Multigenre Author Autobiography & Multimodal Self-Portrait: The Role of Art Integration In Transforming Complex and Critical Thinking In University and Secondary English/Language Arts Classrooms

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Critical thinking is a concept widely used to describe how students should learn to think, as well as an instructional goal for teachers throughout the educational journey. With these assertions about critical thinking in mind, we set out to explore and implement critical thinking as a construct with specific critical attributes that serve as qualifiers of its construction, and a process adolescents and secondary teachers must traverse on the path of literacy development. Additionally, we focused on the role art integration could play when designing and facilitating critical thinking engagements in two high school and one university English/language arts classrooms.

INTRODUCTION

"Critical Thinking is that mode of thinking—about any subject, content, or problem—in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing it. Critical thinking is self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking" (Scriven & Paul, 2008, as cited in Mulnix, 2012, p. 466).

Critical thinking is a concept widely used to describe how students should learn to think, as well as an instructional goal for teachers throughout the educational journey. However, "if we are charged with teaching students to think critically, then we need to clarify the concept; otherwise we will be shooting arrows at a target that we cannot see" (Mulnix, 2012, p. 464). Moreover, a focus on critical thinking encourages important dialogues within social and cultural learning spaces, and is grounded in metacognition, or "making thinking visible…to help people learn about the cognitive processes that underlie their own abilities to learn and solve problems" (Bransford, Derry, Berliner, Hammerness, & Beckett, 2005, p. 57). As English teachers (Marisa and Carly), and as a former English teacher and current teacher educator (Ellen), we do not believe it is beneficial to continue discussing critical thinking

as an abstraction in connection with teaching and learning; rather, we believe that a complex understanding and transparent articulation of critical thinking as a conscious framework overtly named, utilized, and practiced in our instruction and in educational discussions is crucial for real critical thinking to emerge and transform.

Having these assertions about critical thinking in mind, we set out to explore and implement critical thinking as a construct with specific critical attributes that serve as both qualifiers of its construction, and a process adolescents and secondary teachers must traverse on the path of literacy development. Additionally, we focused on the role art integration could play when designing and facilitating critical thinking engagements in two high school and one university English/language arts classrooms. We will describe (1) the role of multigenre composition and multimodal artistic representation as a symbolic system for representing "authoring" (meaning making) practices and the influences of those engagements on complex academic understandings and critical thinking, and (2) an exploration of critical thinking as a construct, and the cognitive process of constructing critical thinking consciously.

Critical Thinking as a Construct

The brain of an effective learner is constantly abuzz with mental activity – thinking that is not accidental but highly purposeful, and thinking that is consciously open to revision and interpretation (Buehl, 2014). We assert that this mental activity are the modes of critical thinking, a construct that must be clearly defined, its attributes and framework taught openly and explicitly, and of which purposeful metacognitive reflection is a crucial part. The definition that drives our thinking about, and instructional designing for critical thinking is: a purposeful and reflective process where we consciously select specific modes of thinking and tools, and we reflect on how and why we chose those modes of thinking and tools (Buehl, 2014; Keene & Zimmermann, 2007; Scriven & Paul, 2008). The "modes of thinking" (Buehl, 2014, p. 5) are specific comprehension processes we believe frame and support critical thinking development; in essence, the modes provide us with a construct from which to work. Those processes are:

(1) Making connections to prior knowledge
(2) Generating questions
(3) Visualizing and creating sensory mental images
(4) Making inferences
(5) Determining importance
(6) Synthesizing
(7) Monitoring comprehension
(8) Applying "fix-up" strategies

Going beyond the modes of *monitoring comprehension* and *applying "fix-up" strategies* to encompass the thinking process, we add metacognition (Bransford, et al., 2005; Mulnix, 2012) and the thinker's conscious participation in reflecting on her/his success and/or struggles when making critical sense of ideas/topics, noting strategies that are in play and those needed to support and guide a more rich and critical understanding of the topic. Mulix (2012) posits, "First, critical thinking must be a learned skill. Second, critical thinking is a habit of mind—an intellectual virtue—of being disposed to using and accepting the results of these reasoning skills. That is, critical thinking is a set of intellectual virtues possessed by good thinkers. This implies that there must be some sort of metacognitive awareness on the part of the thinker of her own thought process" (p. 465). The integration of multigenre composition and multimodal artistic representations in our instructional design and practice supports these modes of thinking and incorporates a metacognitive component to guide consciousness of the modes of thinking in pursuit of critical thinking awareness and development.

