

Assessing Teacher Candidates' Attitudes on Critical Media Literacy Education

Julianna Lily Kowlessar

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts

Graduate Program in Communication & Culture
York University
Toronto, Ontario

July 2023

© Julianna Lily Kowlessar, 2023

Abstract

This thesis will explore Ontario teacher candidates' perspectives on critical media literacy to gain an understanding of the skills and tools they need to constructively approach and teach future students about the subject. In addition, the prospect of introducing remixed, student-created board games into classrooms will be examined. This thesis is guided by the following primary research question (RQ1): What are pre-service teachers' current perspectives and understandings of critical media literacy? Several sub-research questions will also be addressed: what have teacher candidates learned about critical media literacy (RQ2)? What skills and tools do they need to effectively teach their future students about critical media literacy (RQ2a)? What professional development opportunities have teacher candidates engaged in related to critical media literacy (RQ2b)? This thesis uses one-on-one, semi structured interviews as the primary methodology to better understand the unique perspectives of the teacher candidates who partook in this study.

Keywords: Critical media literacy; teacher education; critical thinking; student creativity; learning; growth; empathy; academic development; personal development

Dedication

To my mother,

who relentlessly encourages me to pursue my dreams and make a real difference in the world.

This is for you. I love you with my entire heart.

Acknowledgements

As a woman who is deeply grounded in her Christian faith, the completion of this thesis or master's degree would not be possible without the perpetual guidance and support of my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

I would like to thank my mother, Delma, for being my best friend and biggest cheerleader throughout my academic career. Without your love and encouragement, I would not have been able to achieve half of what I have to date. To my uncle, Dr. Milton A. Harry: thank you for talking me through the thesis-writing process and explaining what to expect as I completed my degree. To my grandparents, who have been an immense support in my educational journey: Grandma, I know you are proudly watching down on me from heaven, and Grandpa, I will continue to make you proud as I pursue the final chapter: my doctorate. I would also like to extend a special thank you to my dear family friend, Zdenka. Your immense support and love have been a continual beacon of light and encouragement for me over the years.

To my primary supervisor, Dr. Kelly Bergstrom: thank you for your ongoing encouragement and support throughout the entire thesis-writing process. I am grateful for the unique ideas you inspired me to pursue within my research. To my supervisory committee members, Dr. Natalie Coulter: I sincerely appreciate the resources you have shared and your guidance throughout, and to Dr. Greg Elmer: thank you for your support and feedback as I worked to enhance this thesis. Each of your perspectives allowed me to reach new heights with my own ideas and writing.

And last but certainly not least, I would like to thank my wonderful and kind participants. I am eternally grateful that you decided to partake in my research. Your enthusiasm and

willingness to share and expand your perspectives on media literacy were truly inspiring. Each of you will be brilliant educators to your future students in the years to come.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	vi
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Objectives of Research.....	2
What is the Point of Critical Media Literacy?.....	7
Why Critical Media Literacy Matters.....	9
Thesis Overview.....	10
Chapter Two: Literature Review	
An Introduction to Critical Media Literacy.....	14
The Importance of Critical Media Literacy Skills.....	17
<i>Critical Race Media Literacy Education</i>	22
<i>Moving Towards Critical Media Literacies</i>	23
Comparison of Methods Used in Previous Studies on Critical Media Literacy.....	27
Empathy as a Factor of Critical Media Literacy Education.....	29
Games as Forms of Pedagogy.....	33
Using Social Media and Different Technologies to Teach Critical Media Literacy....	37
The Necessity of Critical Media Literacy Training for Pre-service Teachers.....	39
Summary.....	41
Chapter Three: Methodology	
Introduction.....	44

Motivations for the Study.....	45
Study Design.....	47
Recruitment.....	50
Data Collection	51
Data Analysis.....	53
Getting to Know the Participants.....	54
Summary.....	56
Chapter Four: Data Analysis & Results: Assessing Teacher Candidates' Attitudes and Knowledge on Critical Media Literacy Education	
Introduction.....	58
Overview of Data Analysis: First Round of Qualitative Coding.....	58
Assigning Themes to the Preliminary Emergent Codes.....	67
In-Depth Data Analysis: Second Round of Qualitative Coding	69
<i>First Observation: Pre-service Teachers Introduction to and Definitions of Media Literacy.....</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>Second Observation: Pre-service Teachers See Media Literacy as a Topic That Serves Multiple Functions.....</i>	<i>72</i>
<i>Third Observation: Pre-service Teachers are Open to More Creative Forms of Pedagogy.....</i>	<i>76</i>
Summary of Key Findings.....	79
Summary.....	80
Chapter Five: Discussion	
Introduction.....	82

Revisiting the Research Question	82
Summary of Major Findings.....	84
Interpretations of Data and Results.....	86
Research Implications.....	88
Limitations.....	89
Summary.....	94
Chapter Six: Conclusion	
Introduction.....	95
Summary of Surveyed Literature.....	95
Summary of Methodology.....	96
Summary of Results.....	97
Summary of Discussion	98
Recommendations for Future Research.....	99
Concluding Thoughts.....	102
References:	105
Appendices:	112
Appendix A: Interview Questions to Assess Current Teachers' Perspectives on Critical Media Literacy and Board Games as Pedagogical Tools.....	112
Appendix B: Example of Remixed Monopoly Board by Julianna L. Kowlessar (2020).....	113
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form.....	115
Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer.....	118

Appendix E: Recruitment Email..... 119

Appendix F: Workshop/Presentation Slides for Participants' Use..... 120

Chapter One: Introduction

We live in a media saturated world, and in our current day and age, it would be difficult to imagine life without these digital and analog forms of media that we take in on a regular basis. The affordances of media range from information dissemination to increased connectivity, further encouraging tangible community building. However, the drawbacks of negligent media use, and specifically, negligent social media use, includes the harmful trajectories that many platforms give rise to, which can lead to an increase in dangerous behaviours from users. A Global News article that was published last year outlined the perspectives of a British Columbia high school teacher, who shared her concerns over a Tik Tok trend leading to vandalism in the school (Boynton & Lao, 2022, paras. 1-2). The authors of the article, Boynton and Lao (2022), further highlighted the teacher's perspectives, communicating her belief that increased social media use has prompted students to engage in questionable activities that could lead to trouble in the personal and academic areas of their lives (paras. 3-4). However, according to Boynton and Lao (2022):

Teachers and youth mental health advocates are quick to point out that social media use is not a direct cause of increased negative behaviours, which can also stem from other problems in kids' lives. There is plenty of good to be found on these platforms, they add, and kids need to be taught the proper and healthy way to use them. (para. 10)

This statement exemplifies how social media can pose benefits and risks to students, depending on how they consume and engage with the material being presented to them on diverse platforms (Boynton & Lao, 2022, para. 10). Teaching students to effectively navigate these digital spaces and optimally benefit from them signals to the importance of empowerment, in which students feel a sense of control when interacting on the platform at hand and with other users.

Contemplating resources and methods that can help students and online users, in general, to make the most of their online experiences can be a challenge, due to the multiple learning styles and approaches that different media users take when interacting in online spaces. However, as a starting point, one beneficial subject area outlined by Kellner and Share (2019) in their book, *The Critical Media Literacy Guide: Engaging Media and Transforming Education*, is critical media literacy. On a broad scale, Kellner and Share (2019) define critical media literacy as “a theoretical framework and practical pedagogy in order to enhance individual sovereignty vis-à-vis media culture, empowering people to critically read, write, and create a better world” (p. xi). Although critical media literacy is a multilayered topic, overall, it can facilitate considerable change in our information, academic and everyday worlds if there is a widespread understanding of it, beginning with our youth.

The aim of critical media literacy education, according to Kellner and Share (2019), transcends the practice of being apt media users. It, instead, further encourages students to engage with the world around them, drawing on the lived experiences of others, to gain a greater understanding of social structures, while developing their personal, academic, and professional skills through critical thinking (Kellner & Share, 2019). To address the research questions proposed by this study, which will be introduced later in the chapter, a series of one-on-one interviews carrying out a needs assessment with ten teacher candidates (BEd students) were conducted between December 1, 2022, and January 24, 2023. Through this needs assessment, teacher candidates were asked about their current understanding of media literacy and the resources and tools they require to be able to employ non-traditional pedagogical methods in their classrooms, such as remixing analog games.

Objectives of Research

The primary goal of this research is to examine an underexplored area of media literacy pedagogy: teacher candidates' perspectives on critical media literacy. Considering the experiences of teacher candidates as a starting point for furthering media literacy efforts in Ontario allows for an in-depth understanding of the skills and tools they need to constructively approach and teach future students about critical media literacy. To offer some additional clarity, throughout this thesis, the terms pre-service teachers and teacher candidates are used interchangeably, to illustrate individuals who are still in the process of learning and training to become teachers.

The secondary goal of this research is to explore non-traditional forms of pedagogy, such as remixed analog games that may serve as enjoyable educational tools to aid in student learning, along with personal and academic development. As such, the prospect of introducing non-traditional forms of pedagogy, such as remixed analog games into classrooms will be examined throughout this research, with teacher candidates offering their viewpoints on the practicality of game-based teaching for enhanced student learning. Games, and more specifically, remixed board games including Monopoly, are an advantageous tool for introducing the core principles of critical media literacy education into classrooms, such as critical thinking, deciphering misinformation and disinformation, empathy building (Kellner & Share, 2005, 2007, 2019; Waren, 2011), and so forth. Presenting students with opportunities to create their own learning materials, such as analog games that accentuate the principles of critical media literacy, as learnt about in formal classroom settings, allows them to be both producers and apt consumers of media. This, overall, places an emphasis on how exploring one's creative skills may promote a greater sense of identity, awareness, and keen ability to navigate the media world (Kellner & Share, 2005, 2007, 2019).

Although considerable research exists on games and simulated versions of Monopoly as forms of pedagogy (Fisher, 2008; Griffin & Jackson, 2011; Jessup, 2001; Paino & Chin, 2011; Waren, 2011), an underexplored area is how a critical media literacy framework may be taught to students through remixed versions of board games, such as Monopoly. Therefore, this work anticipates filling gaps in the former literature concerning how a critical media literacy framework can be used to promote essential training for pre-service teachers in Ontario, further exploring teacher candidates' perspectives on how board game creation may advance critical media literacy skills in students.

For this research, the term “remixed” is used as a way to emphasize the remaking of popular board games, such as Monopoly, for educational objectives, to further students' understandings of critical media literacy through engaging with and making media. A specific example of the term remix is provided by Navas (2018) in the text, *Keywords in Remix Studies*, who expresses the following:

It describes the repurposing of something by being both action and object. This in itself may well be a constant process of becoming, but one that also is likely to push remix to remain on the margins of the mainstream. Paradoxically, this is what enables it to keep changing, because when a remix is produced, it is a thing that can be named, commodified and repurposed — only to begin that cycle afresh: such a thing is then taken and repurposed to become something different. (p. 253)

The definition offered by Navas (2018) is relevant to the objectives of this study, as it illustrates the essence of the term: taking something that is familiar and altering it in a way that gives it a new purpose and meaning (p. 253). The process of remixing a well-known board game, such as Monopoly, and using it for educational benefit can ascribe a new meaning and offer unique

layers of understanding to an activity that is commonly used for recreational purposes. By doing this, the familiar becomes strange, in a way, as a new dynamic is introduced, whereby students actively engage and interact in the interlaced realms of creativity, critical thinking and education.

Furthermore, diverse forms of pedagogy, including unique, student-created board games, emphasize a shift from traditional learning to non-traditional learning, where students can express and develop their creative skills. Traditional pedagogy can be regarded as standard classroom-based learning, where students are evaluated by culminating assignments that include tests, essays, and final examinations. However, while useful in many ways, these traditional forms of learning can be conceived of as more akin to Freire's (2000) banking concept of education, where students engage in passive forms of learning without deeply engaging with the material they are being presented with (p. 72). In contrast, non-traditional forms of learning can be paralleled with what Freire (2000) describes as dialogics:

Thus, the dialogical character of education as the practice of freedom does not begin when the teacher-student meets with the students-teachers in a pedagogical situation, but rather when the former first asks herself or himself *what* she or he will dialogue with the latter *about*. (p. 93)

To encapsulate Freire's (2000) explanation, Kellner and Share (2007) write that "The problem-posing alternative that Freire exercises requires dialogical communication between students and teachers where both are learning and teaching each other" (p. 63). Therefore, the transition from traditional learning, which can be attributed with Freire's (2000) banking concept of education, to non-traditional learning, which is in agreement with Freire's (2000) conceptualization of dialogics, illustrates how holistic learning can take place if harmonious communication remains at the forefront. Kellner and Share's (2007) viewpoints lie in accordance with Freire's

perspectives, in that there is great importance in “praxis,” which the authors define as “critical reflection together with action to transform society” (p. 63). This is central to media literacy education, as bringing theory to life through various academic and creative measures encourages students to enhance the ways they take in and produce dynamic media materials from which they can learn (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 63).

To elaborate on non-traditional pedagogy and games-based learning, in particular, Groom and O’Connell (2018) discuss the benefits of digital games for educating, stating the following:

During gameplay, gaming literacies (elements of game play and complex understanding of computer systems) as a metaliteracy are used to accomplish difficult but motivating tasks in order to develop new knowledge by navigating a complex, changing virtual environment. Learning can become an immersive participatory experience where the knowledge learned in the game and the knowledge learned at school scaffolds disciplinary content. (p. 68)

Groom and O’Connell’s (2018) work parallel much of the previous literature that has investigated the pedagogical impacts of board games (Ansoms & Geenen, 2012; Fisher, 2008; Griffin & Jackson, 2011; Holdsworth, 2021; Jessup, 2001; Paino & Chin, 2011; Waren, 2011). The creative development that might stem from the creation of remixed board games coexists with the theoretical perspectives of critical media literacy, which, as scholars in the field, including Kellner and Share (2005, 2007, 2019) imply, bears great potential in transforming the way students approach everyday media, aiding in their growth while also helping them become both skilled producers and consumers of media.

However, the effectiveness of board games to teach critical media literacy skills have yet to be investigated using a holistic critical media literacy framework. To address this gap, this

study will explore whether critical media literacy theory can be fused with board game creation, to promote critical media literacy skills in Ontario elementary and secondary students, beginning with the knowledge and experiences pre-service teachers hold on the subject. As such, this work intends to investigate a distinct avenue of critical media literacy education: through exploring the thoughts and experiences of teacher candidates, with the goal of understanding their broadly conceived viewpoints on the effectiveness of critical media literacy, as well as the possibilities of board games to promote critical thinking in various subjects.

What is the Point of Critical Media Literacy?

Fundamentally, critical media literacy is about finding common ground in and around us. As we go through life, it can become increasingly easy to see the differences around us. More than often, we may find ourselves thinking: “what is different about this person?”, instead of making conscious efforts to seek out similarities. By challenging our thinking and reflecting on the elements that unite us as humans, especially in how we can grow and learn from our media experiences, we are applying critical media literacy skills. The similarities amongst us suggest that we all live in a media society and require an array of skills to learn how to effectively use the media we encounter on a daily basis. As Kellner and Share (2005) write, “it is not enough to merely understand media, students need to be empowered to critically negotiate meanings, engage with the problems of misrepresentations and under-representations, and produce their own alternative media” (p. 382). Thus, as demonstrated, critical media literacy is far from a limited subject area, and instead, can take on an array of meanings, being expanded to promote and signify a type of growth that surpasses being able to solely traverse digital and analog forms of media.

It is further useful to consider Ahmed’s (2006) theory on disorientation and orientation in how students, and individuals, in general, can set aside their differences and think about the

concrete similarities that exist in how they navigate their media landscapes. Ahmed (2006) explains that “Orientations are about how we begin; how we proceed from “here,” which affects how what is “there” appears, how it presents itself. In other words, we encounter “things” as coming from different sides, as well as having different sides” (p. 8). On the other hand, Ahmed (2006) expresses the following: “Disorientation is a way of describing the feelings that gather when we lose our sense of who it is that we are” (p. 20).

Central to Ahmed’s (2006) scholarship is the understanding that the strange and familiar exist mutually: “being lost is a way of inhabiting space by registering what is not familiar: being lost can in its turn become a familiar feeling” (p. 7). While navigating the media world in which we exist presents a multitude of challenges, some wisdom can be offered by acknowledging and applying Ahmed’s (2006) work on disorientation and orientation. We may often feel disoriented as we try to grasp new theories; however, the disorientation we initially feel has the potential to slowly transition into a sense of orientation, better described for the purpose of this research, as becoming critically media literate, whereby we gradually begin to feel more confident in navigating the online spaces that play a large role in our lives and interacting with one another both online and offline. In general, and as Ahmed (2006) implies, when individuals are removed from their comfort zones, they may experience significant bouts of disorientation (p. 20). However, these feelings of disorientation are necessary for self-reflection and personal growth (Ahmed, 2006, p. 20).

In unison with Ahmed’s (2006) theory on orientation and disorientation is the work of Brené Brown (2021) in *Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection & the Language of Human Experience*. In this text, Brown (2021) explores the myriad of human emotions and how they are conceptualized, seeking to present them in ways that are deeply resonant with the

experiences of diverse individuals (p. xxiii). With respect to the feeling of curiosity, Brown (2021) eloquently states:

Choosing to be curious is choosing to be vulnerable because it requires us to surrender to uncertainty. We have to ask questions, admit to not knowing, risk being told that we shouldn't be asking, and, sometimes, make discoveries that lead to discomfort. (p. 65)

Both the work of Ahmed (2006) and Brown (2021) illustrate how vulnerability and feelings of unease in an exploratory sense can often lead to new and unexpected favourable outcomes. Therefore, by thinking about critical media literacy as a lifelong process that can present challenges and ask us to confront some of our previous ways of learning and thinking, we can remain hopeful that these challenges will offer long-term benefits as they turn into habits, guiding and stretching our ways of thinking.

Why Critical Media Literacy Matters

Altogether, the guiding concept of this thesis is to foreground the experiences of teacher candidates, as their knowledge of and experiences with critical media literacy have not been documented at large. Consequently, an underexplored area of research includes the process by which educators come to understand and internalize critical media literacy throughout their formal training. Therefore, in my study, I specifically explore how teacher candidates define it, where and how they either learn about critical media literacy or do not learn about it and offer some suggestions for future improvements to this part of their teacher training.

This thesis is guided by an overarching research question where I ask:

RQ1: What are pre-service teachers' current perspectives and understandings of critical media literacy?

Specifically, in regard to the training of pre-service teachers, I also ask a second question and two interrelated sub-questions to unpack where and how critical media literacy has been a part of their own educational experiences:

RQ2: What have teacher candidates learned about critical media literacy?

RQ2a: What skills and tools do they need to effectively teach their future students about critical media literacy?

RQ2b: What professional development opportunities have teacher candidates engaged in related to critical media literacy?

Thesis Overview

In essence, this thesis intends to expand the literature on critical media literacy pedagogy, thereby emphasizing the knowledge and experiences that Ontario pre-service teachers hold on the broad realm of media literacy, and how they intend to teach it to their future students. In the second chapter, I start by providing a general introduction to critical media literacy, explaining what it is, and how a reflection of it can allow for new possibilities to arise around creative forms of teaching, such as through remixed board games that include Monopoly. Throughout the literature review, I explore previous research that is categorized into the following subsections: The Importance of Critical Media Literacy Skills, Critical Race Media Literacy Education, and Moving Towards Critical Media Literacies. In these subsections, the social benefits of critical media literacy are discussed, with a further inquiry into what it means to reflect on media literacy as a plurality of literacies. During this chapter, I also introduce and compare the various research methods used in previous studies on critical media literacy to contextualize how my chosen methodology of one-on-one, semi structured interviews complements the research I conducted for this thesis. I then explore an area that parallels the core of critical media literacy education: empathy, and how its benefits can foster a holistic understanding of such education in both pre-service teachers and students. Next, I draw upon former literature that has explored the way

games, and specifically, simulated versions of Monopoly, have been used as forms of pedagogy, primarily in post-secondary institutions in the United States. I further discuss how social media and an array of diverse technologies can be used to aid students in the process of creating their own forms of pedagogy through which they can learn about critical media literacy. I conclude this chapter by centralizing the importance of critical media literacy training for pre-service teachers to, once more, emphasize the relevance and importance of my research.

In the third chapter, I discuss the study's methodology. I begin by providing an explanation of my motivations for conducting this research, and how my previous educational experiences encouraged me to deeply engage with and reflect on creative pedagogy. I then move to discuss the study design, explaining why the qualitative methodology of one-on-one, semi structured interviews were chosen. During this chapter, I also discuss the recruitment and data collection processes. From there, I briefly explain how the data was analyzed, setting up the fourth chapter, which examines the analysis process and results in greater detail. I conclude this chapter by introducing the study's ten participants through their pseudonyms.

In the fourth chapter, I delve into a discussion of the data analysis procedure and results emerging from the study. I begin by providing an overview of the data analysis process, where I explain the first round of qualitative coding. I then move on to discuss my choice of assigning several themes to the preliminary emergent codes that arose from the data. Next, I engage in a more in-depth data analysis, where I document the second round of qualitative coding. Afterwards, I distill three main observations that materialized from the data, which are as follows: pre-service teachers introduction to and definitions of media literacy, pre-service teachers see media literacy as a topic that serves multiple functions, and pre-service teachers are

open to more creative forms of pedagogy. I conclude this chapter by presenting a summary of the study's key findings.

In the fifth chapter, I engage in a discussion regarding the study's findings, placing them in conversation with the previous literature, as discussed in the literature review (chapter two). Throughout this chapter, I revisit the primary research question (What are pre-service teachers' current perspectives and understandings of critical media literacy?) and assess how the results addressed it. I then move to examine how the study's major findings aligned with or deviated from the results of past studies. Next, I provide interpretations of the data and results to articulate how the emergent patterns and themes lead to the three main observations, listed in the previous paragraph. Subsequently, I explore the research implications, which intend to clarify how this study has contributed to the respective fields of critical media literacy pedagogy and game studies. This subsection further explores how the study's findings have attempted to fill the existing gap in the literature around pre-service teacher's knowledge of and experiences with media literacy education. To conclude this chapter, I set forth the study's limitations, which broadly encompassed the relatively small sample size of participants engaging in this research, the exclusion of specific demographic information around race, class, gender, and socioeconomic status, the confines of intersectionality as a design principle for creating pedagogical tools, and my approach to this educational research from the perspective of a communications and media scholar.

