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Capstone Written Analysis

The context of book clubs creates a learning space centered on literary ideas that are directly presented through text choices. Honing in on engaging critical literacy within elementary book clubs, brings forth the questions of what is critical literacy and why do we need this? Critical literacy expands readers engagement with a text to construct more meaningful understanding and integrate their own agency within the content presented. Thinking of critical literacy in elementary book clubs adds an additional layer of importance due to elementary aged students often being deemed “too young” to be introduced and presented within content in critical literacy texts. Elementary school book clubs create a learning environment for students to discuss and think through topics that may differ from the implemented curriculum within the institutions. Hesitancy to utilize critical literacy is discussed by Kimmel & Hartsfield (2019), specifically with pre-service teachers and pre-service librarians. A driving factor in the development of this hesitancy to engage with critical literacy in book clubs and classrooms with younger students stemming from students labeled as too young to be presented with such topics, the predominantly white, female population of professionals in the field and potential backlash from parents or administrative faculty. Luke & Woods (2009) introduce two notions that highlight the importance of critical literacy, redistributive justice and recognitive justice. Redistributive justice is an equitable distribution of books or texts that present social issues topics through the medium of literature, beyond one-dimensional content itself, the subsequent discourse that arises is equally as important in the distribution of these ideals that can become visible through critical literacy. Recognitive justice highlights the “remaking and critiquing” of ideological structures prevalent in societal practices within political, racial, socio-economic,

gender and numerous additional spheres. Research and observations lead to the research question, how to support engagement with critical literacy in elementary book clubs?

The conceptual framework of my capstone is driven by theories, one of which presented by Holland et al (1998) and the construct of figured worlds. Within my capstone I identified the entity of books clubs as a figured world due to the socially constructed and socially reproduced nature of book clubs paralleling with those of figured world attributes. Further classifying text or book choices functioning, as pivots into these figured worlds. A book club is a gathering of individuals in learning and discourse, but the text is integral, functioning as a “doorway” or pivot into these learning spaces to adequately engage with the other individuals in the space. The role of books functioning as entryways into such contexts informed the design of my capstone to incorporate the multi-faceted nature of text choice in terms of importance of motivational appeal, but even more so the layered nature of such an object. Lapp & Fisher (2009) relate the relationship with text choice to degree of motivation for individuals to engage with the text on an individual basis, of reading, but then to exhibit the continual motivation to be an active participant in conversational settings. Critical literacy book clubs are immensely dependent on text choices to foster a space for critical literacy texts, Kimmel & Hartsfield engage with the pre-service educator and pre-service librarian population of individuals to interrogate the discernable hesitation to merely present critical literacy with younger students, aside from engaging with such texts. The identification of the hesitation draws forth the importance to address, Kimmel & Hartsfield move beyond the linear acknowledgement of the hesitancy, to delve into practical supports to combat the fear of engaging with critical literacy. The branches of practicality include seeking out community support within school insitutions from individuals who share beliefs in the importance of critical literacy exposure for students. Additional avenues include

advising students how to respond to such texts in order to craft discourse that is productive for the learning environment. Identifying the literary quality and curricula connections can also aide in the integration of critical literacy for hesitant educators to attend to the educational strides that students can engage with in terms of content exposure, but compounded with literary growth. The development of relationships with students can open pre-service educators to noticing the disservice of not including critical literacy texts can be for students who need to be exposed to the content in a learning space to discuss such content. These research ideals informed the website resource design through providing foundational supports for the importance of text choice, as well as contributing to the curating of online resources for users to utilize.

Theories, surrounding the role of critical literacy, such as Luke & Woods have contributed to further idea advancements in the framework development. Two main objectives of critical literacy identified by the aforementioned authors being redistributive justice and recognitive justice, are integral ideals to consider when utilizing critical literacy in book club contexts to foster meaningful conversations. Gatto (2013) addresses three critical literacy practices of attentive, connective and disruptive. These critical literacy practices informed the prong within the problem of practice of the tension that arises between facilitation and student agency within discourse engagement. Attentive critical literacy practice highlights student awareness of voice in the act of consuming a text in conjunction with awareness of the voice that is central to the production of texts. Through the practice of connective critical literacy, the function of texts becoming a “vehicle for agency”. Disruptive critical literacy practices focus on the togetherness of voice and agency to transform the world, these practices highlight the role of agency in student engagement, simultaneously addressing the role of texts contributing to the

agentic learning. The centrality of texts for agency in discourse informs the need for facilitation within the conversational aspects of book club learning.