Multigenre and Multimodal Art Integration for Critical Thinking

The multigenre autobiography and multimodal self-portrait instructional engagements (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996) we each design and facilitate open space for personal exploration of "authoring" (or meaning-making) practices (Moje, 2000) framed in multigenre composition, and are paired with an

artistic [multimodal and symbolic] representation, or reconstruction, of those composed authoring practices. Short, Harste and Burke (1996) emphasize that, "instructional engagements are open-ended (opportunities) so learners can provide a variety of responses based on their own experiences (and allow) each student to see him or herself as a valuable member of the learning community" (p. 319). We assert that these autobiographical and artistic instructional engagements emerge as influential for both teacher and adolescent literacy identity transformation, complex and critical thinking development, and that the power of integrating visual art into secondary and university English/language arts curriculum provides the crucial framework for critical thinking to consciously emerge and transform. It is in this personal reconstruction spirit we describe and design our own instructional learning tasks.

University classroom

In Ellen's university teacher education classroom, utilizing multigenre (various genres of writing) and multimodal (artistic re-presentations of self) composing processes provides opportunities for the preservice teachers' lives to direct, enhance, and extend the curriculum, as well as creates an opportunity to support the transformation of student agency, confidence in the learning process, and critical thinking consciousness and development (Eisner, 2002; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Moje, 2000). If future English teachers are going to confidently design and facilitate instructional opportunities for the development of personal agency, critical thinking, and community membership in their future classrooms, they should experience and reflect on them firsthand in their own learning journey. Alsup (2006) argues, most often teacher education:

> Is usually focused on the future students of the preservice teacher, not on the development of the teacher her- or himself. When concepts such as multicultural education, identity construction, personal growth, and even the learning of new content are addressed, they are discussed in terms of how preservice teachers can encourage such learning on the part of their future students. I don't think such a focus is completely misplaced—new teachers should, of course, be concerned with what they students are learning. However, this externally focused approach tends to assume that the teacher is already self-actualized, already emotionally and affectively prepared to assume the teacher identity, with few personal challenges left to face. This assumption is rarely accurate. (xiv-xv).

Multigenre Author Autobiography

Early in the semester, preservice teachers in Ellen's university course are directed to write an "author" autobiography where they explore the multiple ways they have "authored" (read, written, voiced, visualized, represented) their lives in significant ways, and the "authoring" practices they believe have most transformed them as people. To assist students with pre-writing, Ellen provides a modified Reading Interest Interview/Inventory (Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987) where they respond in writing to a number of "authoring" questions and prompts asking about their literate practices (reading, writing, speaking, thinking, visualizing, representing) and histories. They also read sources that discuss the multiple ways we "author" our lives and the world (e.g., Bathina, 2014; Freire and Macedo, 1987). A number of "modes of thinking" are at work in the autobiographical composition: making connections to prior knowledge, generating questions, visualizing and creating sensory mental images, making inferences, determining importance, and synthesizing.

FIGURE 1
University Student Sample

As preservice teachers compose the author autobiography, they explore what they already know of their lives [those important moments] and begin *making connections* between those important life moments and how they "authored," or how they read, wrote, spoke about, and/or represented their world in those moments. In essence, the connections they are making require them to shift their explanations of moments in their own lives using the literacy language of "authoring." They must *generate questions*, *make inferences*, and *determine the importance* of the chosen moments of their lives, analyzing the significance by asking, "Is this important? Why is this important?" and "How does this represent an authoring moment in my life?" and then making inferences and determinations about the importance of the moments and the acts of authoring. As they infer, preservice teachers must "acknowledge explicitly stated messages, (as well as) read between the lines to discern implicit meanings, and read with a critical eye," and as they generate questions, they "carry on an inner dialogue within (themselves)" (Buehl, 2014, p. 5). In this sense, the pre-writing and composing steps of the author autobiography are supporting and guiding critical thinking development.