In the sixth and final chapter, I provide brief summaries that discuss the intentions of and the conclusions drawn from each of the previous chapters in this thesis. These subsections include a summary of the surveyed literature, where I broadly explain why the selected body of research was chosen for analysis. The other subsections outline the methodology, results, and

discussion. Following these individual chapter overviews, I present some recommendations for future research based on my study's findings. On a broad scale, these recommendations revolve around creating a series of workshops for Bachelor of Education students to attend on a voluntary basis, to increase their knowledge of critical media literacy, and to learn more about the various teaching resources that are available to them both within and outside the formal university setting. To bring this chapter and the study to a close, I offer some final thoughts on how educators can help their students develop a deeper enthusiasm for learning about critical media literacy through creative pedagogy, with the goal of applying its principals both to diverse scholarly domains and their personal lives.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

An Introduction to Critical Media Literacy

Our world is an intricate place full of ideas, opinions, and beliefs. The ample diversity in these ideas, at times, makes it difficult for us to effectively navigate the online world, ensuring that we make the most of our digital encounters. However, the subject area of critical media literacy can contribute to a meaningful learning experience if it is creatively employed and further integrated into the Ontario education curriculum. As this thesis proposes, one way to further such educational efforts is by first gaining an understanding of the knowledge and viewpoints held by pre-service teachers. This chapter, therefore, serves as a literature review, and explores previous scholarship on the topic of critical media literacy and its many benefits. Additionally introduced in this chapter is some of the existing literature on the educational advantages of games, and specifically, how simulated versions of Monopoly can be viewed as effective forms of pedagogy. The former literature presented and analyzed in this chapter will demonstrate areas within the fields of critical media literacy pedagogy and game studies that have been focused on at length, therefore, demonstrating the gap that this thesis attempts to address: helping Ontario pre-service teachers imagine unique, creative possibilities of teaching their future students about critical media literacy.

It is of value to begin by broadly setting out the importance of critical media literacy. To illustrate how critical media literacy can lead to increased student growth and awareness, Kellner and Share (2019) articulate that “schools today must confront the challenges of providing appropriate forms of education and teach the literacies that enable students and citizens to thrive in the 21st century” (p. xvii). This can be taken to mean that media literacy efforts need to be bolstered in formal academic settings for students to gain not only intellectual skills, but an array

of practical skills that they can carry with them, draw on, and apply through their lives (Kellner & Share, 2019). Alvermann et al. (1999) indicate that another central element of critical media literacy includes “creating communities of active readers and writers who can be expected to exercise some degree of agency in deciding what textual positions they will assume or resist as they interact in complex social and cultural contexts” (p. 2). In like manner, Black (2009) discusses how significant it is for “youth to develop skills for critically consuming media texts, as well as for responsibly producing their own digital media for online publication” (p. 75). Building on this in a Canadian context, Rogers et al. (2015) explain how youth can move towards becoming producers of media that relate to their own lives through engaging with creative learning methods (pp. 2, 9). This is also substantiated by Nam (2010), who explains that media production “encourages students to initiate and organise their own alternative and oppositional media culture and practices” (p. 17). These viewpoints speak to the multifaceted nature of critical media literacy, illustrating how it may encourage the consideration of diverse, non-traditional forms of pedagogy, which include popular board games such as Monopoly.

However, a larger gap exists with respect to how students might approach the practice of meaning making through their own creation of media materials, which can assist their learning, as Black (2009, p. 75) and Rogers et al. (2015, pp. 2, 9) signal to. As a result, research has yet to be conducted on the secondary focus of this thesis: how a critical media literacy framework can be taught to students through their own construction of remixed board games. While this is an intricate area, determining pre-service teachers’ opinions on these creative forms of pedagogy and gaining an understanding of their knowledge, is useful in reflecting on the feasibility of such assignments to facilitate learning. To offer some background information as to why Monopoly

serves as an adequate teaching tool that can expand students' skills on media literacy, Hackett and Coghlan (2023) discuss the game's background, stating the following:

Monopoly was designed and patented by American Elizabeth Magie (1866-1948) in 1902, and was originally called *The Landlord's Game*. The game was based on the anti-monopoly taxation principles of Henry George (1839-1897), who argued that people should own 100 per cent of what they make and the land should belong to everyone. Land ownership, considered George, only benefitted land owners, and forces working people to pay exorbitant rent. Magie's original version of the game was designed to demonstrate how rents enrich property owners and impoverish tenants. (para. 7)

Despite the capitalist attributes that arose through the rules of *Monopoly*, Hackett and Coghlan, (2023) explain that it can facilitate a sense of unity amongst players (paras. 7, 17). The authors elaborate on this notion, expressing that "A look through these rules reveals that players are often trying to restore the balance of power in the game, or in other words increase the chance that a player can win" (Hackett & Coghlan, 2023, para. 17). This illustrates that although *Monopoly* was developed as a game that teaches players how societal inequality arises through the mass acquisition of real estate, contemporary players approach the rules in a way that promotes greater equality (Hackett & Coghlan, 2023, paras. 7, 17). Therefore, imagining board games as pedagogical tools and, further, remixed, student-created board games to teach core principles, partially subverts the monopolistic roots that *Monopoly* attempts to educate on, as students can work to put a unique spin on the standard rules, properties, and player pieces, for instance. In turn, this practice can motivate youth to become both skilled producers and consumers of media, which, according to Kellner and Share (2005, 2007, 2019), are central tenets of critical media literacy education.

To ensure that educators work to place students' creative skills at the forefront for their personal and academic development, it is beneficial for them to imagine various modes of teaching critical media literacy. This notion is addressed by each of the research questions that inform this thesis, which are based on the knowledge, skills, and tools that pre-service teachers require to effectively teach their students about media literacy education. Further outlining the significance of critical media literacy, Kellner and Share (2005, 2007, 2019) explain that it may serve as an effective means of mitigating current global issues, including, but not limited to, social injustices, the climate crisis, and the widespread nature of misinformation and disinformation in the online sphere. Cruz and Dorsch (2019) support this, stating that "Implementation of critical media literacy as a requirement in higher education will be an important first step to help to combat manipulation, disinformation and deception spread unchecked over the Internet" (p. 147). Illustrated here are the holistic benefits of critical media literacy, in that an application of such skills surpasses solely teaching students to become more cognisant of their online behaviour and interactions. Instead, through an acquisition and the development of deepened media literacy skills, students are encouraged to meditate on the cyclical, interconnected nature of the world, as they think about how a greater sense of societal unity can be achieved. However, Kellner and Share (2007) indicate that critical media literacy education in the United States is a relatively new topic (p. 62). Therefore, addressing preliminary gaps, such as conducting research with underexplored populations, which include pre-service teachers, can provide unique perspectives on furthering media literacy efforts across North America, promoting its strength as a dynamic and functional topic that encourages critical reflection and action for students and educators.

The Importance of Critical Media Literacy Skills

Researchers conducting studies in the fields of critical media literacy education have explored the many benefits of such education for students; however, certain studies have focused on the social justice benefits and how it can help counter racial, class and other intersecting inequalities (Butler, 2019; Cruz & Dorsch, 2019; Hawkman & Shear, 2020; Kersch & Lesley, 2019; Romero Walker, 2021; Thevenin, 2020). The primary position that Kellner and Share (2005, 2007, 2019) take with critical media literacy is that it serves as a valuable educational resource for students and media users across the globe. The authors specifically state that critical media literacy “offers an excellent framework to teach critical solidarity and the skills that can challenge the social construction of information and communication, from hypertext to video games” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 381). However, other scholars such as Butler (2019) have defined critical media literacy, stating that it “is not ‘media bashing’ and does not tell students what to think” (p. 159). Further, through critical media literacy, students can “view media in a more informed way and consider alternative ways of thinking about the media they use” (Yousman, 2016, p. 372, as cited in Butler, 2019, p. 159). Similarly, Semali (2008) underscores that critical media literacy skills should be applied outside of formal educational settings and become increasingly beneficial when students draw on them throughout their personal endeavours (p. 201). Taken together, these definitions tell us that critical media literacy should include the following common elements of employing evaluative reasoning and diversifying one’s perspectives to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the world (Kellner & Share, 2005, 2007, 2019; Butler, 2019; Semali, 2008). Each of these parallel definitions presents a way for pre-service teachers, students, and media users, in general, to reflect on how critical media literacy can enhance their lives on an individual level, as the meaning that stems from it is largely based on their own ascriptions within the above frameworks.

To further elaborate on the importance of critical media literacy skills, Cruz and Dorsch (2019) assert that it “remains the only hope in order to develop an understanding of what is happening in the rapidly changing and evolving digitally networked society” (p. 137). Some benefits of critical media literacy, as highlighted by the authors, include students’ enhanced “ability to differentiate between online political claims based on evidence and based on inaccurate information” (Cruz & Dorsch, 2019, p. 145). Contrastingly, Thevenin’s (2020) focus on games as tools to teach critical media literacy specifically looked at *Dark Ride: Disneyland*, a student and faculty-created game at a U.S. university (p. 100). The author explains that *Dark Ride: Disneyland* “attempts to make people think more critically about the stories being told by Disney” (Thevenin, 2020, p. 104). Both Cruz and Dorsch’s (2019) analysis of specific critical media literacy benefits and Thevenin’s (2020, p. 104) focus on deconstructing Disney stories speaks to the need for critical media literacy skills for students to engage in more thorough reflections about the narratives they once viewed as innocuous. This element of “deconstructing” common messages and stories is central to media literacy but has yet to be researched in the context of pre-service teachers’ experiences. This thesis, therefore, addresses how pre-service teachers have thought about their own experiences with media, in part, which is emphasized by the primary research question (What are pre-service teachers’ current perspectives and understandings of critical media literacy?) and secondary research question (What have teacher candidates learned about critical media literacy?). Posing these questions to teacher candidates intends to bring an awareness to their experiences first understanding how and what they have learned about the subject, and how their educational experiences have begun to shape their teaching practices.

Moreover, to illustrate the social justice benefits of critical media literacy education, Hawkman and Shear (2020) discuss the element of race, and “Critical race media literacy

(CRML) [which] calls educators to engage students in investigations of/with media (i.e., film, television, podcast, music, texts) in order to examine problematic representations of race/ism and people of color” (p. 2). As Hawkman and Shear (2020) foreground, incorporating the term race into critical media literacy education enables individuals to “confront racist, colonial, classist, ableist, and heteronormative representations in media; interrogate the messages represented in problematic media messages; and navigate the complexities of representation in the classroom and society” (p. 2). The authors explain that through critical race media literacy, students can make connections and better recognize how the world operates, specifically concerning the marginalization of certain groups (Hawkman & Shear, 2020, p. 2). Hawkman and Shear’s (2020) research emphasizes the diverse benefits of critical media literacy skills, which, in this instance, include a focus on race to better understand many longstanding issues of social injustice. This specific research highlights the multiplicity of critical media literacy as a subject, as it seeks to embrace various subtopics, such as issues on race and class, for instance, to determine how overall media experiences can be made greater inclusive through the prioritization of critical thinking skills (Kellner & Share, 2005, 2007, 2019). Yet, it also gives rise to reflection about the insight that other population groups can offer to extend and enhance the literature on the benefits of critical media literacy skills, particularly by looking at how pre-service teachers approach the subject.

Further touching on the importance of critical media literacy skills, Kersch and Lesley (2019) provide a six-part framework for introducing critical media literacy education: contemporary literacies, equality in technological use, employing intersectionality to understand the lived experiences of others, the consideration of student perspectives, epistemology and storytelling, and collaboration to achieve change (p. 40). The authors explain that this framework

“speaks to the intellectual opportunities of new media as well as arms students against the oppression that new media can perpetuate” (Kersch & Lesley, 2019, p. 38). Correspondingly, Romero Walker (2021) explicates that “To accomplish a decolonial and anti-racist classroom and curricula is to enact an equitable pedagogy that reflects a multicultural approach to education that champions diversity” (p. 88). The fostering of such environments enables students to “build understanding and empathy” as they discuss lived experiences, allowing epistemology and storytelling remain at the forefront (Romero Walker, 2021, p. 90). The work of Kersch and Lesley (2019) and Romero Walker (2021) emphasize the importance of student cohesion to achieve classroom spaces where students are encouraged to think about their lived experiences in relation to educational subject matter. Returning to the earlier discussion of Freire’s (2000) dialogics, which exemplifies how reflective learning can occur if equitable and balanced communication is nurtured, critical media literacy can, therefore, be viewed as diverse starting point for meaningful and mindful communication to evolve in classroom environments.

Altogether, findings in the above paragraphs on the importance of critical media literacy skills suggest that it stimulates students’ personal and academic growth (Cruz & Dorsch, 2019; Hawkman & Shear, 2020; Kersch & Lesley, 2019; Thevenin, 2020). Romero Walker (2021) builds on this general finding, stating that “Allowing students to be vocal about their experiences connected to their identities is valuable in creating a classroom environment where other students can build understanding and empathy” (p. 90). Comparably, in Yousman’s (2019) research on the “ERA (Education-Recognition-Activism)” curriculum, survey data revealed “that participants valued and/or enjoyed critical media literacy discussion because it allowed for reciprocity, companionship, self-expression, and empathy” (pp. 41-42). Therefore, as demonstrated through these two studies, empathy is one of the many personal skills that students

can develop from an engagement with critical media literacy education (Romero Walker, 2021; Yousman, 2019).

In total, previous literature covering the importance of critical media literacy skills accentuates the benefits of critical media literacy education for students' individual and intellectual development, encouraging them to unlearn dominant practices and ideologies, and think more abstractly about the intersecting systems in the world (Butler, 2019; Cruz & Dorsch, 2019; Hawkman & Shear, 2020; Kersch & Lesley, 2019; Romero Walker, 2021; Thevenin, 2020). These outlined benefits illustrate the depth and dynamic nature of critical media literacy, which further demonstrate how students can draw on the subject in unique ways to gain the most of it, in relation to their own lived experiences. Overall, these findings are useful in supporting critical media literacy research as it begins to embrace new dimensions around how alternate populations experience media literacy, think about it in relation to their own lives and, in the case of pre-service teachers, ponder meaningful ways to demonstrate its importance to their future students.

Critical Race Media Literacy Education

As briefly examined in the previous section, another branch of critical media literacy education is critical *race* media literacy. This branch of research is consequential, as it discusses how the experiences of students are influenced by the intersecting factors in their lives, broadly including their race, gender, class, and social status. By understanding the research conducted within this subtopic, new educators can incorporate these approaches into their teaching practices, as they support their students' growth through considering their diverse lived experiences, placing it at the forefront of classroom activities to ensure a meaningful and enriching academic experience.

Previous studies conducted on this subtopic of critical media literacy have explored the benefits of considering race in efforts to counter discrimination (Degand, 2020; Hawkman & Shear, 2020). Kellner and Share's (2019) standpoint on the significance of the topic suggests that "Developing critical media literacy pedagogy also involves perceiving how any type of media can be used positively to teach a wide range of topics, such as multicultural understandings of ethnic and racial diversity, [and] problems of discrimination and oppression" (p. 6). By the same token, Degand (2020) states that "students of pre-service teachers who are equipped to combat discrimination in the classroom have the potential to become the next generation of creators who can disrupt the media landscape's status quo" (p. 97). Further elaborating on the benefits of critical race media literacy, Degand (2020) explicates that it enables students to "be better prepared for conflicts, collaborations, and growth in our increasingly multicultural societies when they are given the opportunity to engage in genuine social exchanges, disagreements, debates, and resolutions with others in multicultural educational spaces" (pp. 96-97). Overall, the element of *race* in critical media literacy education is paramount for the development of youth, as it paves the way for students to explore and apply alternative types of knowledge, which, as Collins (2000) explains, is necessary for the advancement of lived experiences to be considered sound forms of knowledge (p. 253). Combining these former studies with the goals of this thesis, if pre-service teachers are equipped with the resources that greater enable them to reflect on critical media literacy in all respects, they can move towards addressing gaps in students' learning, finding ways to incorporate their lived experiences into their broader educational experiences.

Moving Towards Critical Media Literacies

As demonstrated, a wealth of information currently exists on critical media literacy, and it is of value to reflect on the topic as a plurality of literacies, therefore discovering alternative methods to make it further applicable and meaningful to the lives of adolescents. With respect to how media literacy efforts can be augmented, Lewis (2021) begins by stating that “The approach of critical media literacy has increased the scope of media literacy by adding the critical study of how messages contain underlying stereotypes, marginalization, and exploitation” (p. 7).

However, in efforts to build on current media literacy theory, more discussion is needed on the roles of the media through which people communicate (Lewis, 2021, p. 8). By placing a greater emphasis on the medium, itself, as Lewis (2021, p. 8) suggests, students may be encouraged to critically reflect on how they use different technologies, and the effects that those technologies have on their digital communication and interactions with others in the online sphere.

Lewis (2021) further articulates that media literacy can be developed to cover different areas, stating that “The first step in enhancing media literacy is to extend beyond the primary concern with media content to begin exploring how the content is entangled with the specific medium itself” (p. 44). This practice would help students become greater aware of how the messages they receive are being influenced through the channels by which they receive those messages, according to Lewis (2021, p. 44). By initially deciphering how the message is influenced by the medium, drawing on McLuhan (1997), the interconnectedness of communication can be understood on a deeper level, as students draw parallels about their digital and information worlds. With respect to the well-known phrase that lies at the crux of communications theory, “the medium is the message,” McLuhan (1997) states the following: “the medium is not the figure but the ground, not the motor car but the highways and the factories. Also, I point out that in all media the user is the content, and the effects come before

the invention” (p. 276). McLuhan’s (1997) theory sheds light on the integral nature of the objects that are used to convey messages to audiences (p. 276). In tandem with Lewis’ (2021) work, it is made clear that for a more defined understanding of critical media literacy, media users can benefit from an awareness of how the messages they received are influenced by the object that transmits them, namely, the medium (McLuhan, 1997). As Lewis’ (2021) and McLuhan’s (1997) work underscore, there is value in furthering research that explores how media literacy can be viewed as a plurality. Supporting these viewpoints, Nam (2010) also adds that critical media literacy “needs to be updated and expanded in light of new media and globalisation” (p. 18). This approach would work towards ensuring that a critical media literacy framework accommodates all forms of media, therefore, initiating the contemplation of resources for optimal media use. Incorporating these ideas with the objectives of this thesis, it is evident that more work needs to be done in the future to ensure that media literacy efforts are being expanded to embrace and acknowledge the viewpoints of various subgroups, including those of pre-service teachers and how they reckon with the subject of critical media literacy.

Another concept that illustrates how critical media literacy can be viewed as a plurality of literacies is domestication theory, which “demonstrates how media studies in general can broaden its scope to include both object and context” (Lewis, 2021, p. 47). Lewis (2021) explains that domestication theory “examines media as it is used within its environment” (p. 47). Using domestication theory to expand media literacy efforts is useful, as Lewis (2021) describes that it can provide a greater understanding of the interconnectedness enabled by the media world (pp. 47-48), which, again, speaks to McLuhan’s phrase, “the medium is the message,” encouraging media users to consider how the medium plays a central role in shaping the messages they receive (McLuhan, 1997, p. 247).

To build on Lewis' (2021) articulation of domestication theory, it is worthwhile to consider another realm connected to domestication theory: intersectionality. Kimberlé Crenshaw, who originally coined the term, writes that "Through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge and ground the differences among us and negotiate the means by which these differences will find expression in constructing group politics" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1299). Crenshaw (1989) first used the term intersectionality to discuss the marginalization of Black women, explaining how multiple social factors converge to shape their lives in ways that vastly differ from other racialized groups. It is important to note that Crenshaw's (1989) initial conceptualization of intersectionality intended to serve as a way for the experiences of Black women to be spoken of and heard: two necessary first steps for beginning to grasp the complexities in the lives of women of colour (p. 139). Crenshaw (1989) expands on this, stating that "Not only will this juxtaposition reveal how Black women are theoretically erased, it will also illustrate how this framework imports its own theoretical limitations that undermine efforts to broaden feminist and antiracist analyses" (pp. 139-140). Overall, Crenshaw's (1989) conceptualization of intersectional theory is instrumental in the verisimilitude of critical media literacy education, as it was created to initially call attention to the historically unheard voices and experiences of Black women (p. 139). This coexists with furthering Kellner and Share's (2005, 2007, 2019) work on the importance of critical media literacy, specifically with regards to the importance of activism, empathy, and social change, in order for the lived experiences of each unique individual to be validated throughout history.

In addition, Collins and Bilge (2016), who build on Crenshaw's (1989) original definition on intersectional theory, explain it in the following way:

Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. (p. 11)

Collins and Bilge (2016, p. 119) further explicate that critical education is a core feature of intersectional theory, drawing the following connections:

Both areas draw from broader philosophical traditions of participatory democracy; both work primarily in schooling and formal education as one primary institutional location for their praxis; and, for each, navigating differences is an important part of developing a critical consciousness. (p. 125)

The contributions of Crenshaw (1989, 1991) and Collins and Bilge (2016) on intersectional theory illustrate the importance of contemplating how diverse factors work in tandem to shape individuals' lives in distinctive, often unimaginable ways. This is further significant to the value of critical media literacy education, as it prompts students to seek out a holistic understanding of how the media frames individuals from diverse classes and social and racial groups (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 23). By and large, the consideration of intersectionality as a theory that advances the goals of critical media literacy is central to this thesis, as an intersectional approach allows for continual reflection on how the educational and teaching experiences of pre-service teachers have been influenced in, at least some way, by the various intersecting factors that have worked to shape the personal and professional domains of their lives.

Comparison of Methods Used in Previous Studies on Critical Media Literacy

The following section details the distinct methods used in previous studies conducted in the field of critical media literacy. While the methods used were primarily qualitative, this

section provides a more in-depth exploration of how different studies on an array of topics related to critical media literacy employed qualitative methods that best reflected their nature. Generally, some of these qualitative methods included content analysis (Anyiwo et al., 2021), rhetorical analysis (Elmore & Coleman, 2019), focus groups, interviews, and ethnographic films (Leurs et al., 2018), textual analysis (McArthur, 2019), narrative research (Saunders et al., 2017), and surveys (Yousman, 2019).

In a study conducted by Anyiwo et al. (2021), content analysis was used (p. 202). The authors employed a three-pronged approach, first involving research around sociopolitical development, second, incorporating a content analysis of “Black characters on television programs,” and third, looking at “community engagement and data dissemination” (Anyiwo et al., 2021, pp. 204-205). Similarly, Elmore and Coleman (2019) conducted a study to determine how to successfully teach critical media literacy to students (p. 29). One of the authors, Patricia Elmore, worked with fifty-six of her eighth-grade students, who were African American (Elmore & Coleman, 2019, p. 31). These students conducted “their own rhetorical analysis of a political meme [which] served to provide an entry point for the introduction of CML skills to classroom discussions and future lessons” (Elmore & Coleman, 2019, p. 39). Further exemplifying the use of qualitative methods throughout the literature, Leurs et al. (2018) inquired “whether making young migrants aware of the politics of representation through media literacy education contributes to strengthening their participation and resilience” (p. 427). The authors used a variety of qualitative methods in the study, including focus groups, interviews, and an ethnographic film to determine the elements of critical media literacy that fostered a sense of community and autonomy for newcomer youth (Leurs et al., 2018, pp. 433, 446).