The problem of practice identified in the learning space was informed through observations within the Waverly-Belmont Book Club, as a four-pronged entity. The four tenets of the problem of practice are identified as the tension of facilitation versus student agency, text choice, context of the book club and sustainability. The identified learner of librarian within the learning environment of the book club was an additional contributing factor to the identification of the problem of practice in a meaningful sense, in relation to observation within the site. The context of the Waverly-Belmont Book Club is a weekly recurring, before school, book club for 3rd and 4th grade students within the school. Each text is discussed over the course of a 4-week period, during which the meetings are held for about 45 minutes, in small group structuring. The discussion groups contain around 4-5 students and one facilitator (parent, librarian or member of the school community) to engage with the content presented in each partition of the text per week. Considering the context of the Waverly-Belmont Book Club, the attributes of the book club learning space are integral, as well as acknowledges the embedment of the book club within the MNPS school institution, even more broadly the community context of the location of the school in the sphere of Nashville. The intentionality of text choice showcases the dual nature of addressing interest of students, as well as introducing critical literacy to a learning context. When choosing the text for book clubs the degrees of hesitancy can vary as presented by Kimmel & Hartsfield, but through engaging with practical supports and having access to an abundance of resources, text choice can impact the entry into a space for a student and the following learning strides.

Critical literacy is not a learning experience that can be deemed “completed” after engagement with one text or conversation, which is why the importance of sustainability is integral. The sustainability portion of my design draws attention to sustainability throughout the four-week course of a text, along with the sustainability throughout the academic year and across academic years. The utilization of an adaptable discussion guiding framework, as featured in the design, can aid in the sustainability with feasibility of implementation for the learner.

The contextual nature of book club is unique dependent on the school climate, population of students, adult supports, text choices and a plethora of external factors. Due to the non-generalizable nature of book clubs, the context of each book club is drastically different from one another, the audience of learner for my design being a librarian in one distinct book club context allows for identification of key features within the learning context. The time frame (45 minutes over a four week period per text), text choices (chosen over the summer months for the upcoming academic year), completion of text reading by students, social dynamic and numerous additional factors impact the nature of authentic conversations occurring within the learning environment. The age of the children will also have a notable impact (3rd and 4th grade), in terms of development and what “they know” when entering the context.

Identifying the professional knowledge areas of learner, context and design further thinking surrounding the design choices in conjunction with theoretical ideals. The target learners of the design is the librarian within the Wavely-Belmont Book Club for future implementations of the book club learning space, along with hopeful sustainability. The learning context is a book club taking place within the structure of a MNPS school institution, with complexities of the learning context dependent on the composition of students within the environment, as well as the text/topics presented. The identified design being a website resource

for individuals to access, with the four tenets of the problem of practice highlighted through the pages or structured partitions of the website. Within each of the identified pages is an explanation of the importance of the notion within the learning environment of an elementary book club, followed by online resources or examples embedded within the page for users to access and utilize. The design choice of an online medium was driven by user accessibility, specifically with the integrated online resources to be more easily accessed for the learners in question. The prevalence of critical literacy engagement for students is immensely important to craft space for discourse and learning around topics that are present in numerous student realities, but that a population of educators deem “inappropriate” for school. These hesitations and lack of engagement need to be combatted through exposure to the importance of critical literacy in student learning strides and the plethora of texts that can be integrated into school-based learning. The design of a website resource provides ease in accessing various online caches of text options or content surrounding critical literacy engagement to allow for longevity in implementation of critical literacy engagement.