The future English teachers are directed to compose their author autobiographies in a multigenre format (e.g., essay, poetry, script, story narrative), and then re-present six authoring moments in some multimodal way that might involve music, visual art (paint, draw, cubist collage, computer generated image/s), dance, photography, or a combination of multimodal forms in a self-portrait. Ellen formally introduces Picasso's cubism as an optional structure for re-presenting the authoring moments into a multimodal self-portrait, which reinforces to students that they are not composing a simple collage, but an abstract and artistic re-presentation (New London Group, 2000) of their authoring selves.

Multimodal Self-Portrait

For each authoring moment written about in the autobiography, preservice teachers are invited to choose some material that best illustrates each experience. For example, the creator of the university student sample (see Figure 1) incorporated a bicycle chain and sprocket on her self-portrait. She wrote about a time in her life when the "authoring" modality of speaking was painful, leading to self-destructive choices. The broken chain represented experiences she had as an adolescent with her father as he specifically focused on her school grade reports. Amidst the impressive "As" was a single "B" and he focused there, as he did regularly. In her autobiography, she explained that she was unable to please him and so began hurting herself, which resulted in hospitalization for anorexia. She was 13 years old and did such damage to herself that she stunted her growth. She was 40 years old when she composed and shared her author autobiography and self-portrait in E's university course. The broken chain reconstructed those authoring moments – her own compositions of hurting and healing, and her promise to never be self-destructive moving forward from that moment. The critical thinking modes of *visualizing and creating*

sensory images, "breathing life experiences into abstract language (re-presentations)," alongside *synthesizing* her own experiences by constructing "coherent summaries of meaning…leading to new learning and the development of new schema" (Buehl, 2014, p. 5) within the parameters of the author autobiography and self-portrait engagements illustrate potent opportunities for critical thinking development and consciousness.

Oral Presentation

Once autobiographies and self-portraits are composed, everyone in the learning community orally presents to the class, beginning with Ellen. She encourages students to utilize their multigenre autobiography as a "script" from which to refer while speaking, supporting voices, and she provides students with a comprehension note-taking strategy, called a dialectic journal or double-entry diary (Buehl, 2014), to note each presenter's name and important ideas they hear [and see] during each presentation. The note-taking represents another critical thinking opportunity as students must *determine importance* of the ideas, *make inferences* in the determining process, and *make connections* between the shared ideas and their own "authoring" practices.

After all students have presented, Ellen directs them to review the ideas noted and choose one person whose self-portrait and autobiography resonated most deeply with them. Once chosen, students write an informal note to that person, explaining the connections they personally made to the presentation and the impact of those connections. Each student around the room shares with the whole class a bit about what they have written to their chosen person, which is an incredibly powerful and transformative step in the process. Notes are then delivered to the chosen person.

Metacognitive opportunity

In order to provide preservice teachers an opportunity to *monitor their comprehension* of the process of authoring, and explore the transformations of thinking they experienced with the engagements, Ellen directs them to write a reflection where they respond to the following prompts:

- What was *most* surprising about the writing process steps, including the provided scaffolding support, and what was *most* surprising about actually composing your author autobiography?
- What memories unexpectedly emerged as powerful in some way? How did the writing process steps/scaffolding support the emergence of those memories?
- What moments in the creation process of your multimodal self-portrait were unexpected and brought new understandings, insights and perspectives of your own "authoring" life? In other words, how was your thinking transformed as a result?
- How did the writing of this autobiography, and the creation of this multimodal artifact further develop your understanding of "authoring" your life and the world?
- As you were presenting your autobiography and self-portrait, what surprising moments occurred in your thinking and understanding of your "authoring" practices and experiences?
- How could this type of work, the autobiography and the multimodal artifact be powerful in your own future English/Language Arts classroom? How could you *utilize* the project and the writing?

