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Abstract

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Incorporating Critical Literacy Strategies Through the Use of Music/Song Lyrics to Enhance
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By

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Abstract

This study aims to examine ways in which critical literacy strategies can be incorporated through music/lyric analysis in the social studies classroom to enhance instruction. Data was collected through field observation notes from created lesson plans, student work samples, teacher participant/student participant interviews and questionnaires. The study reveals that incorporating music disrupts the commonplace, using music can engage the reluctant learner, and using music provides students with different viewpoints on societal topics. Teachers must carefully select and analyze the song lyrics chosen as well as researching background information about the overall theme/time period of the song, and teachers need to incorporate a type of written reflection throughout the lesson to gauge if critical literacy practices are being implemented by students.

Incorporating Critical Literacy Strategies Through the Use of Music/Song Lyrics to Enhance Social Studies Instruction

The use of Critical literacy practices should be implemented in all classrooms. Kurki (2015) found that incorporating critical literacy strategies with different types of texts that are familiar to students, such as music had positive effects for instruction in the classroom. Furthermore, according to Burstein (2014) incorporating the arts into the social studies classroom introduces students to cultural ideals and norms that are prevalent to their everyday lives. Burstein concluded that consciousness-raising through music allows students to value the customs, and traditions of others.

Critical literacy techniques require students to “think outside the box” or to become immersed in a text/activity that might be “unknown” to them. According to Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002), critical literacy has been described in many different ways by many different theorists and literacy educators. These researchers have synthesized critical literacy into four dimensions: “Disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action and promoting social justice” (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2006, p. 382). Once teachers have decided to implement critical literacy practice into instruction they must find activities for critical literacy techniques to come out throughout the lesson. As mentioned, numerous action research has investigated the effectiveness of pairing critical literacy with music/lyric analysis. According to Mangram and Weber (2012) music is one of the most widely used and appealing forms of communication. With that being said, teachers must take into consideration the likes and interests of their students. In doing so, students may become more engaged and involved with the specific content.

Simply put, if critical literacy strategies/approaches are not introduced in the classroom, students are not receiving a full education. As members of society it is paramount to be able to analyze a text for more than what is written. Students need to question a text, connect to a text, think about a text, and be inspired by a text. With that in mind, not all songs or music will accomplish this particular goal. Teachers must spend time selecting relevant music and lyrics. This practice is very beneficial specifically in the social studies content. Numerous songs have been written with explicit messages and ideas in the time period in which they were written. Social studies teachers must look at music as a text and should spend considerable time doing research to enhance instruction on the given time period being discussed in their social studies curriculum.

This action research project asks: how does incorporating critical literacy strategies through the use of music/lyric analysis affect instruction in the social studies content? This specific action research project began under the guiding theoretical framework pertaining to critical literacy of Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2006). Also, many leading research studies proved to promote the effectiveness of incorporating critical literacy strategies when paired with the use of music in the classroom. For this study, three lessons incorporating critical literacy with song lyrics were developed. A teacher participant taught the lessons to a group of three student participants. Data was collected through active observation, teacher/student participant interviews and questionnaires. When investigating multiple action researchers, this specific study was implemented to prove that pairing critical literacy strategies with music/lyric analysis was an effective method for social studies teachers to implement in the classroom. After the data was analyzed this action research found that incorporating critical literacy strategies through the use of music/lyric analysis positively affected instruction in the social studies content. It is essential

for teachers to carefully select the music that will be used for instruction. Secondly, the findings show that considerable preparation is required for teachers to create meaningful instruction centered around critical literacy strategies. Finally teachers must include some sort of written reflection throughout the lesson to gauge if critical literacy practices are being implemented by students during instruction.

Theoretical Framework

In today's society, one of the more frequently discussed topics of education is that of literacy. According to Kucer (2009) "literacy itself can be defined as the way in which members of a society learn to effectively, efficiently, and simultaneously control the linguistic, cognitive, sociocultural, and developmental dimensions both orally and through written language and other mediums (p. 5). Many different writers in the world of education also have varying definitions of what exactly literacy is. Furthermore, according to Gee (2001) "literacy is the control of secondary discourses" (p. 23). In other words the ability to "use" or "function" with a person's secondary discourse to effectively communicate. The specific aims of this particular study will be looking at the ways in which critical literacy strategies, specifically through music/lyric analysis can have a positive impact on social studies instruction.

Before discussing a specific theoretical framework for this action research project, we must discuss the ways in which literacy is acquired amongst children. Numerous research has been done looking specifically at literacy acquisition. According to Kucer (2009) literacy is acquired by children through oral and written language development. As children begin to master oral language they are then able to better comprehend and learn written language. Another major factor that affects literacy acquisition is the environment in which a child is immersed in. Kucer also mentions that the people a child interacts with as well as the cultural norms/variation of that

specific environment greatly affect the way literacy acquisition for that particular child. Because people belong to different communities and cultures with different ways in which literacy is valued, taught, used and demonstrated, the interactions and the ways in which parents demonstrate literacy will be different. Another way in which literacy acquisition is different among children is through linguistic variation. Throughout the world, words can have different meanings and connotations. Literacy acquisition also is affected by cultural variation. From a broader stand point, we can see that the mastery of literacy is something valued in American society. To compete with other industrial nations, we value citizens to have basic literacy skills to be able to contribute in the work place. Furthermore, technology plays an important role in literacy acquisition. In today's age children are immersed in technology. Different types of technologies are a primary discourse of many children in American society. With the advancements and affect technology/cultural variation have on literacy acquisition today, there are many different theoretical frameworks and ways in which literacy instruction should be implemented in school.

When looking at this specific action research project, the theoretical framework to be guiding these particular activities must be that of critical literacy. When using critical literacy techniques and activities with music, Social studies teachers will be able to provide their students with very meaningful and thought provoking lessons and activities. As mentioned, the most beneficial and relatable theory to look through this specific lens would have to be critical literacy. The basic definition of critical literacy can be found in the root word: critical. Teachers must foster critical thought and analysis and analysis throughout instruction. According to Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2006) the basis of critical literacy has taken on many different definitions and descriptions. Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys report that

Definitions of what it means to be literate are shifting. Linguists, anthropologists, educators, and social theorists no longer believe that literacy can be defined as a concrete list of skills that people merely manipulate and use. Rather, they argue that becoming literate is about what people do with literacy—the values people place on various acts and their associated ideologies. In other words, literacy is more than linguistic; it is political and social practice that limits or creates possibilities for who people become as literate beings. (p. 199)

Furthermore, in another article written by Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002), critical literacy has been described in many different ways by many different theorists and literacy educators. These researchers have synthesized critical literacy into four dimensions: “Disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action and promoting social justice”(p. 382). Each of the four dimensions of critical literacy can be implemented through the use of music and lyric analysis in the classroom.

When looking at the definition of critical literacy from the perspective of Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002) we must dissect each of the four defined dimensions. The first dimension, disrupting the commonplace is described as seeing the everyday through new lenses. This particular dimension requires people to think outside the box and to question societal practices. Questioning the everyday could be incorporated in the social studies classroom by looking at music and lyrics that pertain to issues that might not be comfortable to talk about in school. These discussions could center on the following: race, gender, immigration, sexual orientation, or any other topical issues in society. The second dimension, interrogating multiple viewpoints places important emphasis on putting yourself in the shoes of others. It is important to see things from different viewpoints and perspectives to have a well-rounded opinion on a particular topic.

Developing a well-rounded opinion or view on a topic could be implemented by looking at songs and lyrics that have differing perspectives on issues throughout history. For example, these different viewpoints could include looking at songs, lyrics, or poems that were written by slaves during the Civil War, a voice or perspective oftentimes neglected when looking at history. Focusing on sociopolitical issues offers teachers the opportunity to discuss the ways in which power is distributed in society, and how politics play a role in our daily lives. This thought process could be demonstrated in the classroom by researching lyrics that discuss these particular societal issues. Teachers could provide students with lyrics that discuss political unrest or the ways in which politics have been written about throughout history, such as song lyrics that protested the Vietnam War. Lastly, the final component of critical literacy is taking action and promoting social justice. According to Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002), this specific dimension is often perceived as the definition of critical literacy itself. Teachers can use music as a way to help inspire or bring attention to important issues in our society that students could become passionate about.

When using critical literacy techniques and activities with music/lyric analysis, social studies teachers will be able to provide their students with very meaningful and thought provoking lessons and activities. Social studies teachers need to spend considerable time planning and preparing lessons that are engaging and motivate their students to participate and think critically. The basis of what critical literacy entails should be looked at from the perspective of the four previously mentioned dimensions.

Research Question

Given that critical literacy is a practice that requires individuals to disrupt the commonplace, question texts, investigate different perspectives, discuss sociopolitical issues and promote social justice, how does using critical literacy through music/song lyrics increase students' understanding of political protests throughout history?

Literature Review

It is imperative for teachers to consistently provide their students with differentiated instruction in the classroom. Although a challenging and time consuming task, teachers need to spend considerable time preparing lessons that include different types of interactive activities to help enhance student learning. Differentiated instruction is important in all contents and grade levels throughout schools. This particular literature review will specifically look through the lens of the social studies content. Social studies as a whole is the combined study of many disciplines where expressive culture is defined and described (Burstein, 2014). Teachers have a vast number of different resources to use when delivering instruction. This literature review will look specifically at the impact/effectiveness of using music in the social studies classroom, with an emphasis on the theoretical framework of critical literacy and critical literacy techniques in the classroom. Research has shown that implementing the use of music in the social studies setting helps increase student learning and is a valuable resource for these specific content teachers.

In the following literature review, three distinct themes will be discussed when looking at the use of music in the social studies classroom. The first theme shows that using music/lyrics in the classroom provides students with connection making opportunities, multiple perspectives, and promotes critical thinking. One way that students can better understand topics or content is

through the process of making connections to prior knowledge. History and societal topics have many different viewpoints and perspectives. It is important for teachers to provide their students with a wide range of viewpoints for students to better understand a topic. The final aspect of this theme in this literature review claims that using music/lyric analysis in the social studies classroom promotes critical thinking skills and as students begin to develop more critical thinking skills, a deeper understanding of specific topics is then placed upon the student; thus producing a higher quality and level of work and student achievement. The second theme focuses on the ways in which critical literacy strategies and music can contribute to promoting social justice in the classroom. Teachers can deliberately come up with activities and lessons that promote the discussion of issues that are not only important societal topics but issues that can have a clear impact on the lives of different students. Also, these issues promoting social justice can help teachers better their practice by having more background knowledge on the lives of their students. The third and final theme of this literature review shows the way in which the combination of critical literacy strategies and music can help students make sense of more “traditional texts.” Teachers can incorporate music into lessons to compare/contrast as well as use current and popular music to make connections to other texts that are being used in instruction.