Moreover, McArthur (2019) engaged with textual analysis by reading *The Sneetches* by Dr. Seuss to second-grade students to “introduce the idea of discrimination” (p. 119). Overall, McArthur’s students distinguished discrimination in the story, comparing it to historical racial injustices (2019, p. 120). Additionally, Saunders et al. (2017) employed narrative research to determine how students interact with newer media technologies and the role of critical media literacy to enable “students greater opportunities to raise their voices and be heard” (pp. 515-16).

Lastly, Yousman (2019) explored how “Media literacy curricula have been used to improve body image, body acceptance, and eating attitudes” (p. 41). The author created the “ERA (Education-Recognition-Activism) curriculum” to promote the principles of critical media literacy education relative to body positivity (Yousman, 2019, p. 41). In the study, Yousman (2019) used surveys taken by fifty participants to “determine the effectiveness of the ERA curriculum” (p. 41). Altogether, as the methods used across these previous studies suggest, qualitative approaches enabled meaningful communication between researchers and student participants, thus emphasizing the advantages of critical media literacy.

As indicated, the primary use of qualitative methods across these studies encouraged students’ voices and opinions to take the lead in exploring a myriad of approaches to teaching critical media literacy (Anyiwo et al., 2021; Elmore & Coleman, 2019; Leurs et al., 2018; McArthur, 2019; Saunders et al., 2017; Yousman, 2019). Nonetheless, the literature explored in the above paragraphs suggest that a gap exists on the effectiveness of games as instruments to teach critical media literacy. Building on the existing scholarship, it would be valuable to examine how diverse media promote greater student involvement, creativity and learning with games as forms of pedagogy by consulting teacher candidates, as a starting point.

Empathy as a Factor of Critical Media Literacy Education

In the following paragraphs, the relationship between empathy and critical media literacy will be examined to illustrate the personal benefits of critical media literacy to students. As Michele Borba (2016) discusses in the book *Unselfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About-Me World*, empathy, an often overlooked skill and emotion, has transformative power to enhance adolescents' lives in multiple ways if it becomes a lifelong habit. Borba (2016) specifically explains that the following nine factors contribute to adolescents' empathy skills: "emotional literacy"; "moral identity"; "perspective taking"; "moral imagination"; "self-regulation"; "practicing kindness"; "collaboration"; "moral courage"; and "altruistic leadership abilities" (pp. xix-xx). One especially valuable point suggests that "Emotional literacy is a key to unlocking empathy. Before you can empathize, you have to be able to read someone else's, or your own, emotions so you can tune in to their feelings" (Borba, 2016, p. 7). This emphasizes how another type of literacy, emotional literacy, is central to honing the skill of empathy (Borba, 2016, p. 7). The importance of empathy is further underscored by Kellner & Share (2019), as they explicate that it is a skill that can be acquired from engaging with critical media literacy education, as it equips students with a sense of educational freedom that assists in their interactions with others around them (p. 45).

To elaborate on Kellner and Share's (2019) viewpoints on empathy, in *The Critical Media Literacy Guide: Engaging Media and Transforming Education*, they articulate that empathy helps students develop in the academic and personal areas of their lives, connecting with their peers and other individuals they encounter in meaningful ways (p. 11). Providing a more detailed explanation of how critical media literacy supports empathy, Kellner and Share (2019) state:

Transformative education requires a critical pedagogy of solidarity in which empathy and compassion help students understand the ways people are interconnected through systems of dominance and subordination. Through combining media production with critical analysis, critical media literacy holds the potential to create liberatory pedagogy. (p. 11)

Placing these benefits of critical media literacy alongside the objectives of intersectional theory, as developed by Crenshaw (1989), and adapted by Collins and Bilge (2016), showcases how it invites students to display empathy, as they critically think about the myriad factors that work together to shape people's lives (Kellner & Share, 2019; Collins & Bilge, 2016).

In relation to empathy is Kersch and Lesley's (2019) six-part framework, which was discussed earlier in the chapter. The authors additionally express that "media education needs to be established in schools and the following stories of hosting and healing around new media reinforce our need for a critical media literacy framework so schools can become an intellectually generative place" (Kersch & Lesley, 2019, p. 40). Kersch and Lesley (2019) explain that students' abilities to reflect on their lived experiences and share those stories with others is a powerful element of critical media literacy education (p. 45). Further to this point, it is important for students to feel comfortable in classroom settings and be able to share personal aspects of their lives, should they choose to, whilst critically engaging with media (Kersch & Lesley, 2019, p. 46).

In agreement with how critical media literacy education can foster empathy skills, Yousman (2019) explores how critical media literacy education reaches many realms outside of media and technology, such as body image (p. 2), for instance, therefore fostering social benefits for students. Comparably, Romero Walker (2021) discusses modes of creating anti-racist teaching practices, mentioning that a central element is "student-centred inquiry" (p. 90).

Explaining this in greater detail, Romero Walker (2021) states that “Allowing students to be vocal about their experiences connected to their identities is valuable in creating a classroom environment where other students can build understanding and empathy” (p. 90). In tandem with Yousman’s (2019) and Romero Walker’s (2021) work on how critical media literacy can foster empathy in students is the work of Baker-Bell et al. (2017), as they discuss how critical media literacy can lead to a “pedagogy of healing”:

The pedagogy of healing that we describe in this article consists of two sets of tools: (1) tools to heal: acknowledging that the wound exists and identifying its culprit, and (2) tools to transform: responding to the wound using a tool that works to transform the conditions that led to the wound (e.g., critical media pedagogy, urban debate, critical language pedagogy, hip-hop based pedagogy, critical race pedagogy). The tools within a healing pedagogical framework are responsive to the needs of a given situation. (p. 139)

This makes clear how critical media literacy can alleviate the harmful effects of stereotypes and the mental trauma that results from regular media engagement. Linking this with Kellner and Share’s (2005, 2007, 2019) contributions to critical media literacy education, pre-service teachers can benefit from centralizing empathy in their future classrooms, to create a deepened sense of harmony amongst students.

The research conducted by the above-mentioned scholars is significant to the field of critical media literacy and the importance of educating pre-service teachers on the subject, as it demonstrates the need for student input. These student-centred approaches emphasize how optimal learning through an array of different styles and pedagogical tools can occur, and how critical media literacy can be used as a therapeutic aid to promote mindfulness about the lived

experiences of students and those around them (Yousman, 2019; Romero Walker, 2021; Baker-Bell et al., 2017).

Games as Forms of Pedagogy

Exploring the viewpoints of pre-service teachers on critical media literacy gives way to assessing contemporary routes of uniquely teaching the subject: through remixed, student-created board games. Thus, this subsection will explore previous literature in the field of game studies that have looked at simulated versions of Monopoly and the pedagogical impacts they have had on higher education students. Within the larger field of game studies, this subtopic is relevant to this thesis, as it explores the research that has been conducted on simulated games, and what remixing board games to teach the essential principles of critical media literacy can look like in formal Ontario classroom contexts.

Although games have not typically been incorporated into traditional curriculum and classroom activity design over the years, many scholars have been arguing that games are, in fact, beneficial to students and belong in the classroom environment (Gee, 2003; Kafai & Burke, 2015). Mayer (2014) provides a definition of games-based learning, stating that: “Games for learning are games and simulations that are intended to promote learning” (p. 4). Mayer (2014) also offers a definition of games, explaining that they “are interactive, simulated systems that are rule based, responsive, challenging, cumulative, and inviting” (p. 5). Synthesizing these definitions, Mayer (2014) then expresses the following:

When we are interested in moving from games to games for learning, we need to focus on a crucial part of the definition of games for learning: they cause a measurable change in the player’s academic knowledge or cognitive skill. (p. 8)

On the topic of video games as forms of pedagogy, Gee (2003) explains that individuals “tend to lose a good deal of their learning including school learning when they cease to practice the skills associated with this learning in their daily lives” (p. 68). Gee (2003) further states that “Passive learning rather than active, critical learning will not lead to much power and empowerment in the contemporary world, however much it may suit one for a low-level service job” (p. 69). In like manner, Grimes (2021) discusses the concept of children’s “play,” and expresses that it is “commonly associated with feelings of freedom and artistic inspiration, joy and self-exploration” (p. 27). Altogether, the previous literature by Gee (2003) and Grimes (2021) demonstrates the following common themes: diverse forms of play and games can be beneficial to adolescents’ lifelong learning, as they serve as enjoyable and appealing activities that can teach essential skills.

In relation to viewing board games as a form of learning, researchers working in the areas of development studies, women’s studies, ethnic studies and sociology, have studied the potential benefits of Monopoly to teach a variety of concepts in tangible ways including poverty and socioeconomic imbalances (Ansoms & Geenen, 2012), social inequalities (Fisher, 2008; Jessup, 2001), diversity (Griffin & Jackson, 2011; Waren, 2011) and critical theory (Paino & Chin, 2011). Waren (2011) explains how games may serve as useful pedagogical tools, stating that “A game may help a student to understand some of the previously inexplicable attitudes and behaviors of actors on either side of a power relationship” (pp. 28–29). Alluding to the earlier definition of games offered by Mayer (2014), games have multiple characteristics that revolve around engagement, procedures, accessibility, demand, and enticement (p. 5).

Teaching the principles of critical media literacy through remixed versions of Monopoly, however, serves as a direct method of challenging dominant ideologies and meaning-making

practices (Waren, 2011, p. 28). As Waren (2011) elaborates, “Sociologists have used games or simulations to spark the sociological imagination, to stimulate critical thinking, and to introduce social stratification” (p. 28). Similarly, Fisher (2008) notes that games are productive tools in aiding students with comprehending information they have learned, particularly because of their practical and engaging components (p. 272). Jessup (2001) further examines social inequality through a simulated Monopoly game entitled “Sociopoly” and its application and relevance in post-secondary environments (p. 103). The author explains that the purpose of simulated games, in this case, around social inequality, is to educate students on the realities of life (Jessup, 2001, p. 103). Jessup (2001) also states that “Whereas so many students enter colleges and universities believing that equality and fairness govern the economic system, they routinely underestimate the extent of racial and economic inequality” (p. 103). Griffin and Jackson (2011) substantiate the ideas of these previous scholars, expressing that “many students today are unaware of how systemic privilege and oppression affect their lives and the lives of others” (p. 1). In the same way, Holdsworth (2021) concludes that through the simulated game of “Homeless Monopoly,” players were able to recognize their own biases and strategize methods to become allies and take collective action to assist homeless individuals (p. 50). Although these studies did not specifically discuss the impacts of remixed board games to teach critical media literacy skills, they illustrated the benefits of games to teach individuals about critical social issues (Ansoms & Geenen, 2012; Fisher, 2008; Jessup, 2001; Griffin & Jackson, 2011; Waren, 2011; Paino & Chin, 2011; Holdsworth, 2021). Altogether, these examples accentuate the value of remixed or simulated board games to teach an array of principles related to critical media literacy to K-12 students.

In another instance, Ansoms and Geenen (2012) look at a version of Monopoly titled “Development Monopoly,” which addresses structural and socioeconomic imbalances,

specifically concerning poverty (p. 713). In this simulated Monopoly game, the authors state that “The purpose is to extract participants temporarily from their familiar contexts and to introduce them to an abstract game environment from where they can reflect upon societal dynamics in the real world” (Ansoms & Geenen, 2012, p. 714). This application of removing players from their comfort zones and placing them in unfamiliar spaces is fundamental for meaning creation, as it allows opportunities for individual growth (Ansoms & Geenen, 2012; Ahmed, 2006, p. 7). Returning to Ahmed’s (2006) work, which was introduced in the previous chapter, there are many benefits of embracing strange environments, as it enables alternate perspectives to take shape, allowing individuals to reach new heights and gain skills to help them progress in personal and academic ways (p. 7). This exemplifies how the reworking of Monopoly games to emphasize various themes, some of which may have been previously unknown to participants, can be considered a constructive pedagogical tool to educate students about inequalities and injustices, while centralizing the importance of empathy for others (Waren, 2011; Kellner & Share, 2019).

It is of further value to coalesce the benefits of simulated Monopoly games for students with Collins’ (2000) work on Black feminist theory. Here, Collins (2000) expresses with respect to marginalized individuals, and Black women that “subordinate groups have long had to use alternative ways to create independent self-definitions and self-valuations and to rearticulate them through our own specialists” (p. 252). Collins (2000) asserts that knowledge is produced by dominant groups, which often do not account for the lived experiences of marginalized individuals, therefore discrediting their encounters and how they view the world around them (p. 253). Consequently, remixed board games would serve as an effective pedagogical tool to educate students on the lived experiences of oppressed groups, as they teach individuals how to

empathize with others (Kellner & Share, 2019; Waren, 2011). Further supporting this viewpoint, Waren (2011) states that “Pedagogical games can challenge individualistic assumptions and demonstrate the lasting effects of discrimination in a direct, but non-threatening way” (p. 34). Therefore, the teachings of critical media literacy through remixed, student-created board games can enable deeper learning and comprehension of “the differences, challenges and forms of oppression organized around class, race, gender, and sexuality” (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 6). These components are central to Collins’ (2000) work on the production of knowledge and the forms of knowledge that are upheld, as students are encouraged to divert, in part, from traditional educational frameworks and begin to critically challenge and actively engage with the subject matter they are learning about (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 14).

Using Social Media and Different Technologies to Teach Critical Media Literacy

Research has also been conducted on how social media and various technologies can be used in creative ways to educate students on critical media literacy. This subtopic is of relevance to this thesis, as it speaks to how pre-service teachers, and educators, in general, can begin considering how their students can learn with the technologies they use on a daily basis. Kellner and Share (2019) examine this aspect in an American context, discussing the UCLA teacher education program, where current teachers in master’s programs enrolled in a critical media literacy course use an array of technologies to teach their students the principles of critical media literacy, in relation to other subjects (p. 63). The authors further describe current teacher students’ use of social media to create lessons on critical media literacy, explaining that many “bring a mixture of prior knowledge, skills, and attitudes about technology, media, and especially video games” (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 74). While this is an important area of critical media literacy research, little has been done to determine whether Canadian pre-service

teachers are equipped with the necessary resources to educate their students on the subject through various social media and digital technologies. Hence, the first interrelated sub-question that informs this thesis (What skills and tools do they need to effectively teach their future students about critical media literacy?), attempts to gain an idea of how undergraduate programs can offer adequate support to Bachelor of Education students as they become teachers.

On the other hand, Gkiolmas and Chalkidis (2019) contrast the benefits of critical media literacy and scientific literacy education, concluding that both “are extremely helpful for one another, based always on the theory and praxis of critical pedagogy in education” (pp. 225-26). In addition, Lacković (2020) explores how critical media literacy can be taught by analyzing digital images, finding that a “production-signification-consumption (PSC) method” to analyze images “[contributes] to knowledge in the fields of critical media literacy, teaching-learning and research in higher education” (p. 459). Exploring different ways to teach critical media literacy, Masur et al. (2021) inquire whether critical media literacy education can “promote more privacy-aware behaviour” on social media platforms (p. 2). The authors conclude that “deliberate social media skills can negatively predict self-disclosure intentions and potentially moderate the effect of the collective norm on self-disclosure intentions” (Masur et al., 2021, p. 16). In this sense, the use of various media and technologies to teach about critical media literacy emphasizes how it can be fused into other subjects, such as those in the related fields of science and technology (Gkiolmas & Chalkidis, 2019; Lacković, 2020), to support a deeper understanding of the interwoven nature of different disciplines.

Moreover, Sohoni (2019) discusses the potential for students to apply the knowledge they have learned informally, online, to their academic endeavours and vice versa, creating a project called “the social media project,” to illustrate both types of knowledge (pp. 390, 392). The author

outlines that this project “is meant to create a bridge between the knowledge students learn in class and the messages they receive on social media” (Sohoni, 2019, p. 392). Through “the social media project,” as Sohoni (2019) discusses, “students also gain experience in different technologies with which they may not have had previous experience (e.g., software for video editing, website building software, etc.)” (p. 392). In accordance with Sohoni’s (2019) work, Gainer (2010) discusses how video creation can foster a deeper awareness in students’ understanding of how the media operates (p. 365). Providing a location-specific example, Gainer (2010) states that “In British Columbia, Canada, students who have been marginalized in traditional schooling turn the lens on their own experiences, creating autobiographic multimodal texts” (p. 365). Both Sohoni’s (2019) “social media project” and Gainer’s (2010) research on video creation relate to the diverse ways of teaching and learning about critical media literacy, as engaging with diverse technologies enables new learning experiences for students. More significantly, Sohoni (2019) articulates that “The social media assignment adjusts to the world in which students live, a world in which social media plays a prominent role in how they gather information, and it empowers them to engage more meaningfully within this context” (p. 404). This is an important point when thinking about the unique ways that students can learn about critical media literacy, as it bears similarities to the use of non-traditional teaching methods, including games and videos that students can create, ultimately honing their creative skills alongside their academic and personal development. As Kellner and Share (2005, 2007, 2019) imply, learning how to work with new technologies can help students expand their critical media literacy skills, as they contemplate the intentions of these technologies and their affordances to enhance users’ digital experiences.

The Necessity of Critical Media Literacy Training for Pre-service Teachers

Although the various benefits of critical media literacy have been thoroughly investigated, as demonstrated in former literature in the field, a remaining underexplored area is pre-service teachers' training on and preparedness to teach the subject in elementary and secondary classrooms. For this reason, this thesis will explore how Ontario pre-service teachers perceive of critical media literacy, while gaining their perspectives on creative forms of pedagogy that include remixed, student-created board games.

Nonetheless, some scholars have called attention to the need for additional media literacy education for pre-service teachers. When discussing critical *race* media literacy, Degand (2020) writes: "The need for pre-service and in-service teacher programs that incorporate CRML and arts-based inquiry into their curricula is especially urgent today" (p. 112). In a similar vein, Kellner and Share (2019) express that "In Canada, where media literacy is mandatory in every grade from 1-12, most new teachers are not receiving media literacy training in their pre-service programs" (p. 62). As the authors suggest, there is a demand for critical media literacy training for Canadian pre-service teachers, and a lack of knowledge leads to students not learning about the subject, let alone in transformative or in-depth ways (Degand, 2020; Kellner & Share, 2019).

Additionally, Butler (2019) discusses the consistent increase in media use amongst youth, drawing comparisons between how parents and guardians from varied social classes may not realize potential issues stemming from their children's interactions with media (p. 155). The author expresses that "Education in critical media literacy needs to begin with teachers, preferably during their formal education" (Butler, 2019, p. 157). As Butler (2019) implies the advantages of effectively teaching critical media literacy, using teachers as a starting point, may help students to become more aware of their media use, and encourage them to fruitfully engage with others in the online sphere, as they critically reflect on the material being presented to them

(pp. 157, 159-60). Building on Butler's (2019) work, Cruz and Dorsch (2019) expand on the necessity for critical media literacy to be taught to students at a young age during elementary curricula and stress the importance of prospective educators to also acquaint themselves with the subject (p. 143). The authors describe that endeavours for media literacy education have been primarily focused on in academic institutions in the United States; however, these efforts have not been carried out extensively (Cruz & Dorsch, 2019, p. 145). To this point, Cruz and Dorsch (2019) state that "Higher education institutions must make programmatic change to course offerings and graduation requirements, and must allocate funds and faculty positions for this new academic initiative" (p. 146). In sum, and as demonstrated by the previous literature, an evident gap exists on the importance of training pre-service teachers to engage with the subject of critical media literacy for it to be taught to prospective students meaningful ways, further providing them with knowledge to decipher the interconnected nature of subjects from an array of fields (Butler, 2019; Cruz & Dorsch, 2019; Degand, 2020; Kellner & Share, 2019).

Summary

As this chapter has discussed, critical media literacy can offer students many advantages that extend beyond academics, touching their personal lives to hone lifelong skills, such as those around empathy and critical, holistic thinking (Kellner & Share, 2019; Borba, 2016; Romero Walker, 2021; Yousman, 2019). This chapter began by introducing the topic of critical media literacy, presenting contributions to the field by Kellner and Share (2005, 2007, 2019), which aimed to highlight that critical media literacy is a lifelong practice that encourages individuals to use outside-the-box-thinking to diversify their perspectives and gain a better understanding of the world. More significantly, this literature review made connections to critical media literacy education and the necessity for pre-service teachers to teach the subject to their students in ways

that promote optimal creativity and social change (Butler, 2019; Cruz & Dorsch, 2019; Degand, 2020; Kellner & Share, 2019), such as through remixed, student-created board games. This chapter also explored another branch of critical media literacy education: critical *race* media literacy education, to offer the perspectives of scholars such as Collins (2000), Degand (2020), Hawkman and Shear (2020) and Kellner and Share (2019), illustrating how critical media literacy can be a valuable tool to address the oppression and discrimination faced by various groups. Subsequently, this chapter introduced the idea of moving towards a plurality of media *literacies*, which, fundamentally, explores ways to make the topic more applicable and meaningful to individuals' lived experiences for deeper engagement, specifically with respect to intersectionality, as outlined by Crenshaw (1989, 1991) and Collins and Bilge (2016).

Furthermore, this literature review discussed the connections between empathy and critical media literacy, as emphasized by Borba (2016) and Kellner and Share (2019), to provide a deeper understanding of how it may benefit students on a personal level. The critical media literacy scholarship that was included in this literature review was selected to, first, provide an overview and understanding of subject, second, highlight the academic and personal advantages it enables for students, and third, to explore the methods used in former studies conducted on critical media literacy. More importantly, the chosen literature demonstrated the need for the research that informs this thesis: considering pre-service teachers' knowledge and perspectives on critical media literacy and remixed, student-created board games to teach the subject. The selected scholarship on game studies and simulated versions of Monopoly to teach an array of topics intended to call attention to the benefits of games as forms of pedagogy (Ansoms & Geenen, 2012; Fisher, 2008; Griffin & Jackson, 2011; Jessup, 2001; Paino & Chin, 2011; Waren, 2011). This section of the literature review further provided rationale for the usefulness of games

in classrooms and elaborated on what games are (Gee, 2003; Kafai & Burke, 2015; Mayer, 2014). This chapter also examined how social media and diverse technologies could be used to teach students critical media literacy skills. Here, the work of Kellner and Share (2019), Gkiolmas and Chalkidis (2019), Lacković (2020), Masur et al. (2021), Sohoni (2019), and Gainer (2010) was drawn on to exemplify how social media and digital technologies could enable creativity in students, ultimately, contributing to the development of their critical media literacy skills. To conclude, this literature review has discussed the domains of critical media literacy that have already been researched, emphasizing an area that has yet to be explored in depth. The following chapter, which discusses the methodology, will underscore how I designed a study to address the aforementioned gap in the literature.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the methodology and procedures used to carry out the study. The study design, explained in greater detail throughout this chapter, was inspired by an upper-year course that I took during my undergraduate degree, which explored critical media literacy, intersectional theory, and how games, such as remixed versions of Monopoly, could be used as forms of pedagogy. In this thesis, I extend my undergraduate project by specifically exploring the knowledge and viewpoints of York University pre-service teachers on critical media literacy, and the prospect of educating students on the subject through their own creation of remixed board games. Gathering the opinions of pre-service teachers and using their experiences as a starting point to expand critical media literacy efforts in Ontario classrooms is useful for the following reasons: first, it provides an understanding of the resources and tools they require to effectively educate students on the subject, and second, it creates a space for them to reflect on what they have learned in their formal education about critical media literacy and share how they intend to teach it. To highlight this notion, Butler (2019) writes:

If we continue to put media literacy in classrooms without teacher training, it will continue to swirl in confusion. Those training to be teachers deserve at least one comprehensive course (ideally, more than one) grounded in the theories and practices of critical media literacy. (p. 165)

Consequently, it is of value to consider the perspectives of pre-service teachers, learning about their experiences with critical media literacy to address gaps in their knowledge and resources. Simultaneously, it is of significant importance to recognize that critical media literacy is a dynamic subject, and it is, therefore, inadequate to assume that teacher candidates possess the necessary

knowledge and skills to educate prospective students on it. Hence, reflecting on pre-service teachers' viewpoints is a foundational step in determining how critical media literacy can be taught to students in unique and engaging ways, while allowing prospective educators to build their experience and knowledge of the subject.