References

- Gatto, L. (2013). "Lunch is gross": Gaining access to powerful literacies. *Language Arts, 90*(4), 241-252.
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- Kimmel, S.C., & Hartsfield, D. E. (2019). "It was...the word 'scrotum' on the first page": Educators' perspectives of controversial literature. *Journal of Teacher Education, 70*(4), 335-346.
- Lapp, D., & Fisher, D. (2009). It's All About the Book: Motivating teens to read. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 52*(7), 556-561.
- Luke, A. & Woods, A. (2009). Critical literacies in schools: A primer. *Voices from the Middle, 17*(2), 9-18.

Appendix A

Link to design: <https://sites.google.com/view/critical-literacy-book-clubs/home>

| My research question is... | choices? | |
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| Article/Citation | What main question(s) does this article ask? | 1-2 Sentence Gist |
| Barone (2011): Making meaning: Individual and group response within a book club structure | How can sharing connections to texts increase the degree of impact of a variety of topics discussed? | The interaction of conversation contributions with the developed skill of active reading a student exhibit, along with the individual reading responses displayed by students in relation to whole group dynamics. Another claim was students establishing their literal knowledge and moving onto more inferential/critical contributions, overtime. |
| Lapp & Fisher (2009): It's All About the Book: Motivating Teens to Read | How central does the role of text choice play in the level of motivation displayed by students engaging in the literacy based curriculum discussions? How to foster productive conversation in book clubs to facilitate discussion, but also additional modalities of writing in discussing ideas. | The impact of motivation in cognitive (critical engagement with the text) and social realms (peer interactions promoting more in-depth conversation and frequency of discourse). Creating a classroom community where communication skills are addressed, as well as cognitive skills regarding the content presented in the books. Assessing student learning was presented as a longer timeline, scaling multiple texts within the classroom setting- with scaffolding manifesting as cognitive/communication skills being developed. |
| Kong & Fitch (2003): Using Book Club to engage culturally and linguistically diverse learners in reading, writing, and talking about books | What constitutes a figured world, factoring in the role of objects functioning as pivots to this third learning space? | What constitutes a figured world and the connected learning that occurs? |

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| Gatto (2013): "Lunch is Gross": Gaining Access to Powerful Literacies | How to engage students in critical literacies within the classroom? | Three conceptual categories of critical literacy practices-attentive, connective and disruptive. Important to connect state standards within the framework of the literacy curriculum. |
| Luke & Woods (2009): Critical Literacies in Schools: A Primer | What are the important and impactful constructs of critical literacies? | Dual focus of critical literacies: redistributive justice and recognitive justice. Using language to problematize the world |
| Casey (2008): Engaging the Disengaged: Using Learning Clubs to Motivate Struggling Adolescent Readers and Writers | How to identify the nature of learning clubs to foster productive learning spaces? | Learning clubs taking on the constructs of sociocultural theory-not adhering to a curriculum, but rather responding to literary needs of students. Establishing differences in book clubs and literature circles-learning clubs having a distinct context. |
| Wenger (1998): Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity | What are central facets of a community of practice? (Joint enterprise, mutual engagement, repertoires of practice) | A community of practice has a joint objective within the learning context-leading to mutual engagement within the population of individuals in the community to make strides toward the identified joint enterprise. |
| Kimmel & Hartsfield (2019): "It Was...the Word 'Scrotum' on the First Page": Educators' Perspectives of Controversial Literature | How to support and address pre-service librarians and teachers in overcoming hesitancies to engage with critical literacy in younger student populations? | Pre-service teachers and librarians are hesitant to present critical literacy texts to students due to possible backlash from administrators and parents, along with the reality of the majority of educators being white females. Four major practical supports are finding a supportive community within school institutions, focusing on literary quality of critical literacy texts, teaching students how to respond to such texts, developing caring relationships with students to highlight the disservice of not including critical literacy. |