Music in the Classroom Provides Students with Connection Making Opportunities, Multiple Perspectives, and Promotes Critical Thinking

When students are able to draw upon their prior knowledge, unknown or new information can be analyzed and contextualized with much greater ease. The unknown information can become more familiar for students. Providing students with multiple perspectives on a particular topic is absolutely paramount for teachers to implement. These different perspectives and

“voices” are not always available in a textbook or through lecture. These critical thinking skills can be enhanced through the use of music/lyric analysis with a specific focus on disrupting the commonplace, providing students with multiple perspectives, focusing on socioeconomic issues. These pertinent critical literacy topics can be found and analyzed in many different types of music and songs. Drawing upon already known knowledge, or making connections is an important tool used to acquire new knowledge. The ability to make connections is important for students, and can help foster new knowledge and concepts. According to Burstein (2014) incorporating the arts into social studies introduces students to cultural ideals and norms that are prevalent to their lives. With that being said, students are then able to internalize the course content, and make connections to help acquire new knowledge. Burstein claims that: “consciousness-raising through music allows students to value the customs, and traditions of others. Students can gain a concrete understanding of what life was like in an alternate time period and make relevant connections to their daily lives” (p. 135). One way that students can look at what life was like from different time periods is through music. The particular music/lyrics chosen for the lesson would be considered a primary source document. With the shifts in today’s education with the Common Core using primary source documents is a very important skill/activity to be used in the social studies/English Language Arts classroom. As an example, students could analyze the song/lyrics to better understand the specific time period. Furthermore, students could compare the current time period to the historical time period studied to make connections from the past. Similar to Burstein’s findings, Cermack (2012) conducted a study with the goal of stimulating learning about environmental issues in urban school settings. Cermack found that through the use of popular music centered on the environment, students were able to make new connections about the impact of the environment to their everyday lives.

As Cermack began to incorporate music and lyric analysis in his classroom, he writes that:

“Another trend in my students’ work is how they connect the case studies into other real-world events. This demonstrates a skilled use of knowledge and authentic learning” (p. 200).

Cermack’s case study showed the impact that the use of music/lyric analysis can have in the classroom. Once those particular students were provided with music relevant to their lives, the students in the case study were able to make connections about environmental issues and their everyday life. Authentic learning maximizes student achievement and growth. In addition to Burstein (2014) and Cermack (2012), Mangram and Weber (2012) find the use of music in the Humanities classroom to be a powerful tool. This particular case study claims that music is a tool that can capture students’ attention and engagement. According to Mangram and Weber,

Music matters in the U.S social and cultural landscape because of its ubiquity. U.S children listen to more than 10,500 hours of music a year during their 12 years of schooling, yet many teachers do not draw upon this area of knowledge. (p. 3)

In U.S culture, music truly plays an integral role in the lives of many. Therefore, students are immersed in music throughout their years of schooling. Music should be used in the classroom to help make connections to the material of the class as well as promoting authentic learning. The implementation of music and lyric analysis will aid in connection making skills amongst students. Mangram and Weber also claim that: “the universality of music allows both teacher and student to connect to and better understand a wide range of historical events, timer periods, cultures, and social issues” (p. 19). This idea goes above and beyond the case studies already mentioned in this literature review. In a classroom setting where both teacher and students are making connections and expressing previous knowledge to new information, the outcome of the discussions/lesson will have great value. Similar to Mangram and Weber’s case study, Kurki

(2015) discusses the importance of using relevant texts of students to enhance student learning. Kurki's study found that teachers should take an approach to enhance the relationship between literacy curriculum and students' text-based interests. Since music/lyrics can be read, it could fall under the category of a text-based interest for a student. According to Kurki, "readers must come to understand that texts are not 'true' but rather that they represent the perspectives of the writer and the socio-cultural times in which they were written" (p. 16). This statement perfectly coincides with the notion that the use of music and lyrics is a great way for students to make connections. When students listen to music from a particular time period they are able to learn about the historical time period as well as the societal norms of the time period as well. Furthermore, when students listen to music that focuses on the sociocultural, they are demonstrating one of the main aspects of critical literacy, disrupting the commonplace.

The findings of Kurki (2015) also pair nicely with the findings of Burstein (2014). Kurki (2015) mentions that teachers need to uncover the kinds of critical engagement that may be happening for their students that might be overlooked or ignored. Therefore, it is important for teachers to find ways in which their students can connect/make meaning of a text. Burstein mentions that by integrating the visual-performing arts in the classroom, teachers provide students several strategies to help students make their own meaning of socio-cultural events. These visual-performing arts could include listening to musical performances and analyzing the lyrics of the particular song.

The ability to make connections is pivotal to learning new knowledge. Listening to music and analyzing lyrics is a great activity to help students make connections to new topics of study. Using music and looking at lyrics is a great activity that should be used in the Social studies classroom. Not only is it important for teachers to provide students with opportunities to make

connections to their course content, but as a teacher it is also important to provide students with historical examples from multiple viewpoints. Well versed students must look at topics from differing perspectives. One way to accomplish this instructional goal is through the use of music and lyric analysis. Music can be used as both as a primary source document and provide students with different views on specific moments and eras in history. Lloyd (2003) states that “lyrics and music of popular songs can represent alternative perspectives to the dominant ideologies of a particular time or place. They can be used effectively to provide the voices rarely heard in textbooks” (p. 1). It is important to look at history/topical issues from many different lenses, looking at history from one perspective does not provide a well-rounded look at topics and issues in the classroom. This instructional approach demonstrates critical literacy not only by interrogating multiple perspectives but disrupting the commonplace. One example of implementing this instructional approach includes looking at the music written by African Americans during a period of slavery in the United States. Music serves as a great tool to use to accomplish this feat. Analyzing music and lyrics can provide students with a different look on an issue. Listening to music can also be a fun and exciting activity for students in the classroom. Mangram and Weber (2012) found that integrating music in the Humanities classroom had many positive benefits and also increased student motivation. Students achieve more in the classroom when they are engaged and are interested in the particular topic. Looking at music from a specific time period or music that pertains to a specific issue could increase the engagement and attentiveness of a particular student or class as a whole. Mangram and Weber also concluded from their study that “the use of music is a powerful tool that teachers can use for examination of social problems such as poverty, racism, hunger, disease and war” (p. 4). This finding once again demonstrates a key critical literacy component. One of the most important roles of a Humanities

teacher is to help students become aware of social issues. If studies have shown that playing music and analyzing lyrics of topical issues increases student motivation then this surely should be implemented in a social studies classroom. Mangram and Weber also say that the use of relevant popular culture, such as music helps students to contextualize historical events. As citizens of the United States, students are submerged in American popular culture. This known knowledge and primary discourse should be used to enhance instruction in the classroom. Similar to the findings mentioned above, Suh (2013) claims that the use of the arts can be a powerful tool for engaging students. Suh writes that “when various arts are used, students can better learn how to understand multiple perspectives” (p. 135). Music represents a voice and a tone different from other sources used to deliver social studies instruction. These voices offer a differing perspective to help students learn about different historical periods or topical issues. Burstein (2014) found that “teachers use music in the classroom to raise awareness of multiple historical perspectives and to enhance understanding of history and culture” (p. 135). These particular findings show the effectiveness of incorporating multiple perspectives in the Social studies classroom. Similar to Suh and Burstein, Kurki (2015) went on to find that “engaging with texts can bring readers to a place where they receive encouragement to question texts, guidance, about the kinds of questions to ask, and view examples of how to work towards a more just society through thoughtful action” (p. 29). Success can be contagious in the classroom. Oftentimes, when students are successful in the classroom they become more motivated. When students are more motivated they are willing to put forth more effort in the classroom, which fosters more student success and engagement. Using music and analyzing lyrics in the Social studies/English Language Arts classroom would certainly have a positive impact on the schooling experience of students.

All the studies researched in this literature review have found that music has the potential to enhance instruction in the social studies classroom. However, Mangram and Weber (2012) found that “the teacher must search for and choose a piece from the historical era that is being studied and research aspects of the piece in order to best present it to their students” (p. 17). These particular findings show that music must carefully be selected before chosen to be used in a lesson.

Another important task for teachers is to provide instruction that fosters critical thinking; critical thinking should be a cornerstone of any classroom. It is a very important task for teachers to prepare lessons that require students to think critically on many different types of issues. This type of instruction is especially important in the social studies classroom. Many case studies have reported that using music in the Humanities classroom is a great strategy to enhance critical thinking amongst students. Burstein (2014) found that integrating arts in a second and sixth grade class such as art, dance, film and music were extremely beneficial in the classroom and enhanced instruction. Burstein says that “using the dramatic arts (music, art, film, etc.) is a multi-sensory approach to learning social studies content. Students must use imagination, risk-taking and critical thinking within a historical time period or cultural context” (p. 134). The use of music and lyric analysis causes students to think critically and to question and translate the music. The historical context/message is not always clear, and through close reads and discussion, students are required to find meaning in the music using their own critical thinking skills. Activities such as lyric analysis can foster great discussions and debates within a social studies classroom. These particular activities also promote critical literacy practices in disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple perspectives, and promoting social justice. Similarly, Mangram and Weber (2012) attempted to investigate the reason that social studies teachers

incorporated music in into their classrooms. Mangram and Weber found that there were two basic reasons:

Contextualization of history and engagement of students. This also included developing critical thinking skills. The Social studies teachers understood that music captured the interest of students while helping them connect to the topic of study and develop critical thinking skills. (p. 17)

The teachers studied by Mangram and Weber (2012) methodically selected music to play in class to captivate and engage students. These teachers also selected music that they thought would be able to connect to the students of the class. These teachers had the intention to increase critical thinking amongst their students. Similarly, Kurki (2015) also found similar findings of the teachers and students she observed. Kurki found that the teachers that promoted critical literacies through music had students that spoke freely and openly expressed their opinions. It should be the goal for all teachers to have classrooms in which students are free to express their opinions and to feel safe in sharing those views. Activities that promote freedom of expression also represent critical literacy strategies that promote social justice in the lens of freedom of expression and freedom of speech; two principals that make up the foundation of the United States.

Not only does music and lyric analysis help students make sense of history, the use of music can also have the ability to captivate and engage students. This research also suggests that Humanities teachers are able to spark critical thinking amongst their students. Implementing music in the social studies classroom will bolster and help enhance discussion and instruction. Critical thinking is essential for instruction. Teachers must find ways to make critical thinking an

important part of all lessons, and the above research mentioned shows that one strategy to use to foster critical thinking is through the use of music and lyric analysis with a specific emphasis on critical literacy strategies and approaches. This theme has shown the importance that the use of music and lyric analysis can have in the humanities classroom. Teachers should attempt to use music whenever possible to help students make connections, look at different historical perspectives, and strengthen critical thinking skills. In a classroom that successfully implements critical literacy practices music/song analysis should be at the core of lessons and student centered activities.