Throughout the chapter, after providing some more details about the starting point from which my interest on critical media literacy education was derived, I move on to describe my study design and approach to data analysis.

Motivations for the Study

When completing my undergraduate degree in communication studies at York University, during the summer of 2020, I took a course titled Mediations of Identity (COMN 4725) with Dr. Stephen Gennaro. One of the assignments in this course asked students to choose a theme from a specified list and create a unique Monopoly board to highlight the principles of intersectional theory. Crenshaw (1991), who originally coined the term, indicates that intersectionality serves as a way to explore the unique differences that arise from lived experiences, and constructively reflect on those differences to discern how they pose advantages or disadvantages to individuals (p. 1299). However, in this assignment, I employed the adaptations of Collins and Bilge (2016) in their text *Intersectionality*, who provide a general explanation of intersectional theory, describing that it prompts individuals to consider how multiple, converging factors work together to create unique experiences for others and shape their lives (p. 11). Subsequently, I chose to design “Hip Hopopoly” (see Appendix B), where I selected twenty-two rappers from diverse backgrounds, and altered the rules of traditional Monopoly to reflect, albeit on a small scale, how these rappers' lived experiences, as indicated through their unique lyrics, could be better understood by drawing on the principles of intersectional theory. To create this remixed, digital Monopoly board, I used Canva,

a free graphic design application. As I completed this assignment, I critically reflected on the potential for games to be used as forms of pedagogy to creatively teach students about critical media literacy in ways that allow them to use their imagination as part of the educational, meaning-making process.

Through my creation of “Hip Hop-opoly,” I saw many benefits, including students developing their creative skills, while also having fun learning about new topics in unique ways. These experiences constructing a remixed Monopoly game, combined with my growing interest in critical media literacies, inspired the proposed research described herein. In *Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection & the Language of Human Experience*, Brown (2021) offers tangible explanations of common human emotions. When discussing the feeling of curiosity, Brown (2021) states the following:

Curiosity is recognizing a gap in our knowledge about something that interests us, and becoming emotionally and cognitively invested in closing that gap through exploration and learning. Curiosity often starts with interest and can range from mild curiosity to passionate investigation. (p. 64)

Brown’s (2021) explanation of curiosity provides an accurate description of what I felt as I worked this assignment and learned more about critical media literacy through Dr. Gennaro’s course.

When I began to think about potential research topics for this thesis, I initially aspired to work with sixth-grade students in an elementary school setting, where I first initiated a three-day workshop on critical media to briefly introduce them to the subject. The next step of this research would have included a creative element, where students chose a board game of their liking and reworked the rules to demonstrate their current understandings of critical media literacy. The

final step of this research would have incorporated a series of one-on-one, semi structured interviews with the participants to gain an understanding of their experiences with creating remixed board games to highlight the principles of critical media literacy. However, due to the large scope of this research, the additional ethics required by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) to work with minors, and the time restraints, due to this being master's level thesis, based on the recommendations of my supervisor, I decided to alter my population to pre-service teachers, to gain an understanding of their experiences and opinions as budding educators.

Study Design

The primary methodology used for this thesis was one-on-one, semi structured interviews that were conducted over Zoom with ten participants. Interviews were conducted virtually, in light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, and to allow for maximum convenience on the participants' and researcher's end. The interviews were not expected to exceed the specified forty-five-minute time frame (see Appendices C and D for the informed consent form and recruitment flyer, respectively). Generally, the one-on-one interviews encouraged more in-depth expression and articulation from participants, as they recounted their experiences with and knowledge of critical media literacy through their progression in York University's Bachelor of Education (BEd) program. The semi structured nature of the interviews, in particular, allowed for a more candid discussion between the participants and I, where I was able to follow up on their initial responses, asking relevant supplementary questions. Overall, this structure appeared to establish a level of comfort between the participants and I, since, through the guiding interview questions, there was a sense of openness and reflectiveness in each of these individuals' responses. Supporting this viewpoint, Brinkmann (2018) states that "it is certainly possible to provide a conversational structure that is flexible enough for interviewees to be able to raise

questions and concerns in their own words and from their own perspectives” (p. 579). More significantly, Brinkmann (2018) explains that through semi structured interviews, participants have a greater degree of freedom, which, in turn, helps the researcher navigate their study and findings in relevant and unique ways (p. 579).

The sample for this study included ten undergraduate students in their final year of the BEd program at York University in Toronto, Ontario. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, current literature in the field of critical media literacy has not yet explored the knowledge and experiences of Canadian pre-service teachers with critical media literacy. Therefore, recruiting BEd students allowed for insight into how teacher candidates understood and engaged with the principles of critical media literacy, and how they thought about it in relation to other subjects, particularly, those in their areas of expertise. This specific population was selected, as it was presumed that teacher candidates would be able to offer unique perspectives on learning, differing from those of current teachers and elementary and secondary students. Based on a study by Icen (2020), the impacts of “activity-based media education on students’ critical media literacy levels” were explored (p. 631). The sample for this study included eighteen grade five students from Istanbul (Icen, 2020, p. 632). Since these fifth-grade students demonstrated critical media literacy skills (Icen, 2020, p. 640), it was presumed that the ten teacher candidate participants in this study would likely be able to offer a different perspective on their understandings of critical media literacy, and viable methods of offering such education to Ontario students. Overall, the inclusion of BEd students in this study aspired to produce different findings in how they perceived of and understood critical media literacy, thereby diversifying, and enhancing current literature in the field.

Further, it was expected that recruiting BEd students would allow for insight into teacher candidates' viewpoints on critical media literacy and their thoughts on using board games to teach the subject to future students. As highlighted in the literature review, previous studies that have researched the effects of remixed board games to teach about various social injustices have included samples comprised of university students at the undergraduate and graduate levels (Ansoms & Geenen, 2012; Fisher, 2008; Jessup, 2001). Thus, it was believed that the BEd students in this study would engage in further conversation about the effectiveness and potential barriers of employing remixed board games to teach critical media literacy, based on their current experiences in classroom settings.

As explored in the second chapter, the most common methods used for research conducted in the field of critical media literacy were qualitative in nature and included content analysis (Anyiwo et al., 2021), rhetorical analysis (Elmore & Coleman, 2019), focus groups, interviews and ethnographic films (Leurs et al., 2018), textual analysis (McArthur, 2019), narrative research (Saunders et al., 2017), and surveys (Yousman, 2019). As I reflected on these diversified qualitative methods, I decided that it would be advantageous to engage participants in one-on-one, semi structured interviews to learn about their experiences as teacher candidates on a whole. One particularly valuable aspect of semi structured interviews is their ability to facilitate spaces of reflection about specified interview questions for both the researcher and participants (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 579). When discussing semi structured interviews in greater detail, Brinkmann (2018) explains that "compared to more unstructured interviews, the interviewer has a greater say in focusing the conversation on issues that he or she deems important in relation to the research project" (p. 579). As a result, engaging with this methodology allowed me, as the primary investigator, to present a clear set of guiding questions

to my participants, yet avoid the potential of limiting their responses, allowing them to think holistically about their experiences with critical media literacy and teaching thus far.

In a study conducted by Leurs et al. (2018) on the benefits of critical media literacy to increase the agency of migrant youth, both extensive and casual interviews were used to collect data (p. 427). The authors implied that through extensive interviews with participants, the students were able to discuss their experiences with media in more meaningful ways (Leurs et al., 2018, p. 443-44). The decision to use one-on-one, semi structured interviews in this research slightly deviates from the various types of interviews used in previous studies, such as the one conducted by Leurs et al. (2018). However, based on the finalized population and the online nature of the interviews, I felt that semi structured interviews with each of the participants would provide me with the greatest clarity to address the primary, secondary, and sub-research questions that guide this thesis, as I sought to understand the experiences of pre-service teachers as prospective educators in the process of completing their Bachelor of Education degrees.

Recruitment

York University's Office of Research Ethics provided ethics clearance on November 23, 2022. After receiving clearance, the recruitment process commenced in an online format. During this process, I sent an email out to York University's Student Services for the Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Arts Educational Studies programs. After being notified that I should contact the Faculty of Education Students' Association, I forwarded my recruitment email and flyer (see Appendices D and E for the recruitment flyer and recruitment email, respectively) to the appropriate email address. After receiving a response from the President of the Faculty of Education Students' Association, I was informed that the details of my study would be shared with the current BEd students.

During the first few weeks of December 2022, I received emails from over twenty interested participants. However, all of the participants did not fit within the original population approved by the Office of Research Ethics, as some of them were not in their final year of study in York University's BEd program. Nonetheless, I began conducting interviews with participants who fit the approved population (BEd students in their final year of study) on December 1, 2022. Throughout the recruitment process, I initially planned to interview ten to fifteen undergraduate students using snowball recruitment techniques. With each interview that was conducted, I concluded by asking that if the current participants knew any other colleagues that fit within the study's population who would be interested in participating, they direct them to my study. By January 24, 2023, I had conducted ten interviews with BEd students in their final year of study. These ten participants will be described in greater detail later in the chapter, with pseudonyms in use to protect their privacy and ensure that they remain anonymous.

Data Collection

The data collected was qualitative, deriving from the one-on-one interviews with participants. Data was collected from the responses that participants provided to each of the eight guiding interview questions (see Appendix A). These guiding questions intended to discover the ten pre-service teachers' perspectives on critical media literacy and their opinions on the pedagogical feasibility of using board games in classrooms to teach the subject.

Before participating in the study, written consent was obtained by the participants (see Appendix C for the informed consent form). The audio from each of the interviews were recorded and transcribed using the transcription feature on the Zoom platform. In addition, to assist with the transcription process, the audio from the ten one-on-one interviews were recorded and the live transcription feature for each of the interviews was turned on. These ten transcripts

were generated and saved. Before each interview began, I reminded participants that, as indicated in the informed consent form, only the audio portion of the interviews would be recorded. I informed each participant that if they chose to keep their video on during the Zoom interview, I would use the Apple Voice Memos app on my iPhone 12 Pro Max to record the audio portion of the interview. Since most of the ten participants chose to keep their videos on, indicating that it made them feel as though they were having tangible conversations, audio recordings of these interviews were performed. However, several participants chose to turn their video off, and these interviews were recorded over Zoom instead of through the Apple Voice Memos app.

Prior to engaging in the data analysis phase, I reviewed and edited the transcripts for accuracy to ensure that the recorded text corresponded with the answers provided by participants. After data was collected, the analysis was completed in the following order: recording the data onto a Microsoft Word document, manually performing two rounds of manual qualitative coding on the data to decipher preliminary emergent codes, recurring themes, and patterns, and examining how those emerging themes illustrated meaningful connections.

More importantly, throughout the study, a needs-based assessment was carried out on the tools and resources participants require to be able to teach critical media literacy to prospective students. Although each of the interview questions generally spoke to participants' knowledge and thoughts on critical media literacy, two questions in particular, being questions three (If you had unlimited time and resources, how would you teach your future students about media literacy?) and five (What tools do you wish you would have had to prepare you to teach future students about critical media literacy?) specifically addressed this inquiry into the potential resources that were deemed a necessity for teacher candidates.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data that originated from the ten interviews through an application of manual qualitative coding. Throughout the data analysis stage, I drew on the work of Saldaña (2009) in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Research*. I coded the data thematically, first seeking out preliminary codes, a final code, and general themes. The first round of manual qualitative coding was done through Microsoft Word. I chose to use Microsoft Word as opposed to a qualitative coding software suite such as NVivo, as Saldaña (2009) explains that for beginners, coding is often made easier when researchers are able to physically interpret and engage with the data, often in print-based formats, which essentially allows for “more control over and ownership of the work” (p. 32). The responses from participants, with their pseudonyms in use, were copied onto a Microsoft Word document along with follow-up correspondences and their responses. During this first round of manual qualitative coding, I used a colour-coding system to highlight participants’ responses that were either similar in nature or distinct from the others. Altogether, I recognized many similarities throughout each of the ten participants’ responses and began to think about these responses in relation to the study’s primary, secondary, and sub-research questions.

Following the best practices laid out by Saldaña (2009), I conducted a second round of coding. This time, I printed out the participants’ responses, again, with their pseudonyms in place, to each of the guiding interview questions. When discussing the prevalence of multiple rounds of coding, Saldaña (2009) writes that “Qualitative inquiry demands meticulous attention to language and deep reflection on the emergent patterns and meanings of human experience” (p. 21). This illustrates that each round of coding allows the researcher to decipher trends that they may not have seen during their preliminary data analysis (Saldaña, 2009, p. 21). Indeed, I found

this to be the case, as through the second round of coding, with the physical printout of responses in hand, I was able to decipher alternate codes and themes that I had not observed during the first review. Throughout this round, I made notes on the printout about how the participants' responses aligned with the primary, secondary, and sub-research questions laid out in this thesis. Overall, I was able to better interpret how each of the research questions were addressed, making tangible connections between the responses from each participant, which, as Saldaña (2009) explains, is greater enabled by materially engaging with the data through paper and pen (p. 32).

Getting to Know the Participants

Table 1 provides a summary of the participants' demographic information. The names included are the pseudonyms for each participant. The participants' ages, level of study in York University's Bachelor of Education program and area of teaching expertise are also listed. However, four of the ten participants had not confirmed their area(s) of teaching specialization during the initial one-on-one interviews. To gather this information, I re-engaged with each of them by email on May 3, 2023.

As indicated in Table 1, participants ranged from twenty-three to thirty-seven years of age. The ten participants also possessed diverse areas of teaching specialization, which encompassed physical education, science and mathematics, English, general social sciences, Indigenous studies, kindergarten, law, geography, history and French. Interacting with participants who regularly engaged with more analytical types of knowledge, such as science and mathematics, in addition to others who were well versed in the fields of social sciences and humanities, ultimately contributed to the rich diversity in their responses to the guiding interview questions. Returning to intersectionality, Crenshaw's (1989) conceptualization of the term and Collins and Bilge's (2016) adaptations, can be used to demonstrate, in part, how expertise in

various subject areas, coupled with educational training to date, some of which were shared with me, fostered an intersectional understanding of critical media literacy for the participants. I, however, recognize that intersectional theory grapples with personal identity factors, some of which include race, gender, socioeconomic status, and class (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Collins & Bilge, 2016). These specific details were not obtained from participants, as I did not specify that I would be collecting this type of demographic information in the documents submitted to York University's Office of Research Ethics or in the informed consent form (see Appendix C) that was disseminated to each individual. As a result, although it was not possible to learn the intricate details of each participant's lived experiences, and how those experiences have shaped them personally, as individuals, and professionally, as prospective educators, listening to how they approached the art of teaching was inevitably entwined in a holistic approach that rooted from individual and scholarly experiences, as they discussed their knowledge of critical media literacy.

Table 1

Table Indicating Participants' Pseudonyms, Age, Year of Study and Teaching Specialization

Pseudonym	Age	Year of Study in York University's BEd Program	Area(s) of Teaching Specialization
Michael	37	Final year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical education
Adam	32	Final year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science • Mathematics
Kyle	26	Final year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English
Ethan	24	Final year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical education • General social sciences

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous studies
Raquel	23	Final year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English
Noah	36	Final year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten
Taylor	23	Final year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General social sciences • Law
Alana	27	Final year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geography • General social sciences
Stephanie	23	Final year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History • English
Kennedy	23	Final year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French

Summary

This chapter intended to build on the literature review, exploring how I designed a study that addressed evident gaps in the previous scholarship around the experiences of and knowledge held by pre-service teachers on the topic of critical media literacy. The motivations for this study were discussed in detail, providing context for my choice to conduct research in the realm of critical media literacy pedagogy. More importantly, this chapter discussed the main methodology used for the collection of data: one-on-one, semi structured interviews with ten participants. This chapter recounted that ten interviews were conducted over Zoom from December 1, 2022, to January 24, 2023. Rationale was also provided for why York University BEd students in their final year of the program were selected for this study. An overview of the recruitment process was detailed, demonstrating how the ten participants were selected. This chapter further outlined the data analysis procedure, explaining how I engaged with manual qualitative coding to

interpret the data and address the primary, secondary, and sub-research questions laid out in this thesis. Lastly, participants were introduced using their pseudonyms, to provide details about their unique areas of teaching expertise, and how they approached the topic of critical media literacy based on a combination of personal and professional experiences. The following chapter will present the results of the study, placing it alongside the existing research on critical media literacy and game studies, as introduced in the second chapter, to illustrate how this study addresses some of the existing gaps in critical media literacy research.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis & Results: Assessing Teacher Candidates' Attitudes and Knowledge on Critical Media Literacy Education

Introduction

This fourth chapter intends to present the results of the study and provide a detailed description of the codes, themes and patterns that lead to major findings. This chapter builds on the previous chapters, as it contributes unique findings to the existing research on critical media literacy pedagogy and game studies, specifically addressing the outlined gap in chapter two regarding pre-service teachers' knowledge of and experiences with critical media literacy. In addition, this chapter expands on the methods discussed in the previous chapter, as it explains how an analysis of the data through manual qualitative coding enabled the production of a clear and distinct set of results that addressed the primary, secondary, and sub-research questions that inform this thesis.

Overview of Data Analysis: First Round of Qualitative Coding

As briefly touched upon in the previous chapter on the study's methodology, the interview data was analyzed through two rounds of manual qualitative coding. The first round of coding was meant to get a feel of the participants' responses to decipher any emerging patterns and distinctions. In the following sections of this chapter, samples of some of the participants' responses (with their pseudonyms in use), will be introduced to discern how they have addressed the research questions.

To begin the data analysis process, I reviewed each of the participants' responses to the eight guiding interview questions and sorted them into three categories: preliminary codes, final code, and emerging theme, as per Saldaña's (2009) suggestions. By first deciphering preliminary codes, I was able to gain a broad picture as to how responses to each of the guiding interview

question began to shape the principal observations. Accordingly, Table 2 introduces the preliminary emergent codes that derived from each of the guiding interview questions. Table 2 also offers a description of the codes and sample quotes from participants to provide greater context and illustrate how the code was generated.

Table 2

Table Indicating Preliminary Codes, Descriptions and Supporting Quotes from Participants

Code	Description of Code	Sample Participant Quote(s)
Media literacy course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased learning about media • Familiarity with topic • Taught in BEd program 	<p>“We actually took a new media course, which I thought was fantastic. It opened my eyes to the kind of resources that are out there to help like teaching with digital tools and in it there was a unit or a section of media literacy.” – Michael</p>
Critical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deeply reflecting on information • Deciphering information received during leisure and academic periods • Interpreting messages • Pondering how social media shapes one’s life 	<p>“I would say that I have learned the importance of kind of bringing criticality into the classroom in terms of dissecting not only our own teaching but also the things that the students bring into the classroom, and just having and giving them that ability to like think critically about stuff. So, a big part of that obviously involves media, because a lot of you know, external sources of information are gonna be captured initially or primarily through the media.” – Adam</p>
Unique information consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse ways of learning • Different ways of engaging with materials 	<p>“I think what I've learned about media literacy is that people have different ways of taking in information. So, you have your more auditory learners, your more visual learners, and again, some people, they understand information when it's delivered through different mediums. So, again, through symbolism, through explicit text or things being stated very bluntly or through metaphors. So, I think when it comes to media literacy, it has to do with a variety of ways of delivering messages, so that it appeals to the different learning styles of students. So that they're able to obtain the same understanding or the same message that you're trying to convey to everybody.” – Taylor</p>

Importance of media literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant topic • Helps people with their media experiences • Engaging people with media • Promotes optimal media use 	<p>“I think that a lot of courses now in the program speaking about, you know, just even media literacy in general has been just kind of like a push for it. So, we’ve had classes that are just about, you know, media literacy and how we can kind of bring different modes of media into our classrooms and kind of just expand the way we teach. So, expanding assignment, you know expectations, and communicating lessons to students who don't maybe learn in a way that's just reading and writing.” – Stephanie</p>
Five Ws of media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is behind the media? • Organizations and individuals that create messages • Who media is intended for 	<p>“Just like understanding not only who wrote the article, but who owns the company that the person wrote the article for, what is their point of view? Where are they aligned politically, delving deeper into the story that they covered? Even if it's a non-opinion, piece, what their lived experiences are, you know, understanding again, understanding the difference between opinion facts, and understanding the journalistic process, in terms like looking at it from a holistic point of view. Instead of oh, you know the Internet said this, so it must be true. Well, hold on a second, where those sources coming from? Where are those sources’ sources? Who's benefiting from this?” – Michael</p>
Who benefits from media?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups that media pieces advantage • Groups that media pieces disadvantage 	<p>“I think of it as being able to read between the lines when it comes to media. So, not just like being able to read the article immediately presented to you, but being able to tell, like where is the position of the articles’ writer coming from? And what is the position they're trying to get you to kind of be in? You know, who owns the place that the article is being published?” – Kyle</p>
Understanding, interacting with, and learning from media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversely interpreting media • Broadly engaging with media • How media shapes people 	<p>“I think of it as like a way of understanding media from different lenses. So, in contrast to what they taught us in the class, which looked at it more of like from the outside, almost as if it exists outside of us, but like kind of focusing only as a tool. But I think of it more of like encompassing what goes, what's involved in media, and how it influences us. And how we can interact with or learn from it.” – Ethan</p>