Juliana (pseudonym), the creator of the university sample (see Figure 1), wrote in her metacognitive reflection of the self-portrait, autobiography and presentation:

> This project affected me on many levels – personally, intellectually, spiritually, and professionally. It is the most community/trust-building endeavor I have ever experienced. I am convinced that this is the only genuine way to accomplish any serious work in the classroom. It taught me the importance of communication, no matter the relationship between people. Open communication is a key component in creating and maintaining a positive environment. How would I ever be able to create an environment, a true learning community in which students are comfortable enough to share and explore speaking and learning? I have an answer now.

The mulitgenre and multimodal engagements require students to tri-dimensionalize (Freire, 2003) their authoring lives in order to create. They must look back on their past, contemplate their present, and predict their future, and in that process, students are immersed in the modes of critical thinking about their own life and lived experiences.

As preservice English teachers, both Marisa and Carly experienced the multigenre autobiography and multimodal self-portrait instructional engagements in Ellen's university course, and took up the work in their own high school classrooms, partnering with Ellen during the design and implementation of their own engagements, and in exploring the critical thinking modes in action.

Marisa's High School Classroom

Literary analysis and personal narrative content are framed by autobiographical and self-portraiture opportunities in Marisa's high school English classroom. As seniors read *The Alchemist* (Coelho, 1988) and analyze the theme of "personal legend" within the story where the main character takes a "journey through the soul of the world," they are guided to define and unpack the essential attributes of a "personal legend" and "the soul of the world journey" and pull textual examples from the novel to support their constructions. Then Marisa provides students with structure and parameters to write their own personal legend autobiographies where they describe six "soul of the world" moments, and then to create a personal legend self-portrait to represent each moment.

For freshman through senior classes, Marisa designs an Expository Writing Unit focused on personal narrative, guiding students to compose what she calls a Multigenre Transformational Autobiography and Multimodal Self-Portrait. She specifically frames the engagements for the unit with the following description and parameters:

Reflect on moments in your life in which you have **transformed** in order to become a stronger and/or more resilient person. These moments do not need to be big or grandiose, but can include even seemingly small moments where you have changed in some way, shape or form. Think of the multiple ways in which we transform – emotionally, physically, spiritually, mentally, etc.

Prompts to guide your Multigenre Transformational Autobiography:

- Describe a moment in your life in which you have experienced change, growth and/or have developed in some way, shape or form.
- Describe what you have learned as a result of a powerful change in your life. In what ways did you grow in your view of yourself, others, and/or the world around you? What was your perspective prior to the experience, and what was your perspective after?
- Who has been an influential person in your life? How did you grow or transform as a result of your interactions with them?
- What types of activities have you in engaged in with others that have made a positive/negative impact on you? Describe why your engagement with that activity and/or group was really powerful for you.

Use this autobiography to explore how you changed in some way and what you learned as a result of that change**.** Try to convey vivid details as you describe your growth throughout that journey and how it helped shape how you view yourself, others, or the world around you.

To guide students in constructing the multimodal self-portrait, Marisa provides the following directions and framework: Please create a transformational self-portrait, representing those transformational experiences using various art materials and techniques.

- How does each chosen art material and/or technique represent the transformational moment/experience about which you have written? How are those connected?
- Please strive to compose a self-portrait that illustrates your face or entire body…feel very free to be creative in the representation process.

The instructional objectives for the unit are situated in both the pre-writing and personal narrative curriculum, but Marisa explains that her goal was not only to ensure that students could verbalize the steps of the writing process, but understood how to authentically apply each step in a purpose driven manner. Having students explain what types of pre-writing strategies they knew, for example, was an ancillary step. She was most concerned about whether or not they could identify what type a pre-writing strategy they were most comfortable with and explain how and why that particular thinking strategy helped them with their metacognition. In that way, as the year goes by and they do more and more writing assignments, they can not only identify the various tools that they can use to begin to plan out their writing, but they will be able to critically determine what is best for their style of learning and constructing.