Critical Literacy Strategies and Music in the Classroom Promotes Social Justice

As previously mentioned in this literature review, it is the role of teachers to provide their students opportunities to be exposed to many different learning experiences. When looking at the four dimensions of critical literacy, according to Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002) promoting social justice may oftentimes be the hardest dimension for teachers to incorporate into their lessons and activities. Activities as such require very well planned thought and careful preparation. The use of music/song analysis is one type of critical literacy strategy that can promote social justice.

Looking at music from different historical eras, as well as different cultural groups would be a great way to begin to promote social justice. Hess (2014) gives an example of a very privileged school district analyzing blues music from the 1920s and 1930s. Hess mentions that “Amanda (teacher) challenged privilege. Students were shocked and silent-confronted racism and the history of oppressing people of color in that moment not a student moved” (p. 243). From Hess’ study, privileged students looking at blues music from the 1920s and 1930s

exemplifies a great example of promoting social justice in the classroom. Hess also looked at the ways in which promoting social justice can have a positive impact in the classroom. Hess mentions that one of the biggest topics of discussion when promoting social justice is equity and inequality. Hess says that “a liberal understanding of social justice and equity is founded on principles of equality and freedom... what is absent here is the understanding of why inequality exists” (p. 243). Through this quote, Hess demonstrates that the critical literacy practice of promoting social justice would be a great tool for the classroom. Similar to the findings of Hess (2014), Sanchez (2007) looked at the ways in which music serves as a social justice text in the secondary classroom. Sanchez conducted a study that investigated the ways in which using music explored the complex nature of promoting social justice in the classroom. Sanchez states that “intellectually, utilizing music and poetry as relevant and accessible texts encouraged students to deconstruct meaning and identify social justice themes” (p. 646). Through this study, Sanchez demonstrates the effectiveness that using music in the classroom can have on promoting social justice, which is not always an easy task for teachers. Throughout this particular study, Sanchez refers to music and poetry as the arts and through the findings of the study concluded that

Arts and aesthetics, thus construed, can be used to support embodied and empathic ways of knowing, critique narrow and exclusionary notions of citizenship, and rethink the relationships that exist among humans and between humanity and the rest of the earth.

Using the arts to expose students to topics related to social change encourages students to explore the multidimensionality of the world and the self, and to seek multilayered meaning. (p. 650)

This particular study demonstrates the ways in which using the arts, such as music and poetry helps teachers promote social justice throughout the classroom. This literature review has identified many different studies that have found similar findings about the effectiveness that music can have on promoting social justice in the classroom.

Also, as previously mentioned in this literature review, it is the task of the teacher to make sure all student voices and perspectives are heard. Silverman (2009) looked at the ways in which educators can develop a curriculum that incorporates more social justice opportunities in the classroom for students, The purpose of Silverman's study was to integrate music with aspects of social justice throughout three different community sites. From the case study, Silverman found that "not being heard is a way of not-being, of not mattering, of not existing...as educators, we need to ask ourselves, who among our students and in our communities are not being seen and heard verbally and artistically?" (p. 180). It is extremely important for teachers to be able to look at the perspectives and backgrounds of their students, in doing so teachers will be able to create more culturally relevant opportunities for their studies to think in a perspective that promotes social justice.

In the world of higher education, an interesting study was conducted by Smith and Chik (2014). This particular study examined the ways in which popular culture was taught in the university context. In this study Smith and Chik looked at the ways in which locally and globally situated popular culture references are used to motivate students to think beyond accepted popular culture references. One of the ways in which looking beyond popular culture was practiced in this particular study was through listening to popular music. Smith and Chik found that "scholars do not want to only represent one way of viewing the world. Rather, scholars want to demonstrate the complexities of popular culture as a subject and the debates that surround it

by introducing multiple theoretical perspectives” (p. 251). This particular mention in the study demonstrates two key critical literacy aspects: interrogating multiple perspectives and focusing on promoting social justice. The scholars in this particular study have decided to use music to help illuminate the multiple perspectives that exist in popular culture. Identifying the ways in which multiple perspectives exist in popular culture is as an important part of Smith and Chik’s study, which finds that

Commentators on both sides of the popular culture debate- both for and against the popular culture phenomenon or its appropriation in the curriculum- find common ground in the notion that the topic is of critical importance in young peoples’ lives. On the one hand, the detractors of popular culture take the view that young people’s subjectivities and everyday lives are at the mercy of all-pervading influences from a corporate-controlled culture. On the other hand, advocates of popular culture as a topic worthy of inclusion in the school and university curriculum regard it as a key part of both academic and critical literacy formation. This view proposes that students’ lives are permeated and enriched with a competing range of popular cultural forms- television, music, movies, comic books, computer games and a plethora of technological devices. If we ignore these aspects of our students’ lived experiences, we miss key opportunities to engage with them and motivate them in their learning. (p. 252)

As teachers it is imperative to subject students to secondary discourses. Students must learn about things that are sometimes unknown to them. One way to assist students in learning about secondary discourses is to provide those students with access or the ability to use their primary discourses to learn new information.

Similar to other studies in this literature review, which highlight the importance of music in an adolescents life, Gainer (2007) looks at the ways in which critical literacy techniques can be used when looking at popular culture texts (with an emphasis on music). Gainer's study focused on the ways in which a young girl looked at lyrics and compared them to that of society. Gainer notes that

The purpose of this article is to highlight the complex literacy transactions that occur when children engage with culture texts, such as music... I focus on the tension between social critique and pleasure when teachers guide students to examine their everyday texts through a lens of critical media literacy. (p. 107)

Social criticism refers to a type of criticism that locates the reasons for blemished conditions in a society considered to be in a flawed social structure. By requiring students to look at critical media literacies such as music, teachers are then advocating for students to look at issues or topics that help to promote social justice. Gainer (2007) also says that "rather than seeing people as passive, mindless consumers, this view attributes a more active role to the consumers of popular culture texts" (p. 108). Teachers need to develop students to read texts for a purpose, not just to read them. This activity can greatly help promote social justice in the classroom. In a similar study, Richardson (2007) also looked at the ways in which black women are portrayed in rap music videos. This study looked at the ways in which examining and dissecting rap music and discussing the stereotypes and misleading representations can have a positive impact on the classroom, specifically promoting social justice topics/issues. Gainer (2007) also mentions that "teachers who are self-reflexive while engaging students in critical media literacy using popular culture texts provide opportunities to 'read' and 'write' media" (p. 109). One way that students can participate in critically reading popular culture such as music is through the use of authentic

texts, such as music that students listen and interact with in their own free time. Furthermore, when students are participating in activities or working with texts that pertain to their daily lives, more connections and more worthwhile interactions take place amongst students as well as teachers.

The use of popular music paired with critical literacy strategies can be very productive in the classroom. Similar to Suh (2013) and Gainer (2007), Bosacki, Francis-Murray, Pollon, and Elliot (2006) looked at the ways in which children perceive popular music. The results of this study suggested that music is important to children. Furthermore, across age and socioeconomic status, the majority of children shared common preferences concerning popular music types. Data was collected in response to questions regarding the studied children's interpretation of their favorite songs. The children's rationale reflected their developmental level of understanding. The results are discussed in terms of educational and clinical programs that promote critical media literacy. Much like Gainer (2007) Bosacki et al. (2006) agree that popular music brings out critical literacy practices in the classroom. This research suggests that teachers must find a way to determine what music is popular for their students. This information could be obtained by questionnaires, interviews, or discussions. Once the teacher has collected those findings, that teacher could locate music that students would enjoy listening to and analyzing. One implication of this research would include the ages of students. Similar to Gainer's (2007) study that looked at the way young children analyze song lyrics, Bosacki et al. (2006) also looked at the way elementary aged children analyze music. However, Bosacki et al. references that

Various researchers support the notion that teenagers respond to lyrics differently, depending on their individual psychological and developmental make-up. Past research

suggests that music has a differential impact on adolescents and highlights the fact that adolescents are a diverse group whose perceptions cannot always be predicted. Many researches claim that both sociocognitive development and sociocultural background play a role in how children and preteens interpret and make personal meaning from music. (p. 371)

This particular quotation provides a challenge for teachers at the secondary level. Furthermore, as mentioned by Bosacki et al., “educators need to encourage children to become critical consumers of the media, including popular music... these findings support the need for schools to implement critical media literacy programs that involve critical pedagogy which promotes a student-negotiated curriculum” (p. 380). Teachers must guide and assist students in looking at music critically. In doing so, students will begin to demonstrate critical literacy skills essential to being an active participant in society. Similar to Bosacki et al. Love (2013) found the need to promote social justice in the classroom. Love’s study demonstrated how black males can deconstruct rap to expose racial stereotyping within society and the media. Love concluded that

The findings of this study all for action: critical dialogues aimed at fostering critical consciousness so that it becomes a fundamental aspect of all students’ educational experience. Classrooms are needed where students learn and develop theoretical or pedagogical frameworks that challenge the status quo within media society at large. (p. 37)

Love’s study clearly shows the importance of providing students with opportunities to think critically and discuss social justice. As shown from this particular study, using rap music can help students make connections and sense of larger societal issues. Love’s study also had very

similar findings to Hallman (2009) who researched the ways in which “out of school literacies,” such as hip-hop can be used as critical bridges in student learning. This out of school literacy works as a vehicle for curricular change. Hallman goes on to write that “A multiliteracies framework endorses the view that individuals’ use of their native language, discourse, and identity are keys to promotion of social action” (p. 38). Further studies have looked at the ways in which “out of school literacies” can be used to enhance student learning. For example, Turner, Hayes, and Way (2013) looked at the ways in which the use of hip-hop in the classroom facilitated student participatory action research. Also this study found that using hip-hop/popular music created a dialectical space for students to integrate their new understanding of social justice issues.

For teachers, developing ways for students to discuss and investigate ways to promote social justice is not an easy task. Considerable planning time must take place for teachers to accomplish this goal. However, it is something that has to be done. When teachers spend time planning and researching ways to promote social justice in the classroom the first type of strategies teachers should research are critical literacy strategies and techniques. These critical literacy strategies can also be paired with music. Teachers can select specific songs to fit a time period or theme. Teachers can also ask students to select their own music. In doing so, there will be many opportunities for discussion and activities to promote social justice in the classroom, the community and society as a whole.

Incorporating Critical Literacy Strategies with Music in the Classroom Helps Students Make Sense of More “Traditional Texts”

As this literature review has already mentioned, incorporating music in the classroom is a very beneficial and worthwhile activity for teachers to implement. As Suh (2013) has mentioned, students or adolescents spend a considerable time listening to music. When analyzing texts, one of the practices often implemented in the classroom is identifying the overall theme of a text. A particular activity that many teachers practice is comparing and contrasting different texts based on their themes. Turner (2011) studied the way in which teachers taught relevant media through the use of critical literacy practices. In this study Turner conducted research following a teacher’s use of using relevant media in the classroom. Turner noticed that

Mr. Soto wants to teach students how they could critique and analyze media similar to how they were learning with print based text during their formal school day classes... Soto was concerned that students were not critically analyzing the media they were watching... Students’ uncritical view of these stereotypes served as a driving motivation for the curriculum and pedagogical strategies. (p. 617)

The teacher observed in this study demonstrates the effectiveness of using relevant media to make sense of more traditional print based texts. Similar to the findings of Turner, Suh (2013) mentions that using music in the classroom to spark critical discussions is a great strategy to use because of the importance that music plays in the lives of adolescents.