Multiple literacies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media pieces are diverse • Print media • Digital media • New media technologies • Critically assessing media artifacts 	<p>“I think of gaining a better understanding of the different forms of media and how they're used to communicate, and, in fact, how they can be used to miscommunicate as well, and also just how students can be able to, you know, make their own different forms of media as well beyond.” – Alana</p>
Uncovering misinformation and disinformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing media bias • Intentions of biased media • Dissecting media to understand underlying goals 	<p>“One thing that we did do in one of our classes was we had to take a piece of media and dissect it. And so, I think in a world where I had like, an infinite amount of time, I would probably build a culminating project around media literacy. You know, looking at the sciences, for instance, a great example would be, find a new story about broccoli curing cancer, or this drug is going to cure something, or there's a new superfood. And then having them kind of dissect that and then have it like, give them some time on their own, but also give them a lot of time in class, because you kind of do want to have an idea of how they're dissecting things.” – Adam</p>
Creative teaching methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-traditional learning • Escape rooms • Workshops • Visualization 	<p>“I really like to get creative, I think, with the grade eights, just because I know that curriculum the best. I did a unit on media literacy, and we looked at like a Johnny Depp case that was going on. Not necessarily the facts of the case, but just about how media portrays that. So, if I had unlimited time and resources, I would do a lot more with that, I would pull different examples. I would let the kids recreate their own media, or I would make it a lot more hands-on and interactive because I just didn't have a lot of time to create this outside of practicum, school, everything.” – Kennedy</p>
Working in media-related fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with media • Social media • Campaigning 	<p>“For sure, so through work, I've definitely used media in my work, just because a lot of the work I did was during the pandemic in the past couple of years, so a lot of the jobs I had were remote, so even if it was like teaching something or working, the media definitely played a role in that, and also just experiencing how to use it.” – Ethan</p>

<p>Learning through reading news stories and non-fiction texts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading books • Reading news stories • Creating media such as movies and websites 	<p>“Well, I don’t know if I would contextualize it as media literacy, but I like to read about stories around the world. Sometimes, I’ll just read stories about Canada, but written from like the Guardian or the BBC, or something, and I just notice that they’re written differently. Now with social media, I’ve seen a lot of stories with misleading headlines. Guess, kind of thinking along those lines, like sports is a big one. Like, I’ll watch a sporting event and then I’ll read a story about it, and I’m like, that’s not how I would have captured it, and then that kind of gets me thinking, okay, like, what is this person, who is the person writing this, and stuff like that. So, I would say it wasn’t something that was very formalized in terms of oh, this is me dissecting something, but it was me kind of just lining up my experience with the experience of whatever I was consuming and having two different perspectives of it.” – Adam</p>
<p>Using critical media literacy in classroom placements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching lessons on media • Learning in classroom contexts • Teaching in classroom environments 	<p>“A long-term occasional position [LTO]. So, a teacher had gone on mat leave, and so I took over her class for the rest of the school year. It was 2 months, but that’s where I did the Johnny Depp case. That’s where I did a lot of those activities where I was kind of in charge of the class. It’s a little harder when you have someone else’s class, cause they don’t necessarily want you to do certain things. But aside from that, I think, trying to think of clubs. I’ve done like art clubs with the kids, like I ran an art club at my LTO in in the grade 8 school that I was working at. So, we looked a lot at media pieces there, because it’s visual arts, and we made posters for the school. We did a lot of like raising awareness through media literacy and the arts in general. My second school is visual art. So, I think that’s where it comes from as well. And then outside of teaching, I mean, social media. I’m an avid TikToker. I love TikTok. So, I’m constantly being fed media literacy through just my day-to-day activities.” – Kennedy</p>

Continued access to technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using Chromebooks and laptops • Augmented student learning 	<p>“So, I would say having access to Chromebooks and laptops. Now I know this is something that some schools have, but the school that I'm working in right now, we're in a very low-income neighbourhood.”– Noah</p> <p>“Honestly, I would say that's [tablets] about the only resource you would really need or at least I can think of off the top of my head right now. Because the whole point is them being able to research on their own. And so, if I needed any kind of specialty equipment, or any special device to do that, it would defeat the purpose. I feel like the goal, ultimately is it's about the everyday man or woman, the common person being able to use the resources they would naturally have at hand to be able to do this. So, they literally just need a phone or a laptop to use Google, and the willingness to do it.” – Kyle</p>
Resources to teach critical media literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to teach critical media literacy • More emphasis on subject in BEd program • Hands-on approach • Access to variety of resources 	<p>“I wish that there were more resources, or like in the program, for example, there could have been a full course about it, or it could have been integrated better.” – Raquel</p> <p>“And that idea of having the resources, because even now, you know, we have a class that talks about one website that you can use, or one tool that you can use. But maybe even something so simple as giving students access to all these things, because, realistically, a lot of these things cost money as well. So, why not give it to students while they're learning about these things? Access to all of these websites and tools and resources. Let them kind of explore it more, and then you know what, realistically, I understand that they can't give me access for life. But within my schooling, when it's my job to learn about it, you know, give me the access, and then afterwards, if this is something that I really found beneficial for learning, then maybe I'll buy into it or learn about it more or kind of see what's similar out there. But without that access to it, it's kind of hard to imagine how we would use it in our own classrooms.” – Stephanie</p>

<p>Unleashing creative potential through diverse learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New ideas • Creative development in students • Enjoyable learning • Academic and interpersonal student development 	<p>“Oh, I absolutely do, just because I think with the pandemic, specifically, I’ve seen in my work experience, in my teaching experience, that there’s certain skills that are just underdeveloped when it comes to just proper study habits. Like, I had a student ask me, “Miss I don't know how to study for a test, what would you recommend?” And I said, “Oh, have you used index cards?” And they didn't even know what I was talking about, like they've never heard of index cards. They didn't even know like where to get them or that it they existed. So, I think, it's just, they have trouble retaining the information. So, when you deliver it in a way where it really stands out, where it's more memorable, or when it's in a way that is different from like just the mainstream way of teaching, you appeal to different ways of communication that students didn't even know they needed. So, I think it just taps into like, addressing those needs that students aren't able to recognize that they have, because again, the component of self-reflection and advocacy for oneself and one's needs have been so hindered by the pandemic.” – Taylor</p>
---	---	---

<p>Board games are an engaging and valuable activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board games are interactive • Board games enable learning amongst peers • Board games can help students with different learning abilities • Board games can help students retain academic concepts 	<p>“Yeah, for sure. I think it also really helps when we like, we look at what the board game needs to have in order for me to evaluate them. Because a lot of them might get carried away like, “let's make it pretty, let's make it this.” And I said, “Yes, of course we're gonna want to make ourselves proud and make a nice board game, but like, what do we need to include, like what are non-negotiables?” And like we would sit there as a class and figure that out together, because I was still learning. It was my first time having my own class, so I was like, okay, I'm all alone, you know. I'm the only French immersion teacher in the school for that grade level. So, I don't really have colleagues necessarily to like, be like, what are you guys doing in your class? So, I think that the board games and just any type of like game or a project that's not necessarily a test. I made them do Facebook templates, where they picked important people from history for the grade eights, and they made a contemporary Facebook profile for them on Google slides. They loved it because they were like, okay, what are their top 3 friends like, who would they have in their top friends category? It was just, I could see how much it benefited them.” – Kennedy</p>
<p>Lack of resources to teach with games</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty with how to teach students through board games • Need for workshops or lessons in BEd program • How can board games be constructed? 	<p>“I'm not opposed to it, but I'm gonna be honest, I didn't play board games really when I was growing up, so I'm not familiar with the vast majority of them. Like, I know of Monopoly, and I've played Monopoly like once, but I would not be opposed to it. I would just personally struggle to implement them. I would need, you know, if there was a course offered about how to do that or a workshop in my teaching career that was like, you know, take this workshop, and we'll teach you how to use board games and teaching critical media. I 100%, would take it.” – Kyle</p>
<p>Board games can introduce new perspectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced student creativity • Learning through different styles • Visual learning 	<p>“I think it would. I think a big challenge with teaching is translating student creativity, which can be very, what's the word, it's very, it's not very focused. It's a lot of chaotic energy. Just something a lot of teachers actually want is for students to</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kinaesthetic learning • Auditory learning • Games that promote critical thinking 	<p>be engaged. But student engagement with something that is new is often very chaotic and uncontrolled. And it's got a ton of potential, but for them doing that, I think I would have to set some parameters and kind of help them design a project that is limited enough in scope that they can actually get it done and seen through to completion and not just stay at like a creative stage, but an execution stage, a testing stage. But I would love for them to do that, but I would help them kind of figure out, okay, well, what's the end game here, what's the timeline here, hopefully without stifling that creativity.” – Adam</p> <p>“Yeah, no, absolutely. There’s kind of a place for each learner in that. And I think it's also sometimes really great for students to interact with those other types of learners. So, although, yes, we create these diverse and inclusive classrooms, so that each individual student can, you know, thrive in their own learning style. I think that creating, let's say, a small group to create a board game and having each of those learners in a space working together. It's so beneficial for other students because they have a chance to do what they're comfortable with and do what they know. But then also they're seeing right in front of them how different modes work so well together, and maybe, I don't know, maybe they adapt a different style of learning, or maybe they, you know, try something they haven't before. So, I think that it works for the individual, and it creates an opportunity for them to thrive academically because their comfort level is there, and they're doing what they're good at. But also, it shows them what else there is, right, showing them what other styles of learning can be beneficial, and how they can kind of adapt and work together.” – Stephanie</p>
--	--	--

Assigning Themes to the Preliminary Emergent Codes

Based on the multiple preliminary emergent codes listed in Table 2, I came up with eight different themes that specifically addressed each of the guiding interview questions. These themes were derived by engaging with the preliminary emergent codes, coupled with revisiting the raw interview transcripts and making note of relevant participant quotes. As discussed in the previous chapter, I used a colour-coding system to spotlight similarities and differences in the participants' responses. I then created and printed off a Microsoft Word document, titled "Preliminary Data Analysis," which listed the eight guiding interview questions with each of the ten participants' responses to the specific question below. Afterwards, in the margins of the document, I created a "Summaries" section, which focused attention on the most significant aspects of their responses. From there, I grouped notable excerpts from the responses with each question to ascribe the eight themes listed in Table 3.

The guiding interview questions that were posed to participants were directly related to the primary, secondary, and sub-research questions that inform this thesis. To restate them, the primary research question asks: What are pre-service teachers' current perspectives and understandings of critical media literacy? The secondary and interrelated sub-questions are as follows: What have teacher candidates learned about critical media literacy? What skills and tools do they need to effectively teach their future students about critical media literacy? What professional development opportunities have teacher candidates engaged in related to critical media literacy? In light of this, Table 3 incorporates each of these eight themes and the guiding interview questions to which they correspond.

Table 3*Table Listing Eight Guiding Interview Questions and Corresponding Themes*

Guiding Interview Question	Theme
1. During your time in the BEd program, what have you learned about media literacy?	Media literacy is an effective subject that promotes critical thinking.
2. When you hear the term “media literacy,” what do you think of?	Media literacy means something different to each individual, and this is based on how they learned about it and their daily media use.
3. If you had unlimited time and resources, how would you teach your future students about media literacy?	Critical media literacy can be taught through creative forms of pedagogy, where optimal learning can occur.
4. Have you had any experiences with media literacy outside of your formal education (i.e., participation in after school clubs, work positions, etc.)?	Engaging with critical media literacy can be done informally, without even realizing that critical thinking skills are being put to use to better understand media.
5. What tools do you wish you would have had to prepare you to teach future students about critical media literacy?	Understandings of critical media literacy cannot be assumed, and instead, both technological and teaching resources are required for pre-service teachers to teach the subject effectively and creatively to future students.
6. Based on your knowledge of critical media literacy, do you believe there are benefits of teaching students about the subject in diverse ways?	Diversely teaching students about critical media literacy in ways that are creative and fun can increase confidence and agency, inspire creativity, and contribute to their aptitude in navigating everyday media.
7. Would you consider teaching your students about critical media literacy through remixed board games that they construct?	Remixed, student-created board games, if appropriately constructed, can serve as effective forms of pedagogy to teach critical media literacy.
8. Do you think this method (remixed, student-created board games) would stimulate their creative abilities and encourage them to learn using different styles (visual, kinaesthetic, and auditory)?	Student-created board games can increase students’ confidence and satisfaction, encouraging collaboration amongst peers, while pushing them outside of their comfort zones to develop creative skills.

In-Depth Data Analysis: Second Round of Qualitative Coding

In the second round of qualitative coding, extensive connections were formed throughout the analysis process, which allowed for more in-depth observations to be made. Describing the analysis process further, Saldaña (2009) expresses that “Recoding can occur with a more attuned perspective using First Cycle methods again, while Second Cycle methods describe those processes that might be employed during the second (and third and possibly fourth ...) review of data” (p. 21). This was indeed the case, as new perspectives came to light, making clearer how the research questions were being addressed based on participants’ responses, resulting in further general themes to arise from the rich dataset.

Following the second round of coding, I extracted three main observations that emerged from the data. While these were broad observations, they allowed me to cohesively assess participants’ responses in relation to the primary, secondary, and sub-research questions. The first observation revolved around the ways that pre-service teachers are introduced to and define media literacy. The second observation encompassed the ways participants see media literacy as serving the following functions: teaching media literacy can act as a break from “the norm”; seeing it as a way to encourage confidence and empowerment amongst students; a way to draw upon diverse experiences amongst students. Lastly, the third observation made was that pre-service teachers are actually quite open to more creative forms of pedagogy. In the following paragraphs, these three observations will be complemented by participants’ responses to discuss the overall conclusions that were drawn. As a result, this will illustrate how the data addressed the overall objectives of this study: gaining an understanding of pre-service teachers’ outlooks and comprehension of critical media literacy as a topic that can be continually integrated into their classrooms and the broader education curriculum.

First Observation: Pre-service Teachers Introduction to and Definitions of Media Literacy

The first observation embraced the ways pre-service teachers are introduced to and define media literacy. The specific guiding interview questions and participants' responses that lead to this observation will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

As briefly outlined in the earlier table detailing the preliminary emergent codes, the ten participants expressed that they had an intermediate knowledge of media literacy and believed that the subject was one of great importance. The primary research question that this thesis seeks to answer (What are pre-service teachers' current perspectives and understandings of critical media literacy?) was partly addressed by the first and second interview questions: During your time in the BEd program, what have you learned about media literacy? When you hear the term "media literacy," what do you think of?

When asked these two questions in particular, I observed that, first, participants were made greater aware of what critical media literacy was through courses they took during the BEd program. For many participants, however, this understanding of critical media literacy was relatively limited, as a large emphasis was not placed on the topic during students' time in the program. It was also noted by some of the participants that critical media literacy has become what we might call a "hot topic" in more recent years, thus substantiating the need for including it, even on a small scale, in the post-secondary education curriculum. Second, I gathered that the participants thought about critical media literacy as a topic that required active engagement, challenging them to contemplate and critically interact with the media around them instead of passively taking it in. In general, the participants conveyed that the hidden messages and processes around media construction have a significant impact on how such artifacts are presented and

understood by larger audiences and the power media has to influence individuals in remarkable ways.

In terms of the second research question that this thesis seeks to answer (What have teacher candidates learned about critical media literacy?) responses from the first interview question, which was also similar in nature (During your time in the BEd program, what have you learned about media literacy?) provided some insight. When asked this question, participants indicated that, one: the media-focused course they had taken during the BEd program made them greater aware of critical media literacy, and two: the current social and media-centred climate in which we exist contributed to their learning about critical media literacy. One of the responses to this question by Stephanie demonstrated the above observation in greater detail:

But actually, you know, interactive and viewing different sorts of media. So, I think that in the grand scheme of things, it's just been a real push for media literacy, or at least trying to, because it's something that I think that personally, I wasn't so familiar with even in high school or elementary school, and a lot of people maybe aren't used to it, and maybe not comfortable teaching it. But it's definitely in the last 2 years been a push to include it more.

You know, lessons in our classrooms and just in the education system.

Similar to some of the other participants' responses to this question, Stephanie's explanation spoke to how critical media literacy has grown in importance as a subject that can evoke critical thinking about the media world in which we are so deeply immersed. Kellner and Share (2019) support this notion, stating that:

Critical media literacy not only teaches students to learn from media, to resist media manipulation, and to use media materials in constructive ways, but is also concerned with

developing skills that will help create responsible citizens who are motivated and competent participants in social-political life. (p. 6)

Second Observation: Pre-service Teachers See Media Literacy as a Topic That Serves Multiple Functions

The second observation involved the different functions participants believe media literacy is effective in serving: teaching media literacy can act as a break from “the norm”; seeing it as a way to encourage confidence and empowerment amongst students; a way to draw upon diverse experiences amongst students. To provide an understanding of how this observation materialized, the corresponding guiding interview questions and participants’ responses will be discussed below.

With respect to the first interrelated sub-question (What skills and tools do they need to effectively teach their future students about critical media literacy?), responses from the fifth interview question, in particular, (What tools do you wish you would have had to prepare you to teach future students about critical media literacy?) highlighted some diverse perspectives. When this fifth interview question was posed to the participants, the general response was that BED students wished they had more exposure on *how* to teach critical media literacy, either through an introduction of resources or a greater emphasis on the subject in courses offered throughout the program. However, some of the participants also indicated that technological devices such as Chromebooks and laptops would be useful tools for future students to learn about critical media literacy. Exemplifying this point, Flores-Koulish and Smith-D’Arezzo (2016) state that “Yet many schools, especially in urban and rural areas, still lack readily available appropriate media technologies” (p. 351). Although Flores-Koulish and Smith-D’Arezzo’s (2016) research focuses on technology discrepancies in the United States, it is essential for students across North America

to have access to Internet connected devices, especially in classroom settings, that they can use in pursuits of acquiring critical media literacy skills.

Altogether, responses from most of the participants suggest that media literacy should be greater prioritized in Bachelor of Education programs, with a more detailed exploration of relevant and useful resources, for these teacher candidates to be confident in successfully teaching media literacy to their future students. These responses emphasize the third function that participants believe media literacy serves: it is a way to draw upon diverse experiences amongst students. This is substantiated by Butler (2019), who expresses that:

When prospective and new teachers enter the classroom, with media literacy as part of their repertoire, they can integrate its concepts and questions into their curriculum development and lesson planning. If teachers and prospective teachers are trained in media literacy, it becomes *part of*, not *an addition to*, their regular lesson planning. (p. 157)

To further illustrate this viewpoint, Kennedy responded to the fifth interview question, stating the following:

I think that we are always asking students like, “oh, don't believe everything that you see.” But we don't actually learn how to teach them that in a meaningful way. Like, it's so easy for us to say, “oh, like, you can't believe that.” But when it's there in front of you, and like, there's 1 million people on TikTok liking the same thing, and agreeing with the same thing, how do we really know if it's real or not? So, teaching kids how to actually use critical thinking and develop that – I don't think that's talked about enough in the education program or in the education society. I guess it's just so easy for us to be like, no, they just need to use their critical skills. But what if they don't have any?

Kennedy's response was echoed by other participants, who indicated that greater programmatic support in the form of resources for teaching future students, would be beneficial for teacher candidates' growth and preparedness as educators. Kennedy's response also brings forth an important point on students' absence or lack of critical thinking skills. As Kennedy's response suggests, it is not realistic to assume that students already possess critical thinking skills. Instead, more should be done to support pre-service teachers on how to introduce critical thinking skills to students and develop these skills, in order to master the practice of drawing on them when engaging with an array of subjects. Essentially, this supports the first function participants believe media literacy serves: that teaching media literacy can act as a break from "the norm."

In relation to this, Butler (2019), whose work addresses the need for critical media literacy education to be greater prioritized in Bachelor of Education programs, articulates that it is necessary for critical media literacy to be an ongoing learning opportunity for pre-service teachers to substantiate its importance (p. 157). This sentiment is also shared by Cruz & Dorsch (2019), who explain that "While there are several efforts of educating for media literacy at U.S. higher education institutions, be it through Media Literacy Weeks, seminars, individual undergraduate and graduate courses, and/or course modules, the practice is not very widespread" (p. 145). Overall, these excerpts from previous literature in the field coincide with the participants' responses, when asked about the skills and tools they need to effectively teach future students about critical media literacy.

Furthermore, with regards to the second sub-question, (What professional development opportunities have teacher candidates engaged in related to critical media literacy?), responses to the fourth interview question, in particular, (Have you had any experiences with media literacy outside of your formal education (i.e., participation in after school clubs, work positions, etc.)?)

provided a descriptive response. When this interview question was posed to the participants, they either cited their previous, non-education related work and personal experiences, even if such endeavours were not explicitly linked to media literacy education. Some of the participants' personal engagements with media literacy occurred through reading books and news stories online in their leisure time. Contrastingly, a few other participants explained that they had not engaged with critical media literacy outside of their BEd program placements in classrooms. Nonetheless, based on many of the participants' non-education related work and personal undertakings, although explicit connections were not made to media literacy education, indirect links emphasized the holistic process and learning experience that is enabled by critical media literacy. This accentuates the second function that participants believe media literacy serves: it is a way to encourage confidence and empowerment amongst students. To provide an example of this, when asked the fourth interview question, Noah shared the details of his volunteer experience, and stated the following:

Yeah, so I'm a basketball coach, and right now, like I said, being that it's kind of impossible to get together if we ever have a meeting, I kind of do find myself doing individual work through Zoom conversations. Like, for example, in basketball, we do a lot of film studies, and so I can easily provide them a film of what we did in the game, and they kinda take a look at it. And then we kinda come together as a team through a Zoom meeting, or we discuss kind of what we see. It's a little, I guess, it's kind of somewhat the same, because if I have them in front of me, in front of a screen, I mean the difference there is if I have like a big projector – we discuss it as a team.

This response from Noah illustrates that although media literacy was not the precise focus of his extracurricular activities, being a basketball coach and interacting with his students about films

over Zoom, incorporated a critical thinking lens, especially as both he and his students reflected on the platforms they used to communicate on during the Covid-19 pandemic. In sum, it suffices to say that apart from some participants' non-related work and leisure endeavours, others relied on the Bachelor of Education program to engage more in depth with the subject of critical media literacy.

Third Observation: Pre-service Teachers are Open to More Creative Forms of Pedagogy

The third observation suggested that pre-service teachers are actually quite open to more creative forms of pedagogy. The guiding interview questions and participants' responses that correlated with this observation will be explored in greater details in the following paragraphs.

Once more, in this case, responses to the fifth and sixth interview questions, in particular, (What tools do you wish you would have had to prepare you to teach future students about critical media literacy?) and (Based on your knowledge of critical media literacy, do you believe there are benefits of teaching students about the subject in diverse ways?) further illustrated that pre-service teachers are receptive to more creative forms of pedagogy.