Marisa asserts that the autobiography (see Figure 3) and self-portrait engagements provide an excellent pathway for students to provide detailed explanations on the ways in which *creating visual representation* supports the composition process as a pre-writing strategy. One student describes how drawing helped her "dig deeper into describing each moment without worrying about what words to use or if I was using certain words correctly." For this student, it was evident that other pre-writing strategies that focused on writing out her thoughts stressed her out, but she liked the freedom that drawing provided her for she "didn't have to find words and think really hard on what I wanted to say." The student also shared how drawing "random objects or shapes in the beginning made it easier to be descriptive when I wrote about what the moment was like in my rough draft because I just had to describe each figure I drew." This student was able to articulate not only what was most comfortable for her, but also how drawing was able to transition her to the next step of writing down her thoughts and ideas. The critical thinking mode of *creating visual images* drove and supported her comprehension by "breathing life experiences into abstract language" (Buehl, 2014, p. 5) of her own composition.

Marisa explains that the metacognitive reflection writing after the students have composed their autobiographies and self-portraits, and orally sharing them in class, becomes the moment in which she completely steps out of the picture and the students themselves become the teachers. The following is an excerpt from one student's reflection where she describes two key learning strategies that she believes emerged for herself and for several of her classmates in order to be resilient and overcome their life obstacles:

> The two key learnings that several of my classmates learned were to put others before oneself and acceptance. They used these to overcome many family issues and sometimes even to overcome something about themselves, they used these lessons to push through the troubles they were dealing with. By listening to their stories it showed me that the world is chaotic, but everything turns out better in the end. By using resilience we are able to change our life for the better.

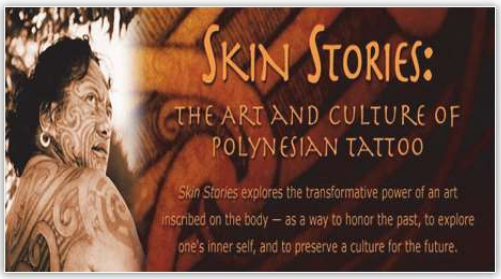
For Marisa, the experiences represented teaching and learning moments where she saw students move beyond the skills of storytelling into the more critical thinking realm of how to make sense and navigate through the chaotic world around them.

Carly's High School Classroom

Just as in Marisa's classroom, Carly designs and implements multigenre and multimodal opportunities for students in her English classroom at a different high school, focusing on the cultural identities of students in her classroom.

One example is "My Skin Story" which embodies the cultural belief that "The marks we choose to wear are clues to the mystery of ourselves" (Pacific Islanders In Communication, 2003). Below is a student example of the multigenre "skin story" autobiography, and in Figure 2, the student represents her "skin story" self-portrait tattoo image.

FIGURE 2
HIGH SCHOOL SAMPLE



What I Faced In My Life

You may see my tattoo but you don't understand the story behind it.My skin story represents the path I took that led me to where I am now. My decisions will never be forgotten, they'll guide me where ever I may go. I chose to have this tattoo on my face because it'll remind me of all journeys I took, of all the choices I made, and of all the road least taken/traveled by until I do better. **Alice** (pseudonym; 11th grade Expository Writing, ELL)

Carly also focuses on the curricular unit of personal narrative, and frames the engagements in the following way:

- Lesson Concept: Personal Narrative Writing
- Common Core State Standard [writing]: CCSS.11-12.W.3 and 3A
- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

- Objectives for unit: By the end of the unit, students will create a drawn and written narrative that explains their connections to their culture, family, and/or self-identity.

Text for unit:

- Skin Stories Website: www.pbs.org/skinstories/
- PBS Documentary Film, "Skin Stories"

Carly begins with Mo'olelo journal engagements that provide students in her classes to further explore their "skin stories," specifically, their cultural identities and the connections to the social groups to which they belong. Mo'olelo can be translated from the Hawaiian language to mean: story, history, and/or tradition. C directs students to use their mo'olelo to "talk story" [share personal experiences] with themselves in written narrative, and with the classroom learning community. She asks them to think about the many different ways they carry their stories in their skin; i.e., the moments, values, beliefs, and philosophies that are a significant part of each student's life. Then students explore these parameters in their Visual Skin Story Autobiography and Tattoo Self-Portraits:

A tattoo is an art form that allows many cultures to express their stories. Often, these "skin stories" illustrate and share the experiences of the culture or a person's values, beliefs, and philosophies.