In addition to the findings of Suh, Kurki (2015) discusses the ways in which music can be used to bridge the gap for students between relevant/known texts and traditional/unknown texts. Kurki mentions that,

Becka considered the lyrics of the songs she listened to as another source of information about the world, rather than enjoying them simply as entertainment. Becka's critical statements about the texts in her life can be placed along various portions of the Critical Engagement Continuum. (p. 29)

Furthermore, Kurki (2015) found that participants of the study were influenced by their own experiences related to oppression. As mentioned by Kurki, one study participant "was making connections between messages in texts, his own life experiences, and other people who are affected by this issue." (p.27). The participants of this study demonstrate that using known texts in the lives of students can help relate known knowledge to topics that might be more unfamiliar.

Specific topics such as wealth, race, and gender are oftentimes complex to discuss in the classroom. As observed by Kurki (2015) the participants in the study conducted "felt strongly about listening to music with important messages "about things that matter," like racism and terrorism." (p. 27). The participants in this study highlight the ways in which music can bring out a critical literacy perspective for students in the classroom. In Kurki's description of the study participants, it is mentioned that

Every participant discussed music with some kind of critical perspective... Rachel had strong opinions about the kind of lyrics she found offensive... She was frustrated that people choose to express themselves in disrespectful ways towards women in their songs. Rachel disliked the ways women were portrayed in music... Rachel definitely expressed a consideration of the effects of songs on her and those around her. Her comments (and actions) demonstrated a critically literate approach to music, located in the challenge area of the continuum. (p. 24)

The findings from Kurki's study show how music can facilitate complex discussions while also encouraging critically literate activities in the classroom. Hayes, and Way (2013) also looked at specific ways music could stimulate important student discussion. They found the use of hip-hop in the classroom not only increased student participation; the students' awareness of social justice issues increased.

Multiple studies have shown that music is a primary discourse among children. Suh (2013) found that the frequency children listen to music is critical to understand. Similarly, Mangram and Weber (2012) report that the integration of music in the classroom has a positive effect on student motivation. In addition to Suh and Mangram and Weber, Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2006) report that

Most people spend as much as their lives engaged with mass media... Popular media which are comprised of news reporting agencies, magazines, films, music, television, and the internet are, for most people, the major source of information about the world... Media culture is now the dominant culture which socializes us and provides material for identity in terms of both social reproduction and change. (p 273)

The Morrell and Duncan-Andrade study centered on a project taking place in a secondary school. According to the outline of the study, "as part of their involvement in a summer research seminar for teens, a group of students decided to study the multiple impacts of hip-hop music and culture of inner city youth and the potential implications for critical literacy instruction" (p. 274). When looking at the effectiveness of hip hop music on inner city youth, Morrell and Duncan-Andrade also observed in their findings that

Our students tell us, in their dress, in their actions and in their words that they want to be taught. But, if we listen carefully, they will also tell us what we can use to teach them. Educators rightly believe that on-going training and continuous education are effective measures to decide on what is best for our children to learn. (p. 278)

Teachers must use popular music to make sense of non “authentic” texts for students. Non-authentic texts could include novels, or texts from a historical context that might not be known about for students.

Wishart, Leard, and Lashua (2006) looked at the ways in which urban youth engaged with popular culture to voice experiences and challenge the dominant narratives of daily lives. The results of the study not only showed that lyric writing was a meaningful activity for students, but also for teachers. Wishard Leard and Lashua found that

Our work in these projects required us to occupy and think through the multiple and shifting roles we played within the classroom... and to rethink the ways what we constructed and understood ourselves in these contexts. For example, students’ rap songs challenged Bret to recognize the political relationships and power dynamics inherent in his interactions with students. (p. 254)

Although all of the studies researched in this literature review agree that using popular music is beneficial for students, that does not mean it is always easy for teachers to plan these types of lessons. Lozenski and Smith (2012) conducted a study with Somali immigrant youth students. The study used hip-hop pedagogy with these young students to make culturally relevant lessons and activities. Lozenski and Smith found that

The layered complexity of immigrant youth identities meeting culturally relevant pedagogues should be generative. The onus is on teachers to be reflexive and to abandon elements of certainty, even if that means reaching crisis, having to improvise, or being vulnerable. In our interactions with Somali youth, student dialogue led to improvised pedagogy, which resulted in the teacher-student dynamic being placed into flux. This moment of flux then highlighted our own vulnerability, which created discomfort, although it provided generative moments of critical reflection and learning for all involved. (p. 609)

These particular findings show the challenges that teachers face when attempting to combine popular texts such as music with more traditional school based texts. As students have little knowledge with the traditional school based texts, the teachers may not be well versed in the popular music texts.

It is important for teachers to have background information on the texts selected for instruction. A study conducted by Irby, Hall, and Hill (2013) expressed the notion that teachers might not have enough background information on certain popular music is a definite concern for using music in the classroom. This particular idea is expressed through their findings that “Through a collaborative self-study with a teacher-educator, we as Black male hip-hop insiders reflect on the promises and pitfalls of preparing predominantly White teachers to incorporate hip-hop into their teaching and learning repertoire” (p. 1). Interestingly enough, Irby et al. also found that

Initially, the workshop was designed with two goals in mind. The first was to help teachers understand how to teach cultural literacy, critical literacy, and media literacy

through hip-hop. This goal focused on preparing teachers to address societal issues in the classroom... The second, more implicit goal sought to assuage teachers' preconceptions about the academic rigor... The central concern was that they did not have sufficient understandings of hip-hop's historical and social development such that they would effectively engage it in the classroom setting to achieve critical ends. (p. 7)

This particular study illuminates the importance that teachers must have a background and knowledge of the popular music that their students listen to as well as a background and potential training of how to effectively use that particular popular music. Similar to Irby, et al. Barrett (2013) studied the effectiveness of using hip-hop music in the classroom. Barrett describes hip-hop as a global youth culture, which draws attention to social issues and power relations as they are expressed through hip-hop literacies. This particular study also shows the importance of using known literacies in the classroom.

This literature review has shown the importance that the use of music and lyric analysis can have in the classroom. Teachers should attempt to use music whenever possible to help students make connections, look at different historical perspectives, and strengthen critical thinking skills. It should be a point of emphasis for teachers to instill critical literacy strategies and practices in the classroom and this literature review has shown the ways in which music can do that. Promoting social justice is something that students need to be aware of and discussing music can help those conversations become stronger and more meaningful in the classroom. Classrooms that incorporate music in lessons certainly set up students to think critically and question the world through discussion and other activities.

Method

Context

Research for this study will take place at a School in upstate New York. This particular school consists of grades 7-12. The students that are enrolled in this School all live within the upstate city district parameters and are all boys. According to the New York State Report card for 2014-2015 there are approximately 441 students enrolled in this school. From a demographic standpoint, the students are 80% black, 10% Hispanic, 6% white, 2% Asian, and 1% multiracial. Furthermore, 89% of the students are economically disadvantaged, 17% of students have disabilities, and 1% are English language learners. Of the 441 total students, 77% are eligible for free lunch, and another 10% are eligible for reduced-priced lunch. As per the 2014-2015 New York State Report card, this particular school has 75 7th graders, 73 8th graders, 74 9th graders, 85 10th graders, 82 11th graders, and 52 12th graders. The average class sizes are a total of 25 students. This school has an average attendance rate of 93% of students.

Participants

The Administration of this school contains a school president, school principal, and one assistant principal. Each grade has a grade level manager. The grade level manager for each grade provides disciplinary support for teachers as well as manages the specific floor the students are located on. There are core classes that meet every day as well as elective classes that meet on a rotating schedule. All of the classes at this school are one hour and twenty minute classes throughout the day. The classes include the following: math, science, social studies/English, computer technology, physical education, other various electives and an enrichment class period. Math, science, and social studies/English classes are co-taught. Also, English and social studies practice a blended curriculum. The English and social studies class incorporate the study of

history with the integration of literacy skills and techniques. Students are grouped together and travel from class to class together. The sectioning of each class is based off of reading and math assessments that are administered at the beginning of the school year. The three separate 7th grade classes are referred to as 7A, 7B, and 7C and are also made up of all male students. The first class section, 7A consists of 25 students. 22 of the students are black, two of the students are Hispanic, and one student is white. 7B consists of 27 total students in which 23 are black, two are Hispanic, and two are white. The final section 7C consists of 18 total students in which 15 are black, two are Hispanic, and one is white.

The participants in this particular study will be one teacher and a group of three students. Patti (pseudonym) is a 7th grade English/social studies teacher at the school located in the upstate New York area as mentioned earlier in the context section. Patti is in her second full time year of teaching, and both years she has worked at this school. For the two years, Patti has worked as a 7th grade English teacher. Patti's job responsibilities also include co-teaching/supporting the 7th grade social studies teacher at the school, as well as teaching an enrichment period that meets one day per week in the afternoon. Patti is a white, twenty-seven years old and received her Undergraduate degree in English and a Master's degree in Special Education/Adolescent English Education from a SUNY accredited college.

The student participants for this study will include three 7th graders from the Charter School noted above. This group consists of three boys ranging in age from 11-13. All three students are African American boys and are all from lower socioeconomic backgrounds as well as eligible for free or reduced-lunches. For this study all names will be used as pseudonyms to protect anonymity and confidentiality.

James is an 11 year old boy with an IEP. He has spent the 2015-2016 school year in an inclusive classroom and has participated in the same type of instruction as the other students in this study, except for test modifications. James is a C student who struggles with reading comprehension and writing, and is described as very energetic, and struggles to focus from time to time during instruction. James has struggled to complete homework during the school year, and oftentimes finds himself removed from the classroom due to disruptive and off task behavior.

The second student, Don, is a 12 year old boy. He is a B student who is a very creative and thoughtful writer as well as a strong reader. Also, Don is quiet and keeps to himself during class. Throughout the week, he receives additional counseling on an individual basis with the school counselor.

The third and final student participant of this study is a 13 year old student named Brett. He is in the Honors 7th grade class. Brett is extremely intellectual and participates in class daily. Also, he demonstrates advanced reading and writing skills in comparison to the other 7th grade students at this school.