Based on most of the participants' replies when the fifth interview question was posed, greater resources on tools for teaching their future students about critical media literacy, in addition to digital technologies, such as Chromebooks, would be necessary for these teacher candidates to proceed with creative activities in the classroom, including board game design. Participants communicated that some of these resources could include workshops or lessons offered throughout the BEd program on how they might approach the task of constructing board games. Another notable response was that pre-service teachers require training on *how* to teach their students to critically think. This is a relevant point, as before students can begin to apply critical media literacy skills, they need to understand what critical thinking skills are, and how they can hone in on and

make them habitual in their lives. Overall, participants expressed the belief that having their future students create remixed board games to teach various subjects, such as critical media literacy, would be a worthwhile activity; however, the requisite is that these pre-service teachers need greater resources to be able to facilitate such creative undertakings. This observation is supported by Martlew et al. (2011), who outline a study conducted in Scotland about active learning and the benefits it poses for children (p. 71). More specifically, when discussing the implications of a play-centred learning approach, Martlew et al. (2011) express the following:

The move towards a more play-based active curriculum in Scotland has been met with enthusiasm from many teachers. However, there are different understandings of the purposes and structure of such a pedagogy. The need for a pedagogy based on active learning, incorporating features of play, in the early stages of formal education presents a challenge for some teachers since it requires them to create an appropriate learning context that allows them to follow children's interests and build upon prior knowledge. (p. 80)

Although the study conducted by Martlew et al. (2011) did not discuss board games in relation to play-centred learning, responses from teachers are comparable to the viewpoints of participants who partook in my study, particularly in regard to how they would approach educating students through creative forms of pedagogy.

Furthermore, I discovered that each of the ten participants believed that teaching students about critical media literacy in diverse ways would be an interesting and worthwhile undertaking. Specifically, participants demonstrated an interest in teaching students about critical media literacy through remixed board games that they construct, explaining that, generally, it could serve as an engaging and interactive activity that would grasp students' attention and help them retain academic concepts in diverse subjects. In addition, participants communicated that student-created

board games could stimulate students' creative abilities, encouraging them to learn using different styles, such as visual, kinaesthetic, and auditory, if the games are constructed properly, in ways that encourage critical thinking. Regardless, although participants believed that teaching critical media literacy education in unique ways could be useful for both their students, and themselves, as educators, there was some hesitation, specifically around students' dependency on traditional methods, such as PowerPoints and conventional assignments, which they believe to guarantee academic excellence.

To emphasize this point in greater detail, Taylor provided an example from her own teaching experience and expressed the following:

You still have the students who very much overthink or prefer the traditional styles, though I do see the benefits [of remixed, student-created board games]. I could see that has the tendency, and students who kind of question their own abilities to just have creative freedom, cause that's something I consistently leave room for, and again, I see students who fall short or like revert back to "let's just do a traditional PowerPoint – I'd rather just do a traditional essay rather than a collage or a spoken word." So again, like I think it'd be great to encourage students to step outside of their comfort zone, but I can definitely see a hesitancy towards just kind of openly accepting a new way of performing one's own ideas.

Taylor's explanation clarified that although creative, games-based assignments could be useful in supporting students' learning, there would likely be a sense of hesitancy from students since this method is entirely new to them. Similarly, Mason (2016) outlines typical activities that have been used to educate students on critical media literacy, explaining that "Some examples of critical media literacy curriculum include having students analyze a cultural issue in current newspapers for the presence of bias and ideology using critical overarching questions such as "who benefits?"

and “who loses?”” (p. 83). This sort of activity would agree with traditional classroom learning, as opposed to games-based and play-centred approaches to critical media literacy. However, Taylor’s perspective as a prospective educator was particularly notable, as it demonstrated the initial limitations that contemporary, creative forms of pedagogy can create when they are introduced to students.

Summary of Key Findings

This section will provide a summary of the key findings, which can be encapsulated as follows: the ten participants all demonstrated diverse understandings of critical media literacy. These understandings were in accordance with previous definitions and discussions of the term, as presented in the second chapter. To reiterate, these definitions included Alvermann and Hagood’s (2000) explanation that critical media literacy can be associated with one’s consumption of “mass media and popular culture practices (e.g., radio, TV, video, movies, CDs, the Internet, gang graffiti, and cyberpunk culture)” (p. 194). This was echoed by some participants, who expressed that, in their view, media literacy encompasses digital forms of media that transcend books, and that new media technologies can be analyzed through a critical lens. Alternatively, definitions offered by Kellner and Share (2005, 2007, 2019) and Butler (2019) demonstrated that another factor central to critical media literacy involves employing evaluative reasoning, which can help broaden one’s horizons, encouraging them to gain a more comprehensive understanding the world, seeking to decipher how distinguished theories and principles can be used in tandem. This interpretation was shared by some of the other participants, who indicated that critical media literacy made them reflect on the five Ws of media, who is behind the media, and the audiences intended for different pieces of media. In other words, these participants believed that media

literacy allows for a critical reflection on the populations that specific media pieces are intended for and the diverse ways in which those messages are disseminated and perceived.

The participants further indicated how important they believe critical media literacy is as a topic, noting that throughout their time in the BEd program, they had learned more about its impact and magnitude. More significantly, many of the participants expressed that for them to teach critical media literacy to future students in diverse ways (i.e., through remixed, student-created board games), a greater emphasis should be placed on the subject throughout Bachelor of Education programs. Lastly, the participants also communicated that an introduction of resources throughout the BEd program on how to teach students about critical media literacy would be useful.

Summary

Throughout this chapter, the in-depth data analysis conducted for this study was discussed, which detailed the first and second manual rounds of qualitative coding. This chapter also detailed how participants responded to the guiding interview questions. Incorporating samples of participants' responses allowed for greater clarity and accuracy in conveying their insights on critical media literacy. As explained throughout the data analysis process, while many common themes and key findings amongst the participants' responses emerged, each of the answers provided were unique in their own regard, due in part to the lived experiences of each of the individuals who partook in this study. Therefore, placing an emphasis on individual responses was a useful practice, as it enabled a glance into, first, how diverse each of the responses were, and second, offered a holistic view into how the responses complemented one another. Subsequently, the second manual qualitative coding round was discussed, with three main observations originating. Here, detailed explanations were provided regarding how the data addressed the

primary, secondary, and sub-research questions that guide this thesis. The final element of this chapter included a summary of the study's key findings. The following chapter will engage the results of this study in a discussion with the previous literature, to explore in greater depth, how this research has worked to fill evident, outlined gaps in the domain of critical media literacy. In addition, this chapter will also explore the study's key limitations, to determine how this research can be built on in the future to underscore different elements of Ontario pre-service teachers' experiences with critical media literacy education.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

This chapter intends to build on the previous chapter, which explored the study's main findings at length, to engage in a discussion, placing the results alongside those of previous studies in the fields of critical media literacy and game studies. As examined throughout, the research conducted aimed to fill gaps in the existing literature concerning how pre-service teachers understand critical media literacy education, and further, gather their opinions on the pedagogical potential of remixed, student-created board games for students' scholarly and individual development. Therefore, this chapter will examine how the study's primary, secondary, and sub-research questions were answered, and how the main findings contribute to existing research in the field of critical media literacy. This chapter will also explore the study's limitations to consider how the research can be adapted in the future, expanding on and highlighting other interrelated areas of critical media literacy, such as intersectionality.

Revisiting the Research Question

Centrally, the primary research question that this thesis seeks to answer revolves around pre-service teachers' current perspectives and understandings of critical media literacy. By placing an emphasis on pre-service teachers, and using their experiences as a starting point, knowledge can be acquired on the tools and resources that these prospective educators need to successfully teach critical media literacy in their future classrooms. Cruz and Dorsch (2019) support this notion, offering the following explanation:

(Critical) media literacy should be taught, starting even in elementary school as the youth starts very early engaging in digital media, and that especially future teachers must be

exposed to (critical) media literacy as they will be the teachers in the K-12 classrooms. (p. 143)

Consequently, this research aimed to explore not only the perspectives of ten pre-service teachers, but also inquire about the specific approaches these individuals would take in teaching critical media literacy to future students. For instance, how would these pre-service teachers educate on critical media literacy in ways that differed from their mentor teachers? Offering some insight to this question, Taylor explained that her mentor teacher would typically rely on tests as culminating assignments. However, Taylor communicated that the traditional test format does not necessarily work for all students, expressing the following:

Something that I would want to do is escape rooms, or board games, or scavenger hunts. Like, those are the things that I feel stand out from your typical, normal classroom routines or school routine. So, just things that really stand out is where the most learning, or when there's fun taking place – that's where the most learning is taking place. That's what stands out, that's what's memorable. So, I think if I had just endless time and opportunities and resources, that's how I would allow learning to take place: through different ways of presentation.

Overall, the results were effective in answering the primary research question, as they provided a comprehensive summary of ten pre-service teachers' experiences with critical media literacy, what such education meant to them, and its importance to their future students. The eight guiding interview questions (see Appendix A), were holistic in nature, prompting participants to reflect on critical media literacy in relation to their own experiences, as individuals, and as aspiring educators. These questions were crafted in such a way that encouraged participants to actively think about how contemporary, creative forms of pedagogy, such as remixed, student-created

board games, could help transform the topic of critical media literacy into one of significance in their students' lives, essentially becoming a lifelong undertaking. The semi structured format of the interviews allowed for conversations that were informative and reflective, yet, at the same time, relaxed, to which Brinkmann (2018) explains:

Compared to more structured interviews, semistructured interviews can make better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee, and the interviewer has a greater chance of becoming visible as a knowledge-producing participant in the process itself, rather than hiding behind a preset interview guide. (p. 579)

Therefore, the chosen methodology, coupled with eight guiding interview questions, served as an effective way in gaining a comprehensive understanding of pre-service teachers' approach to critical media literacy.

Summary of Major Findings

To reiterate the key findings set forth in the previous chapter, it is important for Bachelor of Education programs to place a greater emphasis on critical media literacy education and provide resources for teaching the subject to pre-service teachers' during the course of their degrees. This major finding answered the two interrelated sub-research questions, RQ2a (What skills and tools do they need to effectively teach their future students about critical media literacy?) and RQ2b (What professional development opportunities have teacher candidates engaged in related to critical media literacy?). Furthermore, each of the participants indicated their belief that critical media literacy was a topic of growing importance, and served as one that could aid students with navigating their online spaces. These findings are in accordance with much of the previous literature on critical media literacy, as outlined by Kellner and Share (2005, 2007, 2019), Butler

(2019), Yousman (2019), and Romero Walker (2020), who discuss the myriad of personal and academic benefits that arise from an engagement with the topic.

Fundamentally, the conclusions that can be reached from this study are that, in order to prepare pre-service teachers to effectively teach the subject of critical media literacy, there needs to be greater programmatic support in Bachelor of Education curricula. The study also infers that Bachelor of Education students would benefit from having a specific course tailored to critical media literacy, where they can make strides in expanding their knowledge on the subject, as opposed to momentarily learning about it in various courses.

Another prominent conclusion reached from this study proposes that final-year teaching candidates showed a meaningful understanding of critical media literacy and expressed how significant and transformative they believed it to be. This salient conclusion answered the overarching, primary research question (What are pre-service teachers' current perspectives and understandings of critical media literacy?) and secondary research question (What have teacher candidates learned about critical media literacy?). A meaningful inference, this conclusion also demonstrated that there is merit in the continual pursuit of critical media literacy education and exploring the diverse lenses and methods through which it can be taught to elementary and secondary students. Although critical media literacy can be defined in a myriad of ways, as indicated in the second chapter, some of the participants indicated that hearing the term made them think about the 5 Ws of media (who, what, when, where, why). Alvermann and Hagood (2000) explain the broad array of understandings that can originate from critical media literacy, stating:

It is important to note about this multiplicity of meanings for the term critical media literacy that we have not referred to it as simply visual or critical viewing literacy, both of which

are limited by their reliance on the outdated notion that audiences are passive in relation to media messages. (p. 194)

The participants believed that media literacy allows for a critical reflection on the specific populations that media pieces are intended for, and the diverse ways in which those messages are disseminated and interpreted. Inversely, some of the other participants communicated that, to them, media literacy encompasses digital forms of media that move beyond paper-based formats. These participants particularly explained that media literacy made them reflect on how new media technologies could be critically analyzed. This demonstrates that there is no right or wrong answer when it comes to defining critical media literacy, which scholars such as Alvermann and Hagood (2000) support, explaining that the multidimensionality of the topic contributes to many diverse perceptions.

Interpretations of Data and Results

There were many meaningful patterns and relationships that emerged from the data, allowing for new insights about the experiences of pre-service teachers and their knowledge of and preparedness to teach critical media literacy to future students. While preliminary emergent codes were outlined in Table 2 in the previous chapter, throughout a second round of qualitative coding, three main observations originated.

To reiterate these patterns, generally, participants expressed that media literacy takes on an array of meanings and it can be taught creatively, with an emphasis placed on interpreting the misinformation and disinformation that permeates the media we encounter. Other patterns materializing from the data suggested that media literature exposure stems from a mixture of personal, volunteer or work placement opportunities. Another pattern indicated that there exists a necessity for two types of resources: teaching and technological, for pre-service teachers to

adequately educate their future students on critical media literacy. It was also implied that there are many benefits of teaching students about critical media literacy in diverse ways that, one, can increase their creative abilities, and two, contribute to their proficiency in using media. A further pattern arising from the data emphasized that using remixed, student-created board games to teach students about critical media literacy could be an appealing and practical activity, if they are cleverly designed and include appropriate evaluative components. The final pattern transpiring from the data was that remixed, student-created board games can, overall, increase students' confidence and pride, facilitating collaborative spaces, inspiring them to take academic risks, to develop new and worthwhile creative skills that can offer personal and educational benefits.

With respect to the broader themes that originated from the data, an amalgamation of these themes suggests the following: media literacy is a diverse and effective subject that carries different meanings and ways of engagement, promoting critical thinking, and a shift towards creative forms of pedagogy, such as remixed, student-created board games. These unique learning opportunities can open the door to increased student creativity if pre-service teachers are provided adequate technological and teaching resources to educate on the subject. This synthesis of the major themes in this research are upheld by much of the previous literature explored in the second chapter. When discussing the benefits of critical media literacy for students, Cruz and Dorsch (2019) explain that an in-depth understanding of the subject can assist students in comprehensively considering how media shapes the personal and academic realms of their lives (p. 137). Moreover, Butler (2019) expresses the significance of media literacy, especially for pre-service teachers, stating that "Media literacy training is a necessary part of education because it can foster the space for a more thoroughly informed and involved citizenry" (p. 157). Here, an emphasis remains on the necessity for pre-service teachers to receive sufficient training during their undergraduate

degrees, in addition to being presented with contemporary technological and teaching resources on critical media literacy.

Research Implications

This research is relevant to the fields of critical media literacy and game studies, as broadly, it emphasized the tools and resources that Canadian pre-service teachers need to effectively teach the subject to future students. As other scholars in the field of critical media literacy have articulated, it is necessary for teachers to first demonstrate a broad understanding of the subject before introducing it to their students (Butler, 2019; Cruz & Dorsch, 2019; Degand, 2020; Kellner & Share, 2019). Furthermore, this research has demonstrated the diverse conceptualizations of, and knowledge held on critical media literacy by Canadian pre-service teachers. Participants' responses to interview questions drew on their personal and professional experiences with critical media literacy, as they reflected on how the subject has impacted them and can serve to benefit their prospective students in the long run.

Returning once more to Crenshaw's (1989) establishment of intersectional theory and Collins and Bilge's (2016) adaptations, intersectionality can play a role in how different populations conceive of critical media literacy, based on their personal stories. While each of the study's ten participants shared some similarities, in that they were final-year students in York University's Bachelor of Education program in the process of obtaining their Ontario teaching certifications, their unique personal, volunteer, and work experiences, in addition to their teaching placements to date, influenced their knowledge and perceptions of critical media literacy.

Overall, this research contributed to the fields of critical media literacy and game studies, particularly in a Canadian context, emphasizing the importance for pre-service teachers to receive further training and resources on critical media literacy and creative forms of pedagogy.

In-depth training and an introduction to useful resources would assist pre-service teachers in educating their students on how they might employ critical media literacy in tandem with other subjects, and also think about how it can serve as a helpful tool for navigating their online experiences.

Limitations

Although the results of this study successfully addressed the primary, overarching research question, secondary, and interrelated sub-questions, there were several limitations. The first limitation included the small sample size, and more specifically, that the research solely focused on the experiences of Bachelor of Education students at a single post-secondary institution in Ontario. The second limitation was the absence of specific demographic information, including participants' personal identifying factors, such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and class, amongst others. In addition, the third limitation incorporated the confines of intersectionality as a design principle for creating pedagogical tools. The fourth and final limitation was that I approached this research, which was nestled in an educational space, from the perspective of a communications and media scholar.

As discussed in the third chapter on the study's methodology, which documented the research ethics process, it was difficult to locate an ample number of York University BEd students in their final year of the program. To reiterate, participants were recruited by emailing the Bachelor of Education program. The emails sent to York University's Faculty of Education Students' Association included a breakdown of the study's details along with the recruitment poster. By early December 2022, over twenty students had reached out to me; however, some of them did not meet the project's population criteria. Moreover, due to the holiday season and personal commitments, several of the students who showed an initial interest indicated that they could no

longer participate in the study. As a result, eight interviews were conducted with eligible participants during December 2022. The final two interviews were conducted in January 2023, for a total of ten interviews. The limitation of a small sample size can also be coupled with the fact that this research solely focused on the experiences of Bachelor of Education students at York University: a single post-secondary institution in Ontario. Returning to the former literature examined in the second chapter, Kellner and Share (2019) explicate that in the broader Canadian context, media literacy preparation has not been prioritized for pre-service teachers (p. 62). Additionally, most of the previous research in the field of critical media literacy was conducted in the United States (Kellner & Share, 2019; Butler, 2019; Cruz & Dorsch, 2019). Consequently, these factors, combined with my small sample size, revealed that it is not sufficient to make broad proclamations about how critical media literacy should be taught, due to the tightly focused scope of this research. Nonetheless, while general claims could not be made about the collective experiences of pre-service teachers at multiple Ontario universities, this research, albeit on a small scale, contributed to critical media literacy scholarship in a Canadian context.

Additionally, there were no monetary incentives offered for engaging in the study, but instead, participants were informed that they would be receiving a workshop in the form of a PowerPoint presentation following the finalization of this thesis, outlining the study's key findings, which would also incorporate various resources on critical media literacy to assist them with teaching the subject (see Appendix F for screenshots of the presentation slides). Monetary incentives were not offered in efforts to maintain the authenticity of results and ensure that participants demonstrated an eagerness to partake in the study because they believed it would be meaningful to them, presenting the potential to shape their thinking positively and creatively, which could then influence that of their future students. An example of this keenness to share

knowledge was offered by Kennedy when thanked for her participation in the study. Kennedy responded with the following: “Of course, I saw the topic and I was like, I did this, I have to share.”

Furthermore, as discussed in the third chapter, I did not ask participants to specifically comment on intersecting factors, some of which included their race, gender, socioeconomic status, and class. This data was not collected, as I did not indicate that I would be obtaining this information in either the documents submitted to York University’s Office of Research Ethics or the informed consent form that was disseminated to each of the participants. The exclusion of this data in the study served as the second limitation, preventing me from engaging in a more thorough discussion of intersectional theory and its impacts on participants, in relation to their early teaching experiences and knowledge and viewpoints on critical media literacy. Nonetheless, if this study were to be expanded in the future, the inclusion of personal identifying factors could contribute new perspectives in terms of how pre-service teachers’ perceptions of critical media literacy have been shaped by their professional, teaching endeavours and personal encounters. This would ultimately add another lens to critical media literacy research, placing greater prominence on how intersectionality has shaped their experiences as aspiring educators.

The third limitation included the confines of intersectionality as a design principle for creating pedagogical tools. This limitation became evident as I reflected on the “Hip Hop-opoly” board (see Appendix B) that I created during my undergraduate studies in Dr. Stephen Gennaro’s course, *Mediations of Identity*. While we were tasked with remixing the board, rules, and player pieces of traditional Monopoly to demonstrate an elaborate understanding of intersectional theory, one specific tension arose in that the weight of the lived experiences of others was not able to be fully captured. As I constructed “Hip Hop-opoly,” I realized that although my understandings of intersectional theory were deepened through the assignment, they were inevitably limited, as lived

experiences are deeply personal and can only be entirely understood on individual levels. It is, therefore, valuable to recognize that using intersectionality as a design standard carries limits, especially in how imprecise assumptions are often made about the intersecting factors that influence people's lives in profoundly complex ways.

Finally, the fourth limitation was that my approach to this research, which primarily resided within an educational space, was from the perspective of a communications and media scholar. Since I am not a teacher, nor have I ever worked in curriculum design, my viewpoints on strategies to centralize critical media literacy through board games in Ontario classrooms likely differed from those of individuals in the field of education. Experienced and pre-service teachers, along with curriculum designers, might have diversified approaches to teaching critical media literacy through creative forms of pedagogy, since they possess a deep-rooted understanding of how students learn. However, I believe that there is merit in approaching the topic of critical media literacy education from interdisciplinary standpoints, as it allows for the convergence of multiple voices from individuals who have similar goals in mind, with respect to expanding critical media literacy efforts in Ontario educational settings.

In sum, the first limitation of this study was that the ten participants lead to a relatively small sample size, although the research was qualitative in nature and employed one-on-one, semi structured interviews as the primary methodology. Due to this limitation, the results presented in this thesis are not entirely representative of the general experiences of Bachelor of Education students in their final year of study. The second limitation of this study was the absence of participants' personal identifying factors to support and deepen the discussion around intersectional theory, as presented by Crenshaw (1989, 1991) and Collins and Bilge (2016). The third limitation comprised the bounds of intersectionality as a design principle for creating

pedagogical tools, and the last limitation was my undertaking of this education-focused research from the position of a communications and media scholar.

However, the main conclusions that can be reached from this study are as follows: results demonstrated the need for greater resources on critical media literacy for pre-service teachers to be able to successfully teach the subject to their students. This further highlighted pre-service teachers' viewpoints on critical media literacy as a diverse subject of importance that promotes critical thinking with respect to media use. Moreover, pre-service teachers are open to a shift towards more creative forms of pedagogy that has the potential to promote optimal learning. Another conclusion is that, sometimes, engaging with critical media literacy can be done informally, through personal or academic endeavours, where an individual is not completely aware that they are using their critical thinking skills to make sense of everyday media. An equally important point of consideration involves that each individual does not necessarily have an awareness and comprehension of critical media literacy. Therefore, instead of assumptions being made on pre-existing understandings of critical media literacy, greater steps should be taken towards ensuring that pre-service teachers are versed on the subject for their own personal and professional development as future educators. It is also important to recognize that teaching students about critical media literacy in diverse ways that are both creative and fun can increase their confidence and agency, inspire creativity, and contribute to how they navigate the media they are exposed to on a daily basis. Pre-service teachers expressed their belief that remixed, student-created board games could effectively teach students about critical media literacy, in addition to other subjects, if they are crafted in appealing ways. The final conclusion revealed that student-created board games present many benefits, which include an increase in students' confidence,

further facilitating collaborative spaces with peers, while also persuading them to depart from their comfort zones in order to develop and consistently hone their creative and critical thinking skills.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to explicate how the study's results answered the primary, secondary, and sub-research questions, while also giving prominence to the emerging patterns and themes, and how it contributed to existing literature in the field of critical media literacy. A central takeaway from the study, which transpired from an amalgamation of major themes suggests that media literacy is a diverse and effective subject that carries different meanings and ways of engagement, therefore promoting critical thinking. A shift towards creative forms of pedagogy, such as remixed, student-created board games can open the door to increased student creativity, if pre-service teachers are provided adequate technological and teaching resources to educate students on the subject. Moreover, this chapter detailed how the results of this study contributed to the fields of critical media literacy and game studies, specifically in a Canadian context, which was an underexplored area, as indicated in the second chapter. To conclude, this chapter also discussed several limitations of the study, some of which included the impact of a lower number of participants, and the unavailability of specific demographic information around participants' race, gender, socioeconomic status, and class. The following chapter will this bring this thesis to a close, providing details on the central ideas from each chapter. In addition, the concluding chapter will offer an overview of recommendations for future research, exploring how a series of workshops led by faculty members and students from either the Education or graduate program in Communication & Culture at York University, for instance, could serve as a useful starting point for pre-service teachers to gain more knowledge on the various resources they require to teach critical media literacy education to future students in impactful ways.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Introduction

This concluding chapter aims to provide a summary of the contents included in this thesis. As such, this chapter will outline the previous literature surveyed, the methods used for the research, the results of the study, and the broader discussion around how the research findings paralleled and diverged from the former research. Another section of this chapter will propose recommendations for future research, discussing how forthcoming studies can be conducted to explore other aspects of pre-service teachers' experiences in relation to critical media literacy education. To bring the study to a close, the importance of reflecting on the benefits of meaningful pedagogy and what this may look like for students will be explored. This process of reflection allows for continual consideration of the potential that critical media literacy has to promote personal and professional growth for students and individuals, who wish to employ the outlined principles and teachings central to this thesis in their everyday lives.