- Create an artifact reflecting your values, beliefs, and/or philosophies that you carry in your skin.
- As you create, reflect on how to express your values, beliefs, and/or philosophies in visual form. What shapes, colors, words, etc. will best tell your skin story?
- Feel free to also include the body part where you would place this skin story. Where your display your story is just as important and meaningful as what you display.

FIGURE 3
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SAMPLE

Students and Carly explicitly explore these critical thinking modes during the "Skin Stories" unit:

- Making Connections to Prior Knowledge
- Generating Questions
- Visualizing and Creating Sensory Mental Images
- Determining Importance
- Perspective Taking

Carly's main objectives are to encourage writing, especially for the unconfident ELL writers in her classes. The students participate in bi-weekly mo'olelo journal writing as a norm in her classroom where she explains that the goals of the journals are:

- No grade. No wrong answers. No stopping. No worries.
- Prepares student for Think-Pair-Share participation and gives time to prepare a quality discussion.

Another iteration of the mo'olelo journal in Carly's classroom includes an Insta.Mo'olelo. She and the students have moved their writing to the digital world. In order to increase student writing, reading, analysis, and overall critical thinking opportunities, students provide a daily reflective post to Instagram. She calls this autobiography the Transformational Moments of Resilience where students think critically in a popular online social media space. Her curricular objectives in using Instagram are for students to:

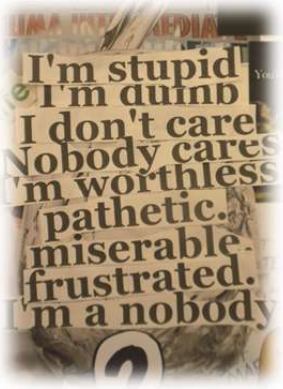
- Understand and APPLY steps of the Writing Process
- Identify and use Evidence and Reasoning within their writing
- Apply metacognitive practices to:
    - Enhance their comprehension and application of steps in the writing process
    - Enhance their understanding of themselves and others = community building

Transformational Moments of Resilience Autobiography directions include:

- Compose a multigenre piece that explains how you transformed
- and what you learned as a result of that change
- Describe your growth and how it shaped your view of yourself,
- others, and the world around you

Thinking Critically: Think over your experiences in which you've experienced resilience ~ moments when change, growth, challenges, triumphs, and development have been powerful for you in some way.

FIGURE 4
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT INSTAGRAM POST



Here are some prompts that might assist your memory:

- Who has been an influential person in your life?
- How did you grow or transform as a result of your interactions with them?
- What types of activities have you engaged in with others that have made a positive/negative impact on you?
- Describe why your engagement with that activity and/or group was really powerful for you.
- Describe a moment in your life in which you have experienced change, growth and/or have developed in some way, shape or form.

Carly then directs students to construct a self-portrait in which they compose a multimodal piece that represents 6 transformational moments in which the students used resiliency to become a stronger person.

Theoretical Perspectives

Eisner (2002) argues, "Work in the arts…is a way of creating our lives by expanding our consciousness, shaping our dispositions, satisfying our quest for meaning, establishing contact with others, and sharing a culture" (p. 3). Pedagogical practices incorporating art can powerfully establish and build communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and can directly guide and extend the thinking of cultural and social membership, supporting the transformation of critically literate people. As Dewey (1934) asserted, "Indeed, since words are easily manipulated in mechanical ways, the production of a work of genuine art probably demands more intelligence than does most of the so-called thinking that goes on among those who pride themselves on being 'intellectuals'" (p. 47).