Researcher Stance

I am currently in my first full time teaching job with a New York State certification in secondary social studies grades 7-12. Currently, I am also a graduate student at St. John Fisher College, working towards completing a Master's of Science in Literacy Education as well as certification for teaching children Literacy from grades 5-12. As a researcher for this study, I will act as a privileged active observer. According to Mills, (2011),

These times provide opportunities for teachers to work as a ‘teacher’s aide’, while at the same time allowing them to withdraw, stand back, and watch what is happening during a particular episode, moving in and out of the role of teacher aide, and observer. (p. 75)

This particular researcher stance was selected so that I would be able to observe the social interactions of students and the effect of critical literacy instructional strategies on those particular social interactions. Although from time to time I assisted Patti in teaching, the majority of my time during these lessons was an observer paying close attention to the effects of the instruction on students as well as the type of work that was produced based on the instruction and activities of the particular lessons observed. Throughout these lessons I asked questions to gauge student understanding to see if these critical literacy strategies were beneficial to learning.

Method

For this study, I collected both quantitative and qualitative data to determine how critical literacy practices and music can affect instruction. Specifically, I looked at the critical literacy dimension of disrupting the commonplace. Through the use of listening/analyzing music I looked at the ways in which the student participants began to question the text that they were reading. This study took place over three separate visits with small group instruction, totaling one hour each in duration. There were three students used (these students were previously mentioned in the participants section).

Prior to the small group instruction, I created three different one hour lessons (Appendix A, B, and C) centered around disrupting the common place. Students analyzed lyrics in each lesson and identified lyrical excerpts with the goal of questioning the message of a text, with an emphasis of discussing patriotism and nationalism. Each lesson focused on a different song. The songs I selected were all by Bruce Springsteen, and are entitled “Born in the U.S.A.,”

“American Skin (41 Shots)”, and “We Take Care of Our Own.” (Appendix D, E, and F). In the lesson, there was a mini-lesson that described the time period in which the song was written. Students listened to the song and kept a journal of their initial thoughts. Students then listened to the song for a second time and followed along with the lyrics. Thirdly, students analyzed the song with the co-teacher, Patti. Throughout the lesson students kept notes and thoughts in the journal that I provided them. Patti led the instruction, and I served as a teacher aide. After the third lesson was taught, I conducted interviews for the purpose of data collection. Individually, I interviewed Patti and the three students (James, Don, and Brett). Each interview consisted of five questions and lasted approximately 15 minutes (Appendix G and H).

Quality and Credibility of Research

Since the collection of data in this study was both qualitative and consisted of action research, it was imperative to ensure that the study is of a trustworthy manner. Mills (2011) mentions the work of Guba (1981) to explain how four different categories known as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability lead to research that is trustworthy. As such, all components of this study were thus subject to Mills’ and Guba’s four criteria for research that is trustworthy in nature.

Credibility refers to the researcher’s ability to comprehend that the particular study being done is complicated. In other words, the results and findings are not often easy to explain. When data is collected in a real world setting, problems and error can often occur. Researchers might also have to deal with the fact that not all data will align with expected outcomes or predictions. According to Mills (2011). one strategy to help with these occurrences is to participate in peer debriefing. Mills states that “the opportunity to test growing insights through interactions with other professionals is able to help us reflect on our own situations” (p. 115). Throughout the time

I am working on this study I will meet with a critical colleague to discuss what I have learned, what I am finding, and what complications I might be experiencing. This critical colleague will assist me in reflecting on my work as well as my writings and conclusions.

The second aspect of trustworthy research is transferability. As defined by Mills, (2011). “transferability refers to qualitative researchers’ beliefs that everything they study is context bound and that the goal of their work is not to develop ‘truth’ statements that can be generalized to larger groups of people” (p. 116). This particular thought means that the findings of a study cannot be considered universal. Rather, these findings can only be applied to the participants of the particular study at hand. To make sure that transferability was evident in this study, I obtained and collected descriptive data of the participants of the study.

The third category of trustworthiness in research is dependability. Dependability is defined by Mills (2011) as “the stability of the data” (p. 116). In reference to research, stability involves the way in which the researcher is able to demonstrate the strength or weakness of the particular argument. These strengths and weakness are identified by quality and quantity of data that is collected. To strengthen my argument I used overlapping methods when collecting data. According to Mills, overlapping methods is defined by “using two or more methods in such a way that the weakness of one is compensated by the strength in another’ (p. 116). While I was collecting data, I approached the same problem many different times and in many different ways. As a result, there will be enough proof for validated conclusions to be drawn.

The fourth and final category for trustworthiness in research is confirmability. As defined by Mills (2011) confirmability is “the neutrality or objectivity of the data that has been collected” (p. 116) In other words, this claim states that research can be considered valid and confirmable when the opinions, perspectives, and beliefs of the researcher are not included as

part of the results of the data. To maintain confirmability in this study, I made sure to maintain the practice of triangulation. Triangulation refers to “a variety of data sources and data methods that are compared with one another to cross-check data” (Mills, 2011, p. 116). My study made sure to include an assortment of different types of data that compared and contrasted common themes and occurrences. Once all the data had been collected and analyzed I was able to make a confirmable conclusion. As a result trustworthiness from this study was indicated.

Informed Consent and Protecting the Rights of the Participants

Prior to any data being collected for this study, I had to make sure that both the teacher and students I hoped to serve as participants in the study confirmed their availability. For Patti, I created a consent form outlining the study I was creating. Prior to confirming what students be participants of the study, I had individual discussions asking students if they would be interested in being participants in this study. Since the students of this study are all in seventh grade, I created an informed assent form also highlighting the schematics and purpose/aims of the study. Also, I created a parent permission form that I required students to get signed before beginning the study. These forms were then collected once that they had been signed. In the consent form for Patti, the assent forms for the students, and the parent permission forms I made note to all participants that pseudonyms would be used to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality throughout the findings and analysis of the study.

Data Collection

I collected four different forms of data for this study. Different types of data will enable triangulation of any of the results that I find. The first type of data that I collected is field observations. I observed the lessons that I created. These lessons were taught by Patti. While Patti taught the lessons I sat back, observed, and walked around the room. I wrote down what I

noticed, what I heard, what events transpired and the discussions that happened throughout the lessons.

The second type of data that I collected is through interviews. After the lessons I spoke with the teacher participant (Patti) as well as the student participants (James, Don, and Brett). I asked Patti how she thought the lesson went as well as if she thought the critical literacy dimension of disrupting the commonplace was achieved or not during instruction.

The third type of data collected was student work samples. As previously mentioned, throughout the lesson students kept a journal. In this journal students wrote down their thoughts as well as their song/lyric analysis. This student work served as a piece of data to analyze if students demonstrated the effectiveness of the music and critical literacy strategies. The final form of data I collected was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was different for the teacher participant and the student participants. The teacher participant questionnaire consisted of questions discussing the instruction, the overall lesson plan, and the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of students demonstrating the critical literacy dimension of disrupting the common place. The student participant questionnaire consisted of questions that reflected upon their experience during the lesson.

Data Analysis

For this particular action research project, numerous forms of data were collected. As mentioned earlier in the methods section, these pieces of data included: observation field notes, interviews (with teacher/student participants), student work samples, and questionnaires (teacher participant version/student participants version). To begin the data analysis process, I reviewed all data pieces that I collected with my specific research question in mind. Firstly, I read through all of the data to once again to familiarize myself with all of the data collected. Then, on the

second read through I began to code my data. According to Mills (2011), codes are working labels applied to blocks of text. The data codes have meaning for the researcher and capture “what is going on.” When coding the data I began to look for any emerging themes throughout the different data sources that either corresponded or contradicted my research question. Because my research topic looks at the use of critical literacy in the classroom, I looked for times in which students demonstrated any of the critical literacy dimensions throughout the observed lessons. After coding all of the data from the four different types of collected data, I began to find prominent themes. These specific findings/ideas will be included in the findings and discussion section of this case study.

Findings and Discussion

The data from this particular action research was organized into field observations, interviews with a teacher participant and student participants, student work samples, a teacher questionnaire/student questionnaire, and three created lesson plans. While examining the data across the different sources, several apparent themes began to emerge. The first theme revealed that incorporating music in the Social studies classroom disrupts the commonplace. The second theme suggests that incorporating music in the Social studies classroom can engage “reluctant” learners. The third theme that emerged during data analysis was that using music in the Social studies classroom provides students with different viewpoints on societal topics.

Incorporating Music in the Social Studies Classroom Disrupts the Commonplace

The action research for this case study looked at critical literacy from the perspective of four distinct dimensions as mentioned by Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002). The first dimension, disrupting the commonplace was happening often based on analyzing the different

forms of data throughout this study. Disrupting the commonplace is described as seeing the everyday through new lenses. This particular dimension requires people to think outside the box and to question societal practices.

As I created my lesson plans I wanted to find ways for students to question the everyday, think outside the box, and question the messages and meanings of certain songs. For the lessons I created I chose three distinct songs that have lyrical messages that students might not pick up on without analyzing the song lyrics. The three chosen songs were all written by Bruce Springsteen and are titled: “Born in the U.S.A.,” “American Skin (41 Shots),” and “We Take Care of Our Own.”

“Born in the U.S.A.” has been perceived as patriotic since it was first released in 1984, however the lyrics paint a very different picture detailing the very difficult challenges many Vietnam veterans faced when they came home. “American Skin (41 Shots)” was written in response to the shooting of an innocent African-American man by police in the late ‘90s. “We Take Care of Our Own” questions the shortcomings of the role of the U.S. government in protecting its citizens.

When I created the lesson plan I followed the instructional format that is implemented at the school I worked on this action research at. The instructional format includes specific learning targets, a bridge activity, a mini-lesson, a workshop, a summary portion, and closure portion. While I created the lessons I wanted to plan activities that would focus on disrupting the commonplace. For example, the content learning target is *I can discuss the overall message of the song “Born in the U.S.A.”* The skill learning target is *I can analyze song lyrics.* The literacy learning target is *I can provide evidence from song lyrics to support an overall theme.* The

essential/focus questions for the overall lesson are *Why has Bruce Springsteen’s “Born in the U.S.A” been misinterpreted throughout history, and what is the overall message of the song?*

The learning targets require students to disrupt the commonplace or to question the everyday. For example, the skill learning target requires students to analyze the “Born in the U.S.A” song lyrics, and the literacy learning target requires students to provide evidence from song lyrics to support the overall theme of the particular song. As mentioned these specific targets were created to require students to analyze song lyrics critically. While observing Patti teach the following lesson I carefully observed the student participants to see if they were disrupting the commonplace or questioning the everyday. I also collected student work samples of their notes from looking at the lyrics. When looking at song lyrics notes I noticed specific instances of students disrupting the commonplace. These specific findings from the student participant Brett will be shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Student Responses to “Born in the U.S.A” Lyrics Demonstrating Disrupting the Commonplace

Song Lyric	Student Response	Critical literacy dimension
Born down in a dead man’s town	Tough times	Disrupting the commonplace
First kick I took was when I hit the ground		
Got in a little hometown jam, so they put a rifle in my hand	Military, Vietnam, war	Disrupting the commonplace
Send me off to the foreign land to go and kill the yellow man		

Come back home to the refinery	Jobless, can't get a job, not fair	Disrupting the commonplace
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Hiring man said son if it was up to me

Went down to see my VA man

He said son don't you understand?