Summary of Surveyed Literature

As demonstrated in the second chapter, the literature review, significant research has been conducted on the benefits of critical media literacy and its importance for students across the globe (Butler, 2019; Cruz & Dorsch, 2019; Kellner & Share, 2005, 2007, 2019; Leurs et al., 2018). However, the primary gap that this research aimed to bridge was how Canadian pre-service teachers understand critical media literacy, whether they feel it is an important subject, and if and how they plan to teach it to their future students.

Correspondingly, the literature review was arranged into various segments. These segments included an introduction to critical media literacy, the importance of critical media literacy skills, critical race media literacy education, the prospect of moving towards critical media

literacies, and a comparison of the methods used in previous studies on critical media literacy. In addition, the role of empathy in critical media literacy education, an exploration of how games can be used as pedagogical tools, with an emphasis on simulated versions of Monopoly, and the necessity of critical media literacy training for pre-service teachers, were explored. The specific selection of previous research discussed in the literature review was chosen to provide a glimpse into each subsection of critical media literacy and its related factors, in addition to the benefits of games, to demonstrate how the research conducted for this thesis fit within and filled the gaps in the former studies. This thesis contributed to the existing research, as it specifically explored the experiences of pre-service teachers, focusing on their knowledge of critical media literacy and whether they intended to teach it to future students. As a result, this research added to the conversation on the experiences of pre-service teachers, precisely in a Canadian context, and, additionally, explored how pre-service teachers felt about the prospect of educating students on critical media literacy through a diverse selection of remixed board games that could be created in the classroom environment. The main takeaway from this chapter was to provide an overview of the relevant existing literature in the fields of critical media literacy and game studies, to determine how the experiences of pre-service teachers corresponded with and expanded the conversation on appropriate starting points to augment teaching the subject in Ontario elementary and secondary classrooms.

Summary of Methodology

In the third chapter, the methodology was detailed, with rationale provided as to why one-on-one, semi structured interviews were used to collect data. Among the various subsections in this chapter, were motivations for the study, study design, recruitment, data collection, data analysis and an introduction to the participants. Including a subsection that detailed the motivations

for the study was helpful in positioning myself within the field of critical media literacy, further illustrating my personal connection to the research, and how initially learning about critical media literacy during an upper-year undergraduate course sparked a deep sense of curiosity to greater explore the benefits in a Canadian educational context. Moreover, the other subsections of this chapter, such as the study design, documented how one-on-one, semi structured interviews were conducted to better understand participants' experiences with critical media literacy thus far, prompting them to holistically reflect on their own media use and that of their students.

In particular, including of a general outline of the research ethics process facilitated an understanding of how the study came together, and how the different phases fit within the timeline. Further, detailing the data collection and analysis procedures were important steps in demonstrating how the study was shaped by the unique patterns, themes and conclusions discussed in the fourth and fifth chapters. Finally, introducing each of the ten participants in this chapter provided a frame of reference, signalling to how their experiences with critical media literacy in their own academic careers and preliminary classroom experiences, as educators, could provide insightful responses to the primary, secondary, and sub-research questions of this thesis.

Summary of Results

In the fourth chapter of this thesis, the data analysis and results were presented. This chapter included the following subsections: overview of data analysis, which documented the first round of qualitative coding, assigning themes to preliminary emergent codes, in-depth data analysis, which documented the second round of qualitative coding, an introduction of three main observations, and a summary of the study's key findings. This chapter was segmented into the above-mentioned sections, to provide an in-depth illustration of participants' specific responses to

the guiding interview questions (see Appendix A), while simultaneously analyzing the emergent themes and patterns that derived from the data.

From each of the eight guiding interview questions that were posed to participants, themes were generated based on codes, as per Saldaña's (2009) recommendation for manual coding of qualitative data. The eight different themes were combined into one larger theme: media literacy is a diverse and effective subject that carries different meanings and ways of engagement, promoting critical thinking, and a shift towards creative forms of pedagogy, such as remixed, student-created board games, can open the door to increased student creativity, if pre-service teachers are provided adequate technological and teaching resources to educate on the subject.

Moreover, the key findings of the study, which specifically addressed the primary, secondary, and sub-research questions posed in this thesis were as follows: the ten final-year BEd students who were interviewed all demonstrated an understanding of critical media literacy. The participants further indicated how important they believe the topic to be. More significantly, many of the participants expressed that for them to teach critical media literacy to future students in diverse ways (i.e., through remixed, student-created board games), a greater emphasis needs to be placed on the subject throughout Bachelor of Education programs. Lastly, the participants also communicated that an introduction of resources throughout the BEd program on how to teach students about critical media literacy would be useful.

Summary of Discussion

Throughout the fifth chapter of this thesis, there was a discussion of the study's major findings, and how these findings addressed the primary, secondary, and sub-research questions, further contributing to the existing body of literature in the field of critical media literacy. The different subsections in this chapter included revisiting the primary research question, a summary

of the major findings, interpretations of the data and results, the research implications, and the study's limitations.

The fundamental ideas from this chapter involved a detailed account into how the primary, secondary, and sub-research questions were addressed by the data, and how the results augmented previous research in the critical media literacy and game studies domains. This study helped bridge a gap in the former literature, as it specifically highlighted the viewpoints and experiences of pre-service teachers, which, as several scholars indicate, are an important group of individuals who can aid in furthering media literacy efforts (Butler, 2019; Cruz & Dorsch, 2019; Kellner & Share, 2019). Moreover, this research contributed to both of the respective research fields, as it focused on the experiences of Canadian pre-service teachers at York University in Toronto, Ontario, which had not been previously explored.

Recommendations for Future Research

Discussed at length, one of the key findings from this study was that pre-service teachers do not have the adequate resources on academic or professional levels (i.e., through their school placements) to teach their students about critical media literacy in diverse and creative ways. While many of the participants expressed an interest in beginning or continuing to teach critical media literacy in relation to other subjects through remixed, student-created board games, they ultimately communicated that they would not know where to start. This is largely due to a lack of resources on creative teaching and lesson plans. To this point, Degand (2020) explains that “Aspiring teachers, in-service educators, and other professionals (e.g., higher education administrators and policymakers) who have not been encouraged to experiment with technology and media may lack the confidence needed to promote their use in classrooms” (p. 103). Pre-service teachers also indicated that they would have appreciated more opportunities to learn about critical media literacy

throughout the BEd program, which would have prepared them to teach future students about critical media literacy in more depth, perhaps through creative activities, such as remixed board game construction.

Based on the study's results, one recommendation for Bachelor of Education programs involves creating a series of workshops for students to attend on a voluntary basis, where they are given opportunities to learn about creative forms of pedagogy (i.e., board game construction), if it is of interest to them. As the results have demonstrated, pre-service teachers are not given adequate opportunities to learn about critical media literacy in-depth or consider contemporary, creative forms of pedagogy to teach the subject in enticing ways. Therefore, making a workshop component available to students could help mitigate this issue. Degand (2020) articulates the benefits of introducing a specific course on critical *race* media literacy, explaining that:

CRML can be taught in many college classes, but an undergraduate education course that utilizes multiliteracies' multimodal approach to teach students about the various ways learning happens in the digital age is an excellent opportunity to develop this competency in undergraduates. (p. 98)

Although Degand's (2020) suggestions touch on critical *race* media literacy, as opposed to critical media literacy, in general, including a course in the undergraduate education curriculum can serve as a worthwhile academic undertaking for pre-service teachers, which can aid in their professional growth (p. 98). However, if opportunities do not exist for new courses to be added to post-secondary undergraduate programs, other options need to be available for Bachelor of Education students to feel supported as they enter the workforce as new educators. Accordingly, a series of workshops introduced by the Education program or another program, such as the graduate program in Communication & Culture at York University, for instance, that presents the resources pre-

service teachers are lacking in their courses could be beneficial. As an example, if pre-service teachers desired to learn more about digital board game construction, a workshop on how to use Canva, which is “a comprehensive website ‘empowering the world to design’ that covers a myriad of graphic design concepts” (Band, 2017, p. 149) could be offered. A workshop on effectively navigating Canva might be helpful for pre-service teachers to learn how to construct remixed board games with their students, in addition to other visuals that might aid with creative forms of pedagogy. An example of Canva in action is demonstrated in the remixed Monopoly board game that I created during my undergraduate studies, which can be found in Appendix B.

Although a series of workshops presented by either the Education program or another program in the liberal arts at York University could be useful for pre-service teachers, providing them with the valuable resources they need during their academic careers, this recommendation is not without its own limitations. As Butler (2019) articulates:

Courses in media literacy need to be woven into prospective teachers’ comprehensive education, not just in one-off workshops or professional development opportunities; it should be integrated into their curriculum and certification preparation so that they can, in turn, integrate into their curriculum development and lesson plans. (p. 157)

Based on Butler’s (2019, p. 157) explanation, hosting a series of workshops does not guarantee that each student can benefit from in-depth learning about critical media literacy or gain additional resources to teach the subject. Since these workshops would be attended on a voluntary basis, this could lead to a lack of emphasis placed on the importance of and exposure to critical media literacy training for pre-service teachers’ professional development.

Nonetheless, in terms of future research, based on the above recommendations, it might be of value to conduct a study on pre-service teachers’ responses to workshops on critical media

literacy that call attention to various resources for educating with creative forms of pedagogy. However, in order for this research to be conducted, the first step would entail the creation of workshops, potentially led by a combination of faculty members and students in selected programs. Although Butler (2019) takes a somewhat critical stance on workshops to educate pre-service teachers on critical media literacy (p. 157), they can serve as a useful starting point to introduce Bachelor of Education students to resources on teaching critical media literacy, helping them to further familiarize themselves with the topic.

Finally, the specific observation that pre-service teachers are open to creative forms of pedagogy made in the fourth chapter lends itself to a potential follow-up study. Through this expanded study, participants would be contacted after they receive their teaching certifications, begin teaching in their own classrooms and gain a few years of experience in the field. Several research questions that might guide this follow-up study include: Are these educators still open to creative forms of pedagogy? Or, do new teachers conform to more traditional types of teaching (i.e., inheriting existing lesson plans, realizing they have less prep time than they thought, lack of funding to buy the necessary tools for creative media literacy lesson plans, etc.)? Fundamentally, this follow-up study would seek to address how pre-service teachers are currently approaching the subject of critical media literacy and creative pedagogy in their own classrooms, by specifically focusing on the developed teaching experiences of individuals who partook in the current research.

Concluding Thoughts

Promoting an eagerness in students to learn is the key to fostering a healthy relationship between the student and their academic endeavours (Dewey, 1916). Garris et al. (2002) discuss the common characteristics held by students who exhibit deep desires to learn, stating the following:

Motivated learners are easy to describe. They are enthusiastic, focused, and engaged. They are interested in and enjoy what they are doing, they try hard, and they persist over time. Their behavior is self-determined, driven by their own volition rather than external forces. (p. 444)

While motivated learners are relentless in their diverse pursuits (Garris et al., 2002, p. 444), certain forms of pedagogy may be able to supplement a more enjoyable sense of learning in classroom contexts, as this research has explored. This can be related to the work of Dewey (1916), in which he states that “Experience has shown that when children have a chance at physical activities which bring their natural impulses into play, going to school is a joy, management is less of a burden, and learning is easier” (p. 120). It is, therefore, important for educators to take time to discover students’ individual hobbies and creative outlets to determine what they enjoy, finding ways to include those activities into their daily learning. Gee (2004) also notes that learning is an intricate experience that is uniquely approached by each individual (p. 53). Keeping this truth in mind can help to not only develop adequate critical media literacy skills in students, but more importantly, inspire them to retain those skills and apply them in collaboration with other subjects. Incorporating critical media literacy pedagogy into other subjects can ultimately accentuate the interconnected nature of diverse domains that may have once appeared to have no palpable connection to one another.

Perhaps, one of the most important questions we can pose to ourselves and to those around us is: “What does critical media literacy mean to you?” By asking this question, we are encouraged to reflect on what critical media literacy means to us on personal and professional levels and understand why it is that we conceive of it in that particular way. If we ask ourselves these questions at the different stages of our lives, we can meditate on what we need to learn from critical

media literacy, consider what it has taught us so far, and think about the lasting transformative potential it can continue to have in constructively shaping our thinking.

References

- Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer phenomenology: Orientations, objects, others*. Duke University Press.
- Alvermann, D. E., & Hagood, M. C. (2000). Critical media literacy: Research, theory, and practice in “new times.” *The Journal of Educational Research*, 93(3), 193–205.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220670009598707>
- Alvermann, D. E., Moon, J. S., & Hagood, M. C. (1999). *Popular culture in the classroom: Teaching and researching critical media literacy*. International Reading Association ; National Reading Conference.
- Ansoms, A., & Geenen, S. (2012). Simulating poverty and inequality dynamics in developing countries. *Simulation & Gaming*, 43(6), 713–728. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046878112451876>
- Anyiwo, N., Richards-Schuster, K., & Jerald, M. C. (2021). Using critical media literacy and youth-led research to promote the sociopolitical development of Black youth: Strategies from “Our Voices.” *Applied Developmental Science*, 25(3), 201–216.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2021.1906246>
- Baker-Bell, A., Jones Stanbrough, R., & Everett, S. (2017). The stories they tell: Mainstream media, pedagogies of healing, and critical media literacy. *English Education*, 49(2), 130–152.
- Band, B. (2017). Canva: www.canva.com. *School Librarian*, 65(3), 149. https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/apps/doc/A506957233/AONE?u=yorku_main&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=49244d1b
- Black, R. W. (2009). Online fan fiction and critical media literacy. *Journal of Computing in Teacher Education*, 26(2), 75–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402454.2009.10784636>
- Borba, M. (2016). *Unselfie: Why empathetic kids succeed in our all-about-me world* (First Edition). Touchstone.

- Boynton, S., & Lao, D. (Jan. 23, 2022). *Teachers say social media is 'hurting' students - but their jobs have also gotten harder*. Global News. <https://globalnews.ca/news/8430423/social-media-teachers-students-youth/amp/>
- Brinkmann, S. (2018). The interview. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (Fifth edition, pp. 576–599). SAGE.
- Brown, B. (2021). *Atlas of the heart: Mapping meaningful connection & the language of human experience*. Random House.
- Butler, A. (2019). Teacher education: The next needed step in critical media literacy education. *The International Journal of Critical Media Literacy*, 1(2), 153–172. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25900110-00102001>
- Collins, P. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (Rev. 10th anniversary ed). Routledge.
- Collins, P., & Bilge, S. (2016). *Intersectionality*. Polity Press.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *The University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 139-167.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>
- Cruz, A., & Dorsch, J. (2019). Critical media literacy in global disquiet times. *The International Journal of Critical Media Literacy*, 1(2), 137–152. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25900110-00102002>
- Degand, D. (2020). Introducing critical race media literacy in an undergraduate education course about technology and arts-based inquiry. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 22(3), 96–117. <https://doi.org/10.18251/ijme.v22i3.2461>

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education* (1st ed.). EdTech Books.

<https://edtechbooks.org/democracyandeducation>

Elmore, P. G., & Coleman, J. M. (2019). Middle school students' analysis of political memes to support critical media literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 63(1), 29–40.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.948>

Fisher, E. M. (2008). USA stratified Monopoly: A simulation game about social class stratification.

Teaching Sociology, 36(3), 272–282. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092055X0803600307>

Flores-Koulish, S. A., & Smith-D'Arezzo, W. M. (2016). *The Three Pigs: Can they blow us into critical media literacy old school style?* *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 30(3),

349–360. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2016.1178673>

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed). Continuum.

Gainer, J. S. (2010). Critical media literacy in middle school: Exploring the politics of representation.

Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 53(5), 364–373. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.53.5.2>

Garris, R., Ahlers, R., & Driskell, J. E. (2002). Games, motivation, and learning: A research and practice model. *Simulation & Gaming*, 33(4), 441–467.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1046878102238607>

Gee, J. P. (2003). *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy*. Palgrave

Macmillan.

Gee, J. P. (2004). *Situated language and learning: A critique of traditional schooling* (1st ed.).

Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203594216>

Gkiolmas, A. S., & Chalkidis, A. (2019). The interconnection between critical media and social media literacy and science literacy, in adolescents and children: A critical pedagogy approach. *The*

International Journal of Critical Media Literacy, 1(2), 214–227.

<https://doi.org/10.1163/25900110-00102006>

Griffin, R. A., & Jackson, N. R. (2011). Privilege Monopoly: An opportunity to engage in diversity awareness. *Communication Teacher*, 25(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17404622.2010.514273>

Grimes, S. M. (2021). *Digital playgrounds: The hidden politics of children's online play spaces, virtual worlds, and connected games*. University of Toronto Press.

Groom, D., & O'Connell, J. (2018). Digital games: Providing unique digital challenges in childhood. In K. Reedy & J. Parker (Eds.), *Digital Literacy Unpacked* (pp. 63-82). Facet.

<http://doi.org.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/10.29085/9781783301997.007>

Hackett, L., & Coghlan, J. (2023). Why Monopoly monopolises popular culture board games.

Media/Culture Journal, 26(2). <https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.2956>

Hawkman, A. M., & Shear, S. B. (2020). “Who made these rules? We’re so confused.”: An introduction to the special issue on critical race media literacy. *International Journal of*

Multicultural Education, 22(2), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.18251/ijme.v22i2.2645>

Holdsworth, N. (2021). Disrupting monopoly: Homelessness, gamification and learned resourcefulness. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and*

Performance, 26(1), 38–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569783.2020.1838270>

Icen, M. (2020). Developing media literacy through activities. *International Journal of Educational Methodology*, 6(3), 631–642. <https://doi.org/10.12973/ijem.6.3.631>

Jessup, M. M. (2001). Sociopoly: Life on the boardwalk. *Teaching Sociology*, 29(1), 102.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/1318787>

- Kafai, Y. B., & Burke, Q. (2015). Constructionist gaming: Understanding the benefits of making games for learning. *Educational Psychologist, 50*(4), 313–334.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2015.1124022>
- Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2005). Toward critical media literacy: Core concepts, debates, organizations, and policy. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 26*(3), 369–386.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01596300500200169>
- Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2007). Critical media literacy: Crucial policy choices for a twenty-first-century democracy. *Policy Futures in Education, 5*(1), 59–69.
<https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2007.5.1.59>
- Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2019). *The critical media literacy guide: Engaging media and transforming education*. Brill Sense.
- Kersch, D., & Lesley, M. (2019). Hosting and healing: A framework for critical media literacy pedagogy. *Journal of Media Literacy Education, 11*(3), 37–48. <https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2019-11-3-4>
- Lacković, N. (2020). Thinking with digital images in the post-truth era: A method in critical media literacy. *Postdigital Science and Education, 2*(2), 442–462. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-019-00099-y>
- Leurs, K., Omerović, E., Bruinenberg, H., & Sprenger, S. (2018). Critical media literacy through making media: A key to participation for young migrants? *Communications, 43*(3), 427–450.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2018-0017>
- Lewis, R. S. (2021). *Technology, media literacy, and the human subject: A posthuman approach*. Open Book Publishers.

- Martlew, J., Stephen, C., & Ellis, J. (2011). Play in the primary school classroom? The experience of teachers supporting children's learning through a new pedagogy. *Early Years*, 31(1), 71–83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2010.529425>
- Mason, L. (2016). McLuhan's challenge to critical media literacy: The *City as Classroom* textbook. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 46(1), 79–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2015.1113511>
- Masur, P. K., DiFranzo, D., & Bazarova, N. N. (2021). Behavioral contagion on social media: Effects of social norms, design interventions, and critical media literacy on self-disclosure. *PLOS ONE*, 16(7), e0254670. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0254670>
- Mayer, R. E. (2014). *Computer games for learning: An evidence-based approach*. The MIT Press.
- McArthur, S. A. (2019). “It's like black and white!”: Critical media literacy and social justice in the elementary classroom. *The International Journal of Critical Media Literacy*, 1(1), 118–127. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25900110-00101010>
- McLuhan, E., & Zingrone, F. (1997). *Essential McLuhan*. Taylor and Francis.
- Nam, S. (2010). Critical media literacy as curricular praxis: Remapping the pedagogical borderlands of media literacy in U.S. mass communication programmes. *Javnost - The Public*, 17(4), 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2010.11009038>
- Navas, E., Gallagher, O., & burrough, xtine (Eds.). (2018). *Keywords in remix studies*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Paino, M., & Chin, J. (2011). Monopoly and critical theory: Gaming in a class on the sociology of deviance. *Simulation & Gaming*, 42(5), 571–588. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046878110391022>
- Rogers, T., Winters, K.-L., Perry, M., & LaMonde, A.-M. (2015). *Youth, critical literacies, and civic engagement: Arts, media, and literacy in the lives of adolescents*. Routledge.