We perceive art as a cultural and social artifact for meaning making and communication, and as a mediating tool (Vygotsky, 1978) for literacy identity and critical thinking transformation. Multimodal texts, or multiple forms of representation, are symbolic systems (Bruner, 1990) and cultural artifacts that are produced by a society to make sense of and illustrate the world. As Bruner (1990) asserts "The symbolic systems that individuals [use] in constructing meaning [are] systems that were already in place, already 'there,' deeply entrenched in culture and language. They constitute a very special kind of communal tool kit whose tools, once used, made the user a reflection of the community" (p. 11). Therefore, the integration of art and the creation of multigenre and multimodal texts in secondary and university English/language arts classrooms provide a canvas to extend critical understandings of the academic language/topic under study, and are crucial aspects of learning in the 21st century. When used in learning spaces organized and orchestrated to support literacy identity and critical thinking transformation, this power of creation can guide an analytical deconstruction of a subject providing

critical insight into a view of self, developing and supporting complex thinking, literacy development, and a rich analysis of academic content that would not exist in the absence of such opportunities.

Further, Sanders and Albers (2010) posit that "within multimodality inherently lies a critical perspective enacted when examining the textmaker's choices regarding the materials used, how those materials are framed and designed and how such decisions are realized and situated within the creator's beliefs" (p. 9). We assert that literacy instruction that incorporates an art component is a potent opportunity for critical thinking consciousness and transformation (Kress, 2003, 2006), one that powerfully supports the ways teachers (pre- and inservice) and students read the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Freire, 2003).

Implications for Education and Future Inquiry

Langer (2011) asks, "What is knowledge? How do we gain it? How do we teach it?" (p. 1). She answers with the assertion that "knowledge is crafted and honed. It requires an understanding of social and disciplinary conventions surrounding the ideas. What we think about, and the ways we think" (p. 1). More detailed explanations can be discovered when the focus falls on critical thinking as a concept with specific attributes and processes, and is deconstructed, critically analyzed, and studied as a framework for learning in explicit ways and that support literacy development. Explicit and conscious literacy instruction in support of critical thinking, which includes art integration and metacognitive processes can become the norms in educational spaces "in order to help (students) learn about the cognitive processes that underlie their own abilities to learn and solve problems" (Bransford, Derry, Berliner, Hammerness & Beckett, 2005, p. 57).

Gee (2003, 2008) and others (e.g., Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002; Kress, 2006; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2007) explain that multimodal texts, or multiple forms of representation, are cultural artifacts that are produced by a society to make sense of and illustrate the world. As the learner re-presents her or himself, and/or English/language arts ideas framed in multimodality, new and subtle understandings and complexities emerge. Furthermore, Vygotsky explained, "Art is the social technique of emotion, a tool of society which brings the most intimate and personal aspects of our being into the circle of social life" (as cited in Moran & John-Steiner, 2003, p. 62).

Our inquiry questions for continued investigations of critical thinking consciousness and the role of art for literacy development include:

1. What are ELA secondary teachers' and adolescents' understandings of the concept critical thinking, its critical components and the process of critical thinking before, during and after literacy instruction designed to support and guide critical thinking consciousness and transformation?
2. How does the specific design and implementation of a multigenre composition and a multimodal artistic representation support adolescents' transforming critical thinking consciousness, confidence and literacy development?

Our aim in this discussion of classroom practice is to make an important contribution to the conversation surrounding critical thinking, and raise the point that critical thinking is more than a concept to be generically used. Rather, with metacognition as a critical attribute of that higher order thinking, and with artful instructional strategies and processes, critical thinking is a construct in which secondary teachers and adolescents can engage to meet those significant goals. Educators must strive to provide students with significant and transformative critical thinking learning opportunities in support of rich classroom spaces that provide authentic and artistic explorations of English/language arts content, and art should be viewed as a powerful tool to support and guide this process. Best articulated by Freire (2003), "…the humanist, revolutionary educator('s) efforts…must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization. (These) efforts must be imbued with a profound trust in people and their creative power" (p. 75). We assert that the process of multigenre composition and multimodal artistic creation are instrumental for developing and supporting complex thinking, literacy development, and a rich analysis of self and academic content that would not exist in the absence of such opportunities (Eisner, 2002; Moje, 2000).

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