfulness teaches us how to work with distractions, and how to be open to whatever comes up with non-judgment and equanimity" (657). Sharing conversations sparked by footage, illustrations, news outlets, and social media posts will ensure that everyone does their part until justice is ultimately done. Targeting and soothing raw emotions will build a platform for students. Being open, receptive, clear, courageous, and compassionate with students will provide comfort.

(5) Foundational to students' lives, students will explore their own happiness and effectiveness, in addition to their positive impact on others. According to "Gratitude and Appreciation," we show gratitude by being grateful *to* someone when we benefit from their kind gestures. On the contrary, we are often grateful *that* we have access to people and things that improve our quality of life. Using a journal format to increase privacy and the degree of emotions students express, students can write about who they are grateful *to* and explain why they are grateful. This will explicitly pave a way for students to self-reflect and show appreciation for the people they consider to be important in their lives. Additionally, these positive statements of affirmations will increase actionable change for students who have experienced trauma.

(6) Explicitly building background knowledge requires tapping into student's interests and experiences will increase the relevancy and deepen students' understanding and knowledge of the symbolic meaning behind mirrors, windows, and sliding doors.

(7) Students should be prepared to undertake the added responsibility of being tough-minded and tenderhearted. Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. explains how "we must bring together tough mindedness and tenderheartedness, if we are to move creatively toward the goal of freedom and justice" (King, 2010, 7). This is important for students to build a more robust sense of self in order to be productive members of society. Our open request for freedom and equality, namely nonviolent resistance, "avoids complacency and do-nothingness of the soft minded and the violence and bitterness of the hardhearted" (8). Sharing informative resources for students to take action or work towards internal change will pivot this unit into a

more student-centered exploration of how far back inequality can be traced.

(8) Students are tuned in, watching the protests that have been going on across the nation, in some of our major cities, and right here in New Haven. The level of callousness and pride displayed in the most recent killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor have resulted in widespread protests. Social movements like Black Lives Matter at School, Black Lives Matter, Say Their Name, and I Can't Breath are active examples of nonviolent resistance movements. We all have to rise up to work on dismantling racism in all of it's forms, through courageous conversations and actionable change.

(9) This situation has added to the pain, fear, and suffering that the COVID-19 pandemic has unleashed on our black and brown communities at large. Displaying explicit support of our families and students will highlight the racial and economic inequalities that have become pervasive in our society. Anger is acceptable; acknowledge that we stand with the protesters and not the violence. We will continue to fight against racism and bigotry in all its forms. Our community is hurting; we must stand united.

(10) Students will use this unit as the appropriate space to imagine educational reform, furthering a world where the lives and futures of students of color are valued and sustained. Undoubtedly, cultivating a genuine sisterhood and brotherhood will help students see "affirming visions of themselves" (Harris, 2007, 153). Students will envision the inequality more explicitly by looking metaphorically through their own windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors as Violet Harris declares in "In Praise of a Scholarly Force: Rudine Sims Bishop."

"Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created and recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books" (153).

Students will be required to tap into their abstract thinking toolbox in order to think critically about themselves. Highlighting countless personal experiences in the core text will help students feel more comfortable opposing the unjust systems that challenge us to act.

(11) For students who have experienced pain, they must develop a self-management plan to determine family expectations they will let go of, which cultural traditions they will let go of, and which expectations for the current generation they will not follow. By teaching the foundations of personal maturity, students will ultimately have more self-control and an improved quality of life. Jessica Minahan uses "Trauma-Informed Teaching Strategies" as a resource to remind educators that "traumatized students are especially prone to difficulty in self-regulation, negative thinking, being on high alert, difficulty trusting adults, and inappropriate social interactions. They often haven't learned to express emotions healthily and instead show their distress through aggression, avoidance, shutting down, or other off-putting behaviors" (30). Therefore, this unit uses social emotional learning as an umbrella strategy to increase the cultural relevance in the curriculum.

(12) When tapping into the root of some of the toughest undesirable behaviors, educators must learn to expect unexpected responses. Do not take anything personal; students are developing effective communication skills. "For traumatized students, the ability to learn and behave appropriately can be person-dependent. When they are with a safe and supportive adult, their behavior reflects that" (30). Choosing appropriate responses will reduce problematic behavior. "Giving supportive feedback to reduce negative

thinking [will] foster a feeling of safety" (30). Building a supportive, judgment free space will provide more depth to future discussions.