- Romero Walker, A. (2021). Using critical media literacy to create a decolonial, anti-racist teaching philosophy. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 13(2), 86–93. <https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2021-13-2-7>
- Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE.
- Saunders, J. M., Ash, G. E., Salazar, I., Pruitt, R., Wallach, D., Breed, E., Saldana, S., & Szachacz, A. (2017). “We’re *already* somebody”: High school students practicing critical media literacy irl (in real life). *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 60(5), 515–526. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.617>
- Semali, L. (2008). Critical viewing as response to intermediality: Implications for media literacy. In L. Semali & A. W. Pailliotet (Eds.), *Intermediality: Teachers’ handbook of critical media literacy* (pp. 183–205). Westview Press. <http://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1777113>
- Thevenin, B. (2020). Dark Ride: Disneyland. Using educational games for critical media literacy education. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 12(1), 100–122. <https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2020-12-1-8>
- Waren, W. (2011). Using Monopoly to introduce concepts of race and ethnic relations. *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, 11(1), 28–35.
- Yousman, L. B. (2019). “I am not alone”: The additional benefits of critical media literacy. *The International Journal of Critical Media Literacy*, 1(1), 38–50. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25900110-00101003>

Appendix A

Interview Questions to Assess Current Teachers' Perspectives on Critical Media Literacy and Board Games as Pedagogical Tools

1. During your time in the BEd program, what have you learned about media literacy?
2. When you hear the term “media literacy,” what do you think of?
3. If you had unlimited time and resources, how would you teach your future students about media literacy?
4. Have you had any experiences with media literacy outside of your formal education (i.e., participation in after school clubs, work positions, etc.)?
5. What tools do you wish you would have had to prepare you to teach future students about critical media literacy?
6. Based on your knowledge of critical media literacy, do you believe there are benefits of teaching students about the subject in diverse ways?
7. Would you consider teaching your students about critical media literacy through remixed board games that they construct?
8. Do you think this method (remixed, student-created board games) would stimulate their creative abilities and encourage them to learn using different styles (visual, kinaesthetic, and auditory)?

Figure A1. These guiding interview questions were used to assess participants' perspectives on critical media literacy, gain an understanding of the professional development opportunities they may have engaged in to teach the subject, and explore the future of critical media literacy education and the unique ways it can be taught to Ontario elementary and secondary students.

Appendix B

Example of Remixed Monopoly Board by Julianna L. Kowlessar (2020)

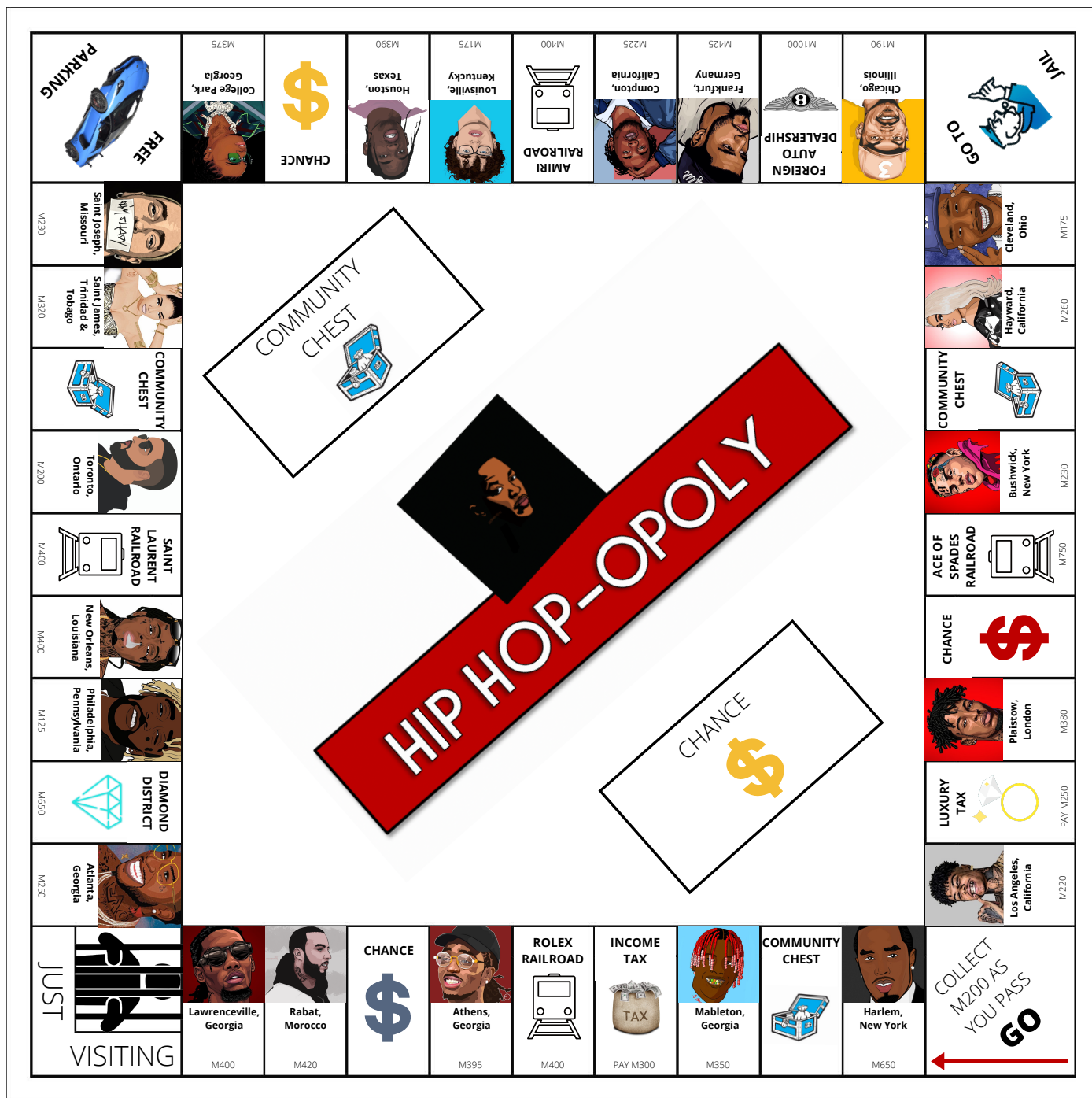


Figure B1. Pictured above is an example of a remixed version of Monopoly, “Hip Hop-opoly,” that I created during an upper-year undergraduate course (COMN 4725), to highlight the

intersecting factors that work to uniquely shape hip hop artists' lives. This serves as a visual example of a remixed Monopoly board to highlight a specific theme. This board was described to the participants during their one-on-one interviews, as an example of what a remixed, student-created board game can look like.

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form



Office of Research Ethics
York University

Kaneff Tower, Fifth Floor -- 4700 Keele Street,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M3J 1P3

ore@yorku.ca
research.info.yorku.ca

Informed Consent Form:

Bringing the Fun Back Into Learning: Assessing Teacher Candidates' Current Attitudes on Critical Media Literacy Education and Remixed, Student-Created Board Games as Pedagogical Tools

Date: November 10, 2022

Study Name: Bringing the Fun Back Into Learning: Assessing Teacher Candidates' Current Attitudes on Critical Media Literacy Education and Remixed, Student-Created Board Games as Pedagogical Tools

Researcher Name: Julianna L. Kowlessar (Principal Investigator), Communication & Culture, MA Candidate, York University

Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this study is to learn more about teacher candidates' (BEd students') current perspectives on critical media literacy, gain an understanding of the professional development opportunities they may have engaged in to teach the subject, and explore the future of critical media literacy education and the unique ways it can be taught to Toronto elementary and secondary students. This research will be presented and reported in the form of a thesis and potentially presented at academic conferences.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:

You will be asked to participate in an interview about your perspectives on critical media literacy and the professional development opportunities you have had throughout the BEd program. This interview will be conducted over Zoom, and the audio will be recorded. This data will be thematically analyzed by the Principal Investigator. The estimated time commitment for participants is forty-five minutes. Each of the one-on-one, semi-structured interviews will be conducted during this forty-five minute time slot.

Risks and Discomforts:

We do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research. If you become stressed or uncomfortable answering any of the interview questions or discussing topics during the interview you can skip the question or take a break. You can also stop the interview and complete it another day, or you can withdraw from the project altogether.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You:

By participating in this research, you will be able to share your thoughts and experiences about critical media literacy, reflecting on professional development opportunities you may have had throughout the BEd program relating to the topic. Once the research is finalized, the Principal Investigator will create a workshop (a PowerPoint presentation) based on the study's key findings, which will then be shared with you in the Spring of 2023, when the thesis is in the final stages of writing. You will be free to use the contents of this workshop in your own classroom and future endeavours. This workshop component (PowerPoint presentation) requires no additional participation on your end. In addition, through participating in this research, you may further reflect on how to create engaging classroom activities and methods from which your future students may benefit.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer, to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions will

Figure C1. The first page of the Informed Consent Form.

not influence the nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the Principal Investigator or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible. Should you wish to withdraw after the study, you will have the option to also withdraw your data up until the analysis is complete.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be known to the Principal Investigator. In addition to the Principal Investigator, her primary supervisor will also have access to the data. However, anonymity will be maintained throughout the Principal Investigator's thesis and any subsequent publications arising from this research. Any identifying information you supply during the research will be held in confidence, your name will not appear in the thesis or publication of the research. Your interview responses will be anonymized in the thesis or any report, publication, or presentation of this research. In the case of an interview using Zoom and you choose to turn on your video for the interview, only the audio will be recorded, using a digital recorder. Your data will be safely stored in a password protected file folder on the Principal Investigator's password protected computer and only she will have access to this information. Handwritten notes and any printed copies of informed consent documents will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal Investigator's home office in Toronto, Ontario. Raw interview audio files will be deleted after transcription is completed; all other data will be deleted five years after the project completion date.

The participants' data in the form of audio-recorded Zoom interviews will be stored on the Principal Investigator's computer. The data will be stored for five years after the one-on-one interviews are conducted and subsequently destroyed. If the Principal Investigator makes any handwritten notes, those notes will be destroyed using a paper shredder. Correspondingly, digital data, such as password-protected audio recordings, will be permanently deleted from the Principal Investigator's computer. All data will be destroyed on or before December 15, 2027. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

This study will use Zoom to collect data, which is an externally hosted cloud-based service. When information is transmitted over the internet privacy cannot be guaranteed. There is always a risk your responses may be intercepted by a third party (e.g., government agencies, hackers). Further, while York University researchers will not collect or use IP address or other information which could link your participant to your computer or electronic devices without informing you, there is a small risk with any platform such as this of data that is collected on external servers falling outside the control of the research team. If you are concerned about this, we would be happy to make alternative arrangements (where possible) for you to participate, perhaps via telephone. Please contact Julianna L. Kowlessar at for further information.

Audio recordings will be saved in a password protected file to the Principal Investigator's local computer, not the cloud-based service.

Please note that it is the expectation that participants agree not to make any unauthorized recordings of the content of a meeting / data collection session.

Questions About the Research?

If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Julianna L. Kowlessar at or her supervisor, Dr. Kelly Bergstrom at. You may also contact the Graduate Program in Communication & Culture at.

This research has received ethics review and approval by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is delegated authority to review research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-

Figure C2. The second page of the Informed Consent Form.

Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, Kaneff Tower, York University.

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I _____, consent to participate in the study, Bringing the Fun Back Into Learning: Assessing Teacher Candidates' Current Attitudes on Critical Media Literacy Education and Remixed, Student-Created Board Games as Pedagogical Tools conducted by Julianna L. Kowlessar. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature

Participant

Date _____

Signature

Principal Investigator

Date _____

Additional Consent:

1. Audio recording

I consent to the audio-recording of my participation in the interview.

Signature:

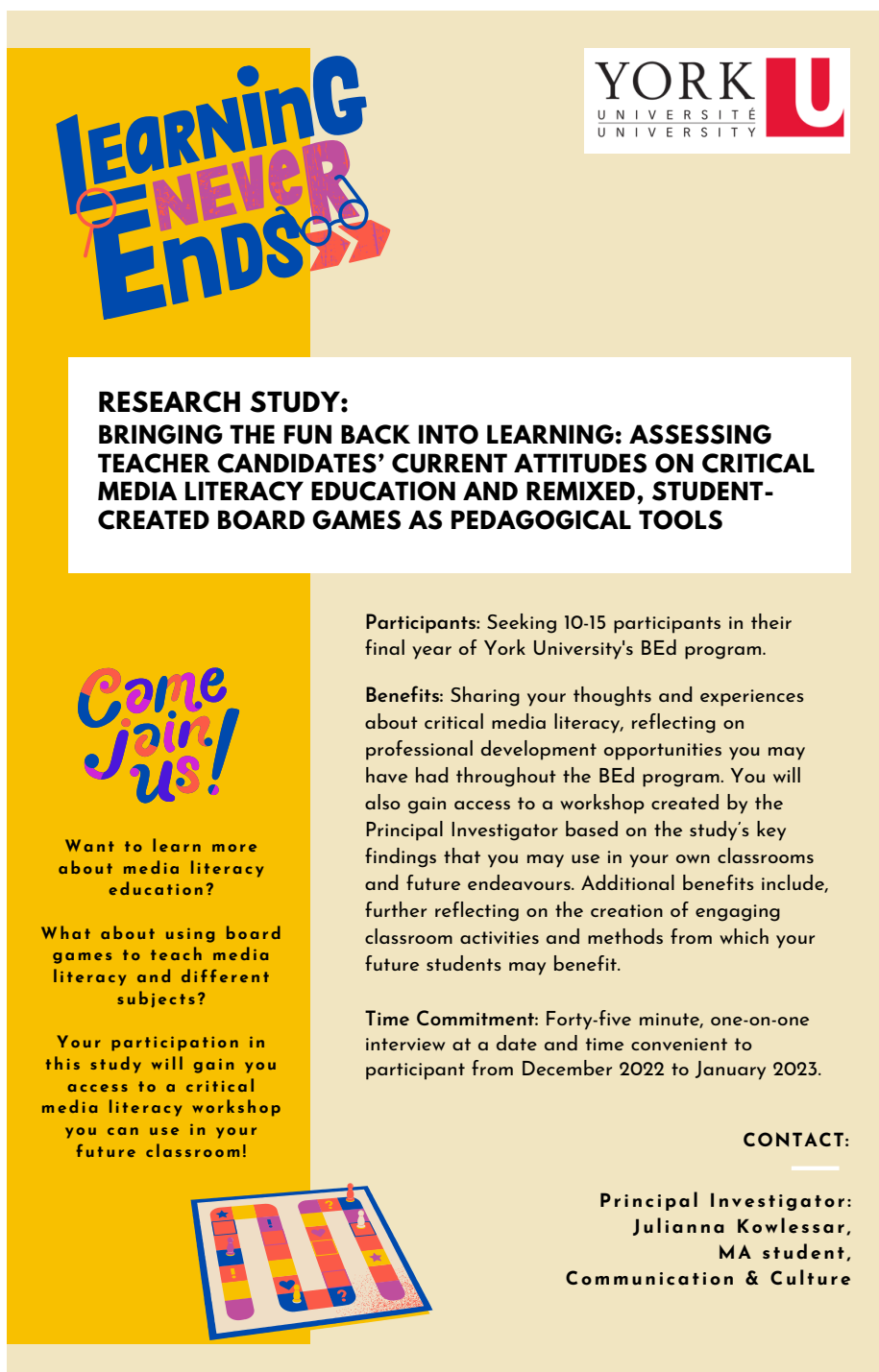
Date:

Participant Name: _____

Figure C3. The third page of the Informed Consent Form.

Appendix D

Recruitment Flyer



LEARNING NEVER ENDS

YORK UNIVERSITY

**RESEARCH STUDY:
BRINGING THE FUN BACK INTO LEARNING: ASSESSING
TEACHER CANDIDATES' CURRENT ATTITUDES ON CRITICAL
MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION AND REMIXED, STUDENT-
CREATED BOARD GAMES AS PEDAGOGICAL TOOLS**

Come join us!

Want to learn more about media literacy education?

What about using board games to teach media literacy and different subjects?

Your participation in this study will gain you access to a critical media literacy workshop you can use in your future classroom!

Participants: Seeking 10-15 participants in their final year of York University's BEd program.

Benefits: Sharing your thoughts and experiences about critical media literacy, reflecting on professional development opportunities you may have had throughout the BEd program. You will also gain access to a workshop created by the Principal Investigator based on the study's key findings that you may use in your own classrooms and future endeavours. Additional benefits include, further reflecting on the creation of engaging classroom activities and methods from which your future students may benefit.

Time Commitment: Forty-five minute, one-on-one interview at a date and time convenient to participant from December 2022 to January 2023.

CONTACT:

**Principal Investigator:
Julianna Kowlessar,
MA student,
Communication & Culture**

Figure D1. Pictured above is the recruitment flyer, which was disseminated over email to potential participants.

Appendix E

Recruitment Email

Recruitment Email

November 2022

To: Faculty of Education – Attention BEd Students in the Final Year of the Program

Dear BEd students,

I am an MA student in the Communication & Culture program conducting a research study about teacher candidates' (BEd students') current perspectives on critical media literacy, gaining an understanding of the professional development opportunities they may have engaged in to teach the subject, and exploring the future of critical media literacy education and the unique ways it can be taught to Toronto elementary and secondary students.

This study entails conducting one-on-one interviews over Zoom. These interviews will be around forty-five minutes per participant and will run from the end of November 2022 to mid-December 2022, at dates and times convenient to the participants.

Potential benefits of participating in this research include being able to share thoughts and experiences about critical media literacy, reflecting on professional development opportunities throughout the BEd program related to the topic. Once the research is finalized, I will create a workshop based on the study's key findings, which will then be shared with participants. Participants may use the contents of the workshop in their own classroom and future endeavours. In addition, participation in this research may encourage ideas on creating engaging classroom activities and methods from which future students may benefit.

Ten to fifteen BEd student participants in their final year of the program are needed for this study.

If you wish to participate or request more information about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Julianna Kowlessar
MA student, Communication & Culture

Figure E1. Pictured above is the recruitment email that was initially sent to the Faculty of Education Student Association on November 24, 2022.

Appendix F

Workshop/Presentation Slides for Participants' Use

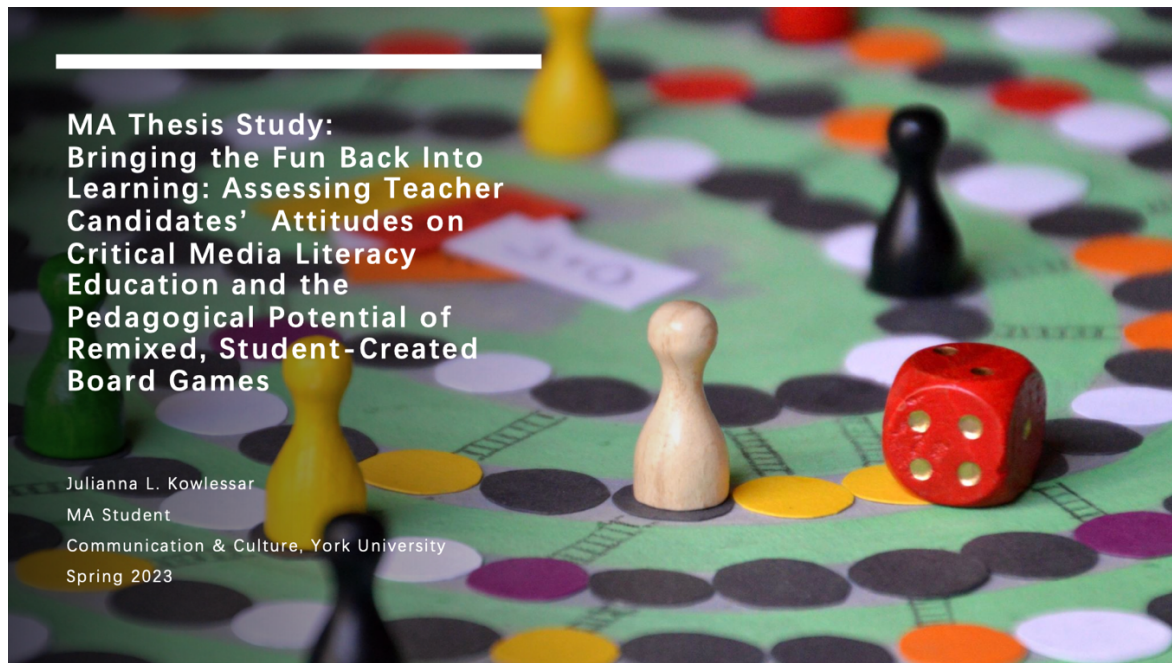


Figure F1. Screenshot of introductory slide of the PowerPoint sent to participants summarizing the study's results and resources on critical media literacy.



Figure F2. Screenshot of second slide of the PowerPoint thanking participants.



Figure F3. Screenshot of third slide of the PowerPoint outlining contents.

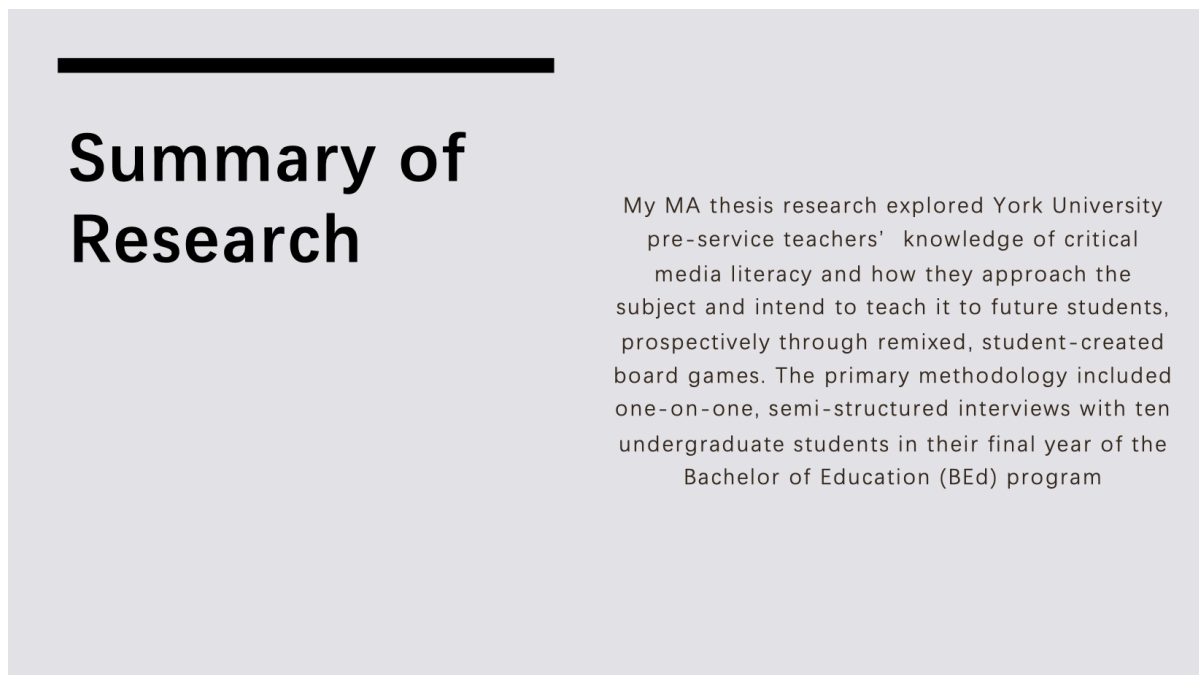


Figure F4. Screenshot of fourth slide of the PowerPoint offering a summary of the research.



Significance of Research