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| Hughes-Hassell, Barkley & Koehler (2008): Using a Critical Race Theory Framework to Examine Transitional Books | How do transitional texts focused on people of color support readers in a field where lack of representation is the reality? | Defining what consists of a transitional reader text for students, leading to identifying and describing the main tenets of CRT (counter-story telling, whiteness as property, interest convergence and the permeance of race. |
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| What are the design implications for your work? | How does this connect to other papers? | Constructs / Key Ideas (Note: include page numbers for quotes) |
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| <p>The implications for my work is thinking through the impact/translation of curriculum over time -with regards to book clubs in which meet once a month vs. once a week-yet crafting a space for notable strides in critical reading.</p> | <p>Connects to consequential learning through the different readings exhibited by students in individual realms vs. group, as well as the degree of literal reading contributions shifting to critical dependent on time.</p> | <p>Literal reading, inferential reading, critical reading, group and individual perspectives</p> |
| <p>Implications in the design of the foundational structure of a book club-independent student choice in texts, guidance? What levels of scaffolding?</p> | <p>Connects to Holland et. al. with the importance of book choice in relation to motivation, but additionally as a pivot into a figured world</p> | <p>Motivation to read the text, motivation to engage in conversation, the dynamic of book clubs embedded in classrooms (guidelines).</p> |
| <p>Design implications stem from this research under the idea of scalability of curriculum dependent on the scheduling of book club meetings.</p> | <p>Connects to Kimmel & Hartsfield in communication skills within the learning space-teaching students how to respond/engage with critical literacy through discourse</p> | <p><i>Scaffolding, communication skills, cognitive skills, assessing student learning in the book club context</i></p> |
| <p>Books function as pivots into the learning context/figured world of book clubs, the importance/centrality of books for the space place an even stronger emphasis on the importance of text choices.</p> | <p>Connects to Lapp & Fisher and Kimmel & Hartsfield to highlight the multiple tiers to text choice within book club spaces</p> | <p>Pivots, figured world, third space</p> |

In terms of design implications I have to consider the scope of audience for students to make meaningful connections on the context of their community, but rather even more so to recognize the impact of critical literacy.

Connects to Luke & Woods in terms of critical literacy practices and the identifiers of critical literacy objectives

Key Ideas: Critical Literacy allowing students to *question*, and take action, develop a sense of agency through voice, 3 categories of critical literacy (attentive, connective, disruptive)

Being able to identify key aims of critical literacies impacts design choices in terms of where the center thoughts/what to inform the design decisions

Connects to Casey-to see the objectives of critical literacy and incorporate those to motivate readers in learning groups

Key ideas: the power of language, redistributive justice, recognitive justice

Identifying the key features of book clubs and literature circles to construct even more beneficial learning groups

Connects to Holland et. al. in terms of learning groups functioning in a distinct context (figured world)

Students becoming active constructors of learning, rather than passive recipients, responsible grouping practices, responsive management structures, moving "beyond" the text

Viewing book clubs as communities of practice allows for the theory to identify the joint enterprise and impact on mutual engagement/conversations/learning occurring

Connects to Holland et. al. with the parallels of a community of practice and figured worlds

Joint enterprise, mutual engagement, repertoires of practice

Design implications are found in the text choice portion of the problem of practice to support the importance of text choice with the associated practical supports.

Connects to Lapp & Fisher with regards to the central nature and multi-faceted impact of text choice

Pre-service teachers and librarians, text choice, hesitancy to engage with critical literacy

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| Lead to design implication when considering the context and learner (white, female-similar to majority of education field) and who has the power/interest in engaging with critical literacy. | Connects to Kimmel & Hartsfield in relation to hesitation with interest convergence (who is making the decisions/valuing the presentation of race in the school?) | Critical Race Theory, interest convergence, transitional texts, counter-story telling, whiteness |
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Additional Notes & Reactions

If meaningful contributions takes time-How can that be expedited?
Can it?

How can you support motivation through guidance? Motivatiinn is great, but how can you support that fostering of engagement?

Do you let the figured world steer the learning or do you steer the learning withint the figured world?

If meaningful engagement with texts comes from interaction with multiple audiences-how can this be achieved within the scope of one book? The use of supplemental sources? Or would this rather be an overarching objective over a longer time span?

"Reading the word (and writing the word) entails reading (and rewriting) the world"

Balance of literary needs of students and presenting pertinent content themes?

How cognizant are students of book clubs functioning as communities of practice?

Practical ideas presented that can be implemented utilized! Introduces theory with a realistic/supportive response

Framework for power dynamics in school insitutions/learning spaces- who decides what to include? And why?