Down by the shadow of the penitentiary	Jobless forever	Disrupting the commonplace
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Out by the gas fires of the refinery

I'm ten years burning down the road

Ain't go nowhere to run, ain't got nowhere to go

Note. This student work sample is taken from Brett's lyric analysis worksheet.

When looking at Table 1, Brett's analysis of "Born in the U.S.A" demonstrates Brett's ability to disrupt the commonplace. In the first lyric, "born down in a dead man's town, first kick I took was when I hit the ground," Brett's written thoughts were *tough times*. This thought represents disrupting the commonplace because Brett is identifying the environment/situation that the main character of the song is describing as challenging.

In the next line "got in a little hometown jam, so they put a rifle in my hand. Send me off to the foreign land to go and kill the yellow man," Brett notes *military, Vietnam War*. This particular thought by Brett represents disrupting the commonplace because Brett is associating "they" as the U.S government forcing the character to join the military in a fight against an unfamiliar entity, in which there is no mention of the character wanting to become involved in the conflict.

Next, “Come back home to the refinery, hiring man said son if it was up to me. Went down to see my VA man, he said son don’t you understand?” Brett notes *jobless. Can’t get a job, not fair*. Brett is questioning the ability of a Vietnam veteran struggling to find a job after fighting in the war as unfair. This particular thought shows that Brett is contextualizing the harsh realities that veterans faced after the Vietnam War.

Lastly, “down by the shadow of the penitentiary, out by the gas fires of the refinery. I’m ten years burning down the road, ain’t got nowhere to run, ain’t got nowhere to go.” Brett notes *jobless forever*. Brett internalizes that the character has been unable to better his life after serving in the Vietnam War and the characters outlook is very bleak. Brett’s written notes from the lyrics of “Born in the U.S.A” demonstrate the effectiveness that the chosen song has on enabling students to disrupt the commonplace and think from a critical perspective.

These particular findings coincide with Burstein (2014). Burstein found that “students can gain a concrete understanding of what life was like in an alternate time period and make relevant connections to their daily lives” (p. 135). From looking at the notes that Brett took when analyzing “Born in the U.S.A” we can see that Brett has formed an understanding of the challenges Vietnam veterans faced after the war.

There were also other types of data that I coded that showed me instances of disrupting the commonplace. I found similar themes to disrupting the commonplace in my interviews with both Patti and my student participants. During the interview I asked Patti if she thought the activities of the lesson required students to think critically, and to question the lyrics of the song, Patti responded by saying the following:

While I was teaching I definitely noticed that the students were questioning and thinking hard about the message of the song. I found that while we were analyzing the lyrics together that not only were the students questioning the lyrics, but so was I. (Teacher Participant Interview, June 22, 2016)

When reflecting on the interview with Patti the excerpt “students were questioning and thinking hard about the message of the song” represents Patti’s observation that students were in fact disrupting the commonplace. As previously mentioned, disrupting the commonplace questions the everyday. Thinking hard about the message of the song and questioning the lyrics demonstrates both Patti and the student participant’s ability to do just that. Similar to the study of Mangram and Weber (2012), who methodically selected music to play in class to captivate and engage students, I also carefully selected music that I hoped would do the same. Based on my interview with Patti I have found that the chosen songs did just that. Similar to my findings demonstrating the ability of the student participants to question the everyday, Kurki (2015) found that the teachers that promoted critical literacies through music had students that spoke freely and openly expressed their opinions.

While interviewing the student participants I asked them if looking at/analyzing song lyrics was a meaningful activity for social studies class. Don responded by saying the following: “I thought it was really cool. I have had teachers talk about protest songs before, but I never was able to make up my mind that it was a protest song, I just went along with it” (Student Participant Interview, June 21, 2016). Don’s statement definitely confirms that disrupting the commonplace was prevalent throughout the lesson. Evidence of disrupting the commonplace is specifically demonstrated when Don says that in the past, “I was never able to make up my mind that it was a protest song.” Don successfully questioned and analyzed the lyrics of the song. He

concluded on his own that “Born in the U.S.A.” is in fact a protest song about the repercussions following the Vietnam War, by questioning the everyday and disrupting the commonplace. Likewise, Kurki (2015) found that “readers must come to understand that texts represent the perspectives of the writer and the socio-cultural times in which they were written” (p. 16). As shown by this interview excerpt Brett has come to understand that the song “Born in the U.S.A.” represents the difficulties of the time period.

The last piece of data that showed me that disrupting the commonplace was prevalent throughout these lessons was from a student work sample. Students were required to make predictions about the song based on the song title. All three participants thought that “Born in the U.S.A.” would be a patriotic song. However, the student participants’ minds were changed after analyzing the lyrics. When Don was asked about the overall message of the song, Don wrote “Being in the U.S.A isn’t really that good because after they came from saving people lives they can’t be rewarded with a job” (Student Participant Work Sample, 2016). After listening, discussing, and analyzing the song lyrics, Don realizes the injustice Vietnam veterans experienced when seeking employment after serving. Without disrupting the commonplace, thinking critically and questioning the everyday, Don might not have expressed those thoughts. Much like Gainer, (2007) who concluded that teachers need to develop students to read texts for a purpose, Don’s work sample demonstrates that through instruction Patti was able to encourage Don to read/analyze a text for a purpose.

From coding/analyzing the different data sources it was very prevalent that using music in the Social studies classroom disrupts the commonplace. The data I collected definitely shows that using music is beneficial to use for social studies classrooms. Also, while collecting my data and analyzing the data I found many similar findings from the various studies researched during

the literature review portion of this case study. The findings of this particular study coincided with the findings of Kurki (2015). Kurki discusses the ways in which music and critical literacy strategies can be used to bridge the gap for students between relevant topics and issues. The student participants for my case study had very little background knowledge about the music of Bruce Springsteen. Although Don had heard of the name Bruce Springsteen he was not aware of any of his songs. The song analysis of the selected music helped students discuss topical issues such as how veterans are treated as well as unemployment in America. The findings from this particular case study also resonate with the findings from Smith and Chik (2014). Smith and Chik decided to use music to help illuminate the multiple perspectives that exist in popular culture. The lessons that I created also looked at this concept, and both studies found using music to be beneficial for student learning as well as serving as a way to disrupt the commonplace.

Incorporating Music in the Social studies Classroom Can Engage “Reluctant Learners”

Prior to beginning my action research I thought it was very important to carefully select the student participants for the study. I wanted to have different types of students to collect more accurate data. For example, I thought it was important to have students with different academic levels. As you can read in the Method section of this case study, the three student participants varied in academic strengths (James, Don, and Brett). When coding and analyzing my data I noticed findings that I had not foreseen happening. I was astonished to see the engagement, attentiveness, and positive impact from the student participant James. From speaking with Patti (teacher participant) and my background knowledge on the selected student participants, I would classify James as a “reluctant learner.” In my opinion and analysis, I would define a reluctant learner as a student who struggles to stay alert, attentive, motivated, and engaged during

instruction. However, based on my data analysis, I would say that the “reluctant learner” of the student participant group, was anything but.

The first piece of data that I analyzed in which this specific theme emerged was through the teacher participant interviews. I spoke with Patti in depth after the three lessons were taught. During our conversation we reflected on both the specifics of the instruction as well as how we thought the students reacted to the lessons. To our surprise, we were both very impressed with James throughout all three lessons. One of my interview questions for Patti asked her to comment on how she thought the students responded. After being asked that question, Patti responded by saying:

I was super impressed with the work that James did. When I normally have James in class he does not participate in instruction. He is usually completely off task, and his behavior is often detrimental to my instruction. But with the music James was on task the entire time, he raised his hand a bunch of times to answer questions to give his thoughts. I did not know this prior to the lessons, but James must enjoy music. He also gave a great answer on what he thinks it means to be patriotic. If I had known that James would have been this interested in looking at music, I certainly would have done activities like this throughout the school year. (Teacher Participant Interview, June, 22, 2016)

When analyzing this particular excerpt from my teacher participant interview, it is clear that James is to be considered a reluctant learner when Patti mentions that James does not participate and is usually off task. However, when Patti reflects on the behavior/attitude of James during the “Born in the U.S.A” lesson, Patti mentions that James was one of the main participatory students in that specific class period. This part of the interview shows me that when James was given the opportunity to listen to/analyze music he became engaged, captivated, and interested in the

content of that lesson. This portion of the interview I conducted with Patti really stood out while analyzing the collected data. The effectiveness of incorporating critical literacy strategies and music had a very positive impact on a reluctant learner. The practice of listening to a song and analyzing the lyrics was something that the student participants said they had not done in school before, which relates to the findings of Mangram and Weber (2012). Mangram and Weber mention that the average adolescent has listened to over 10,000 hours of music in their life. Therefore, I have found that music lyrics should be a type of text analyzed in the classroom, because of the potential importance music might play on the lives of students.

The next piece of data in which this particular theme emerged was from looking at my field notes during the instruction that Patti taught. While observing the lessons I paid close attention to the ways in which students were responding to instruction, specifically with James. The following observations I noted about with regards to James were the following:

James keeps answering questions... Responds to what it means to be patriotic... James offers to read a second section of song lyrics... James keeps answering and gives his thoughts... Patti said he usually does not participate... Make sure to look at James' work sample. (Field Observation Notes, 2016)

As previously noted in the teacher participant interview, Patti mentions that James does not regularly participate in class. However, through my observations it is noted that James was answering questions and participating with great frequency. It is also noted that James actually volunteered to lead an activity by offering to read aloud another section of the song lyrics. As noted, it has been made very clear that James is a reluctant learner. However, when James participated with a lesson centered around music/lyric analysis, he was an engaged and active student.

In my opinion James demonstrates an active interest in music. These findings can be interpreted and analyzed very similarly to the findings of the previously mentioned study of Mangram and Weber (2012). Mangram and Weber found the use of music in the Humanities classroom to be a powerful tool. In my findings, I show that while James has been described as a reluctant learner that was not the case in a lesson centered around music/lyric analysis. As represented by James, using music in the classroom can indeed be a powerful tool for instruction. The findings of this action research state that music is a tool that can capture students' attention and engagement. In U.S culture, music truly plays an integral role in the lives of many. Music should be used in the classroom to help make connections to the material of the class as well as promoting authentic learning. These ideas are clearly demonstrated by looking at the reaction James had to instruction.

This idea becomes even more apparent when looking at the student participant questionnaire results. One of the questions on the student participant questionnaire asked the students to give their thoughts on the lesson. James answered with the following: "I thought the lesson was cool. I don't like reading books, so it was chill to listen to the music by the Bruce bro. Maybe it's not always nice to be an American" (Student Participant Questionnaire). When analyzing how James responded to that question, James demonstrates his "reluctance to learn" when he states "I don't like to read books." However, when James mentions that he enjoyed listening to the music, James is then demonstrating that he was engaged throughout the lesson, therefore I have found that the use of music in the social studies class had a positive impact in the classroom.

Another piece of data collected that confirms using music in the social studies classroom can engage the "reluctant learner," can be seen through a student work sample. At the conclusion

of each of the three lessons, students completed a series of questions reflecting on the song they listened to that day. When James was asked how his opinion of the song changed after reading the lyrics, James wrote, “At first I thought it was racist. But when I looked at the lyrics, I saw it was helpful” (Student Participant Work Sample). From this specific work sample, it is clear James’ thoughts changed. His initial perception was that the song is racially insensitive. But, his opinion of the song changed once he analyzed the lyrics. If James was not listening to the music and reading the lyrics he would not have formed any opinion. James was able to discuss his original thoughts before analyzing the lyrics of the song and then make a more accurate analysis of the song. James also provides great detail and answers the question very well. This student work sample further strengthens the commonality of my findings and Mangram and Weber (2012) which further discusses the value incorporating music in the classroom can have.

From my analysis, these particular findings were the most important. From collecting data I was able to interpret that using music in the social studies classroom engages many different learners. The student who was described as the least engaged in the classroom actually demonstrated the highest level of engagement during instruction. The specific findings included for this theme demonstrate the effectiveness of using music in the classroom and leave me as a proponent of using music to implement in not only social studies classrooms, but other content areas as well.

Using Music in the Social Studies Classroom Provides Students with Different Viewpoints on Societal Topics

As I continued to analyze and code the data that I collected, a trending theme that consistently emerged in my findings was the way in which students were able to look at different viewpoints of societal topics. According to Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2006) one of the

dimensions of critical literacy is interrogating multiple viewpoints. Looking at different viewpoints provides students with the opportunity to look at differing perspectives on pertinent topics in society. I made it a point of emphasis to choose activities that included different perspectives on various historical topics. Also, the three songs chosen for the three different lessons (“Born in the U.S.A,” “American Skin (41 Shots), and “We Take Care of Our Own”) provide insight and viewpoints that students might not have been accustomed to or aware of. For example the song “Born in the U.S.A” is written from the perspective of a veteran of the Vietnam War in the 1980s. The character of the song demonstrates the unemployment rate of many Vietnam War veterans. The plan for the “Born in the U.S.A” lesson had Patti give a short lecture about the time period as well as some background about challenges that war veterans have faced in American history. From observing this portion of the lesson, the student participants did not have any background knowledge of the time period, or the Vietnam War for that matter. The mini-lesson for the “Born in the U.S.A” lesson plan states

Before listening to the song for the first time, Patti will lead a short lecture about the Vietnam War as well as the background about the challenges some Vietnam War Veterans faced in the 1980s. This will give some background about the viewpoint of the “character” the song is written in the perspective of. Students will then listen to the song without looking at the lyrics. They will jot down notes and ideas while listening to the song. (“Born in the U.S.A” Lesson Plan)

While creating the lesson, I made it a point of emphasis for Patti to lead a short lecture before listening to the song. Because the song was written in the 1980s, I wanted to make sure that the student participants had some background information to help make the song more meaningful.

As I continued to analyze the collected data I noticed that the short lecture given by Patti enhanced the lesson. In the interview I conducted with Patti, she mentioned that

I think once I gave the lecture about the background of Vietnam, it helped make more sense of the overall message of the song. When I explained that the song was written by a “character” students were able to look at the viewpoint of the character. After they figured that part out the students began to sympathize with the lyrics of the song. I remember that even Brett mentioned that it wasn’t fair that the character served his country and then could not find a job. (Teacher Participant Interview, June 22, 2016)

Patti when reflecting on the lesson, Patti mentions that the brief lecture on the time period the song is about helped students better understand what the character was experiencing. Although brief, the value of the short lecture enabled Brett to conclude that it was unfair for the character in the song to serve in the military then later unable to find employment. Without the short lecture at the start of the lesson, I do not think the students would have internalized the character’s struggle. This particular excerpt from the interview shows that the use of different viewpoints in music/song lyrics can be beneficial to student learning. Patti went on to mention that without the background information about the Vietnam era of American history, the lesson might not have been as productive. Patti stated that “they might not have gotten the entire message of the song, and it might not have gone over as well” (Teacher Participant Interview). The findings generated from this theme relate to findings by Lloyd (2003) that state “lyrics and music of popular songs can represent alternative perspectives to the dominant ideologies of a particular time or place” (p. 1). It is important to look at history/topical issues from many different lenses. Looking at history from one perspective does not provide a well-rounded look at topics and issues in the classroom. This instructional approach requires students to interrogate

multiple perspectives and to disrupt the commonplace. When looking at the background of the “character” in “Born in the U.S.A.,” students were able to look at a viewpoint or perspective not typically found in textbooks.

Another piece of data collected that demonstrates the concept that using music in the classroom provides students with different viewpoints on societal topics comes from a student participant questionnaire. One of the prompts on the questionnaire asked students if they gained any new knowledge of history while looking at the lyrics of the selected songs. Specifically, Brett responded by saying “I did not know nothing about the Vietnam War before. The books we read for school don’t say a thing about bad stuff about war. Like not getting jobs after, does not seem right to me” (Student Participant Questionnaire). While looking at this questionnaire response, I can see that Brett makes mention that the viewpoint illustrated in the song “Born in the U.S.A” is not something typically found in a textbook. Brett points out that “bad stuff about war” is not information provided in the types of materials Brett is given in class. Therefore, if Brett was not given the opportunity to listen/analyze the song he would not have been able to see this particular viewpoint echoed in American history. The excerpt above written by Brett shows the effectiveness of selecting different viewpoints to be discussed in the social studies classroom. As Brett made mention of, he did not know about the issues that veterans have faced throughout American history. Therefore, analyzing the lyrics to “Born in the U.S.A” was an effective use of time in a social studies class.

The next piece of evidence further discussing this particular theme is shown from a student participant work sample. Specifically, this work sample shows the thoughts Brett came up with when analyzing song lyrics. The following questions were located on the “after analyzing song lyrics” worksheet: What is the song about? Find a specific lyric that provides

evidence for your thoughts about the song, and what is the overall message of the song? Brett responded with

The song is about a man who came from the military and has hard times.... A specific lyric that provides evidence is I'm ten years burring down the road, ain't got nowhere to run, ain't got nowhere to go... the overall message of the song is about hard times in the U.S.A after Vietnam. (Student Participant Work Sample)

When analyzing this student work sample, I was able to conclude that Brett was able to analyze and come up with an opinion about a different perspective than his own, that of a Vietnam veteran. Brett was able to internalize the struggles and hardships that the character of the song faced. For example, when asked to provide specific evidence from the song, Brett chose the lyric about burning down the road and having nowhere to go. From that specific selection I can see that Brett used his newly acquired knowledge from the short lecture about Vietnam. Brett was able to make an inference on the mention of the ten years because of his new background knowledge on the struggles Vietnam veterans faced.

When coding Brett's work sample, it is apparent that he is successful in analyzing the song lyrics. Furthermore, I was able to see the effectiveness of looking at different viewpoints in the social studies classroom when interviewing Brett. During the interview Brett said the following:

I didn't know about the Vietnam War before this class I had heard about it before, but didn't know anything. I feel like it always says in books that after war is all good stuff if you win, but that didn't happen to the guy in this song. I feel like it's that way more often than we are taught. (Student Participant Interview, June, 21, 2016)

Through this portion of the student participant interview, I was confident in interpreting that looking at different viewpoints is essential in social studies instruction. For example, Brett mentions that he had heard of the Vietnam War before but didn't know anything about it. The short lecture on the War gave Brett insight into an era of which he had no previous knowledge. Brett mentioned a viewpoint not commonly used in texts in today's social studies classroom. When reflecting on the findings of this study, I am convinced that one of the best ways to provide students with different viewpoints on societal topics is through the use of music/lyric analysis. What I have found confirms Burstein's findings of why teachers use music in the classroom to raise awareness of historical perspectives and to enhance understanding of history. My findings for this particular theme have shown the effectiveness the use of music can have when looking at different viewpoints. I firmly believe that it is important to provide students with as many perspectives as possible when looking throughout various historical eras.

Implications and Conclusions

While completing this action research study I have identified that there are implications for teachers that decide to incorporate critical literacy strategies through music/lyric analysis. I have found that it is essential for teachers to carefully select the music that will be used for instruction. Teachers need to spend time analyzing the lyrics, as well as researching the background information about the overall theme and time period in which the song was written. As my findings have shown, using music from a particular time period has had a positive impact for student learning. Similar findings were demonstrated by Hess (2014) who found that selecting specific blues music from the 1920s and 1930s served as a worthwhile activity in the secondary classroom.

A second implication that my findings have shown deals with teacher preparation. I have found that creating instruction centered on critical literacy requires considerable time. Teachers need to research various strategies that encourage students to think critically and exemplify the aforementioned four dimensions of critical literacy. When teachers choose to incorporate critical literacy through the use of music/lyric analysis, considerable time must be spent selecting poignant music that can engage students to think critically. Once the music is chosen, the next step for a teacher is to create meaningful activities that engage students to think from a critical perspective. For example, after I selected the music for this research, various discussion points/topic as well as short writing response questions were created. The various discussion/writing questions were prepared in the hope that students would demonstrate critical thought. Furthermore, my findings have shown that these activities paired with the selected music effectively targeted critical thought among the student participants. The goal of disrupting the commonplace as defined by Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2006) requires students to question the everyday. My findings and field observations have shown that these student discussions become very meaningful and important conversations. I have found that it is important for the teacher to serve as a facilitator of discussion instead of the leader. Guiding the conversation is important for the teacher, but teachers need to let the conversation follow its own path.

The third implication identified is that for full effectiveness of incorporating critical literacy strategies through the use of music/lyric analysis in the social studies classroom teachers need to incorporate a type of written reflection throughout the lesson. The use of a written reflection or writing piece can be used to gauge if critical literacy practices are being

implemented by students during instruction. Also, a written reflection requires students to expand their thoughts and continue to critically analyze the music/song lyrics.

This action research project asks: how does incorporating critical literacy strategies through the use of music/lyric analysis affect instruction in the social studies content? This specific action research project began under the guiding theoretical framework pertaining to critical literacy of Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2006). Also, many leading research studies proved to promote the effectiveness of incorporating critical literacy strategies when paired with the use of music in the classroom. For this study, three lessons incorporating critical literacy with song lyrics were developed. A teacher participant taught the lessons to a group of three student participants. Data was collected through active observation, teacher/student participant interviews and questionnaires. When investigating multiple action researchers, this specific study was implemented to prove that pairing critical literacy strategies with music/lyric analysis was an effective method for social studies teachers to implement in the classroom. After the data was analyzed this action research found that incorporating critical literacy strategies through the use of music/lyric analysis positively affected instruction in the social studies content. It is essential for teachers to carefully select the music that will be used for instruction. Secondly, the findings show that considerable preparation is required for teachers to create meaningful instruction centered around critical literacy strategies. Finally teachers must include some sort of written reflection throughout the lesson to gauge if critical literacy practices are being implemented by students during instruction.

While I spent considerable time reflecting on my data collection/interpreting my findings I was able to conclude that there were some specific instances where I felt my study “fell short,” as well as specific things I would do differently. Firstly, I think that my study would have

generated better results if I had chosen to use more student participants. The second thing I would do differently if I were able to do this research again would be to rethink the responsibilities I delegated to the teacher participant. Since I created the lessons and selected the specific songs to be analyzed I feel as if I were much better prepared to teach the lessons than Patti. Although Patti did a great job teaching the lessons and leading discussion, I think that if I had included Patti in the lesson preparation, the lessons might have been taught differently which would have produced more data to be analyzed. Therefore, if I were to do this study again I would include the teacher participant in all facets of the planning preparation of the three lessons created for this study.

After completing this action research project I have been left with a question that I am very interested in learning more about. I spent the entire time working on this case study specifically looking at the effectiveness of using critical literacy strategies and music just in the social studies content. My specific findings, as well as other literature I researched would lead me to believe that the use of critical literacy through music/lyric analysis would be effective in many other content areas. I would be very interested in looking at studies that researched other content areas. Furthermore, I am also interested in what other types of “different” activities other than music can be paired with critical literacy strategies to better engage students such as, movies, and television.

Through this action research project I was able to find that incorporating critical literacy strategies with different activities, such as music/lyric analysis was a worthwhile activity to implement in the classroom. Listening and analyzing music can be a fun and exciting activity that is not always implemented in the classroom. Teachers of all ages and content areas should consider using critical literacy and music throughout instruction. I also think that teachers should

spend considerable time learning about the background/interests of their students. In doing so, teachers may be able to find specific activities that might engage their students to be more productive participants throughout class.

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Appendix A

Connor Julien

American Skin Lesson

Learning Targets**Content LT:**

I can discuss the overall message of the song “Born in the U.S.A”

Skill LT:

I can analyze song lyrics

Literacy LT:

I can provide evidence from song lyrics to support an overall theme

Vocabulary:

Various historical terms

Essential / Focus Question

Why has Bruce Springsteen’s “Born in the U.S.A” been misinterpreted throughout history?

What is the overall message of the song “Born in the U.S.A”?

Bridge

Students will be asked to make predictions on what the overall message of the song “Born in the U.S.A” will be about. Students will not yet listened to the song, they will only be making predictions based on the song title.

Mini Lesson

Before listening to the song for the first time, Patti will lead a short lecture about the Vietnam War as well as the background about the challenges some Vietnam War Veterans faced in the 1980s. This will give some background about the viewpoint of the

“character” the song is written in the perspective of. Students will then listen to the song without looking at the lyrics. They will jot down notes and ideas while listening to the song.

Workshop

Students will then listen to the song with the lyrics in front of them. Teacher will lead a close read of the lyrics. Students will then listen again and take notes while they listen. Students will complete worksheet as they listen. After listening students will take time to analyze the song and form their opinion on the overall message. Students will then read article about “Born in the U.S.A”

Summary

Why has Bruce Springsteen’s “Born in the U.S.A” been misinterpreted throughout history?

What is the overall message of the song “Born in the U.S.A”?

Closure

Class discussion about overall message of the song

Appendix B

Connor Julien

American Skin Lesson

Learning Targets**Content LT:**

I can discuss the overall message of the song “American Skin (41 Shots)”

Skill LT:

I can analyze song lyrics

Literacy LT:

I can provide evidence from song lyrics to support an overall theme

Vocabulary:

Various historical terms

Essential / Focus Question

What is the overall message of the song “American Skin (41 Shots)”?

Bridge

Students will be asked to make predictions on what the overall message of the song “American Skin (41 shots)” will be about. Students will not yet listened to the song, they will only be making predictions based on the song title.

Mini Lesson

Before listening to the song for the first time, Patti will lead a short lecture about the background of the song as well as the background about the response to the song being written. This will give some background about the viewpoint of the “character” the song is written in the perspective of. Students will then listen to the song without looking at the lyrics. They will jot down notes and ideas while listening to the song.

Workshop

Students will then listen to the song with the lyrics in front of them. Teacher will lead a close read of the lyrics. Students will then listen again and take notes while they listen. Students will complete worksheet as they listen. After listening students will take time to analyze the song and form their opinion on the overall message. Students will then read article about “American Skin (41 Shots)”

Summary

What is the overall message of the song “American Skin (41 Shots)”?

Closure

Class discussion about overall message of the song

Appendix C

Connor Julien

“We Take Care of our Own” Lesson

Learning Targets**Content LT:**

I can discuss the overall message of the song “We Take Care of our Own”

Skill LT:

I can analyze song lyrics

Literacy LT:

I can provide evidence from song lyrics to support an overall theme

Vocabulary:

Various historical terms

Essential / Focus Question

What is the overall message of the song “We Take Care of our Own”?

Bridge

Students will be asked to make predictions on what the overall message of the song “We Take Care of our Own” will be about. Students will not yet listened to the song, they will only be making predictions based on the song title.

Mini Lesson

Before listening to the song for the first time, Patti will lead a short lecture about some of the specific references throughout the song. This will give some background about the viewpoint of the “character” the song is written in the perspective of. Students will then listen to the song without looking at the lyrics. They will jot down notes and ideas while listening to the song.

Workshop

Students will then listen to the song with the lyrics in front of them. Teacher will lead a close read of the lyrics. Students will then listen again and take notes while they listen. Students will complete worksheet as they listen. After listening students will take time to analyze the song and form their opinion on the overall message. Students will then read article about “We Take Care of our Own

Summary

What is the overall message of the song “We Take Care of our Own”?

Closure

Class discussion about overall message of the song

Appendix D

BORN IN THE U.S.A**BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN 1984**

Born down in a dead man's town
The first kick I took was when I hit the ground
End up like a dog that's been beat too much
Till you spend half your life just covering up

Born in the U.S.A., I was born in the U.S.A.
I was born in the U.S.A., born in the U.S.A.

Got in a little hometown jam
So they put a rifle in my hand
Sent me off to a foreign land
To go and kill the yellow man

Born in the U.S.A., I was born in the U.S.A.
Born in the U.S.A., born in the U.S.A.

Come back home to the refinery
Hiring man said "son if it was up to me"
Went down to see my V.A. man
He said "son, don't you understand"

I had a brother at Khe Sahn
Fighting off the Viet Cong
They're still there, he's all gone

He had a woman he loved in Saigon
I got a picture of him in her arms now

Down in the shadow of the penitentiary
Out by the gas fires of the refinery
I'm ten years burning down the road
Nowhere to run ain't got nowhere to go

Born in the U.S.A., I was born in the U.S.A.
Born in the U.S.A., I'm a long gone daddy in the U.S.A.

Appendix E

41 shots, and we'll take that ride
'Cross the bloody river to the other side
41 shots, cut through the night
You're kneeling over his body in the vestibule
Praying for his life

Is it a gun, is it a knife
Is it a wallet, this is your life
It ain't no secret (it ain't no secret)
No secret my friend
You can get killed just for living in your American skin

41 shots, Lena gets her son ready for school
She says, "On these streets, Charles
You've got to understand the rules
If an officer stops you, promise me you'll always be polite
And that you'll never ever run away
Promise Mama you'll keep your hands in sight"

Is it a gun (is it a gun), is it a knife (is it a knife)
Is it a wallet (is it a wallet), this is your life (this is your life)
It ain't no secret (it ain't no secret)
No secret my friend
You can get killed just for living in your American skin

Is it a gun (is it a gun), is it a knife (is it a knife)
Is it in your heart (is it in your heart), is it in your eyes (is it in your eyes)
It ain't no secret (it ain't no secret)

41 shots, and we'll take that ride
'Cross this bloody river to the other side
41 shots, I got my boots caked with this mud

We're baptized in these waters (baptized in these waters)

And in each other's blood (and in each other's blood)

Is it a gun (is it a gun), is it a knife (is it a knife)

Is it a wallet (is it a wallet), this is your life (this is your life)

It ain't no secret (it ain't no secret)

It ain't no secret (it ain't no secret)

No secret my friend

You can get killed just for living in

You can get killed just for living in

You can get killed just for living in your American skin

Appendix F

“WE TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN”

I been knocking on the door that holds the throne
I been looking for the map that leads me home
I been stumbling on good hearts turned to stone
The road of good intentions has gone dry as a bone
We take care of our own
We take care of our own
Wherever this flag's flown
We take care of our own

From Chicago to New Orleans, from the muscle to the bone
From the shotgun shack to the Superdome
There ain't no help, the cavalry stayed home
There ain't no one hearing the bugle blowin'
We take care of our own
We take care of our own
Wherever this flag's flown
We take care of our own

Where're the eyes, the eyes with the will to see
Where're the hearts that run over with mercy
Where's the love that has not forsaken me
Where's the work that set my hands, my soul free
Where's the spirit that'll reign, reign over me
Where's the promise from sea to the shining sea
Where's the promise from sea to the shining sea
Wherever this flag is flown
Wherever this flag is flown
Wherever this flag is flown

We take care of our own
We take care of our own
Wherever this flag's flown
We take care of our own
We take care of our own
We take care of our own
Wherever this flag's flown
We take care of our own

Appendix G

Teacher Participant Interview Questions

1. How do you think the lesson went? Was the lesson effective/worthwhile?
2. Did students have critical thoughts/discussion after analyzing the lyrics? Any specific instances of students demonstrating this?
3. Would you use music in the classroom again for another lesson?
4. Was the background information about the songs worthwhile? Did it help the students get more out of the song?
5. What other activities/ideas would you pair with using music during the lesson another time?

Appendix H

Student Participant Interview Questions

1. Did you like listening to music as a part of learning about history? Why? What did you like about the activities of the lessons?
2. How can using music help you learn about history?
3. After listening to the songs did your opinions about the events of the song change?
4. What other types of music would you be interested in learning more about when paired with history?
5. Were these types of activities something you would want to do again in social studies class? What about other classes?

Appendix I

Student Participant Questionnaire

1. Did you enjoy class today? What about it?
2. Did the music help you learn more about a topic you did not know that much about before?
3. What was your favorite part of the lesson? Why?

Appendix J

Song analysis

NAME:

DIRECTONS:

FILL OUT YOUR IDEAS/THOUGHTS ON THIS WORKSHEET

Song Title:

Before listening

Thoughts on song title?

What do you think the song will be about?

First time listening:

Connections, What is this song about?

After analyzing lyrics:

What is the song about?

Find a specific lyric that provides evidence for your thoughts about the song:

What is the overall message of the song?

Appendix K

Post song analysis

NAME:

How did your opinion on the song change after reading the lyrics?

Do you like the song? Why or why not?

What is the message of the song?

Why might people analyze the overall message of the song wrong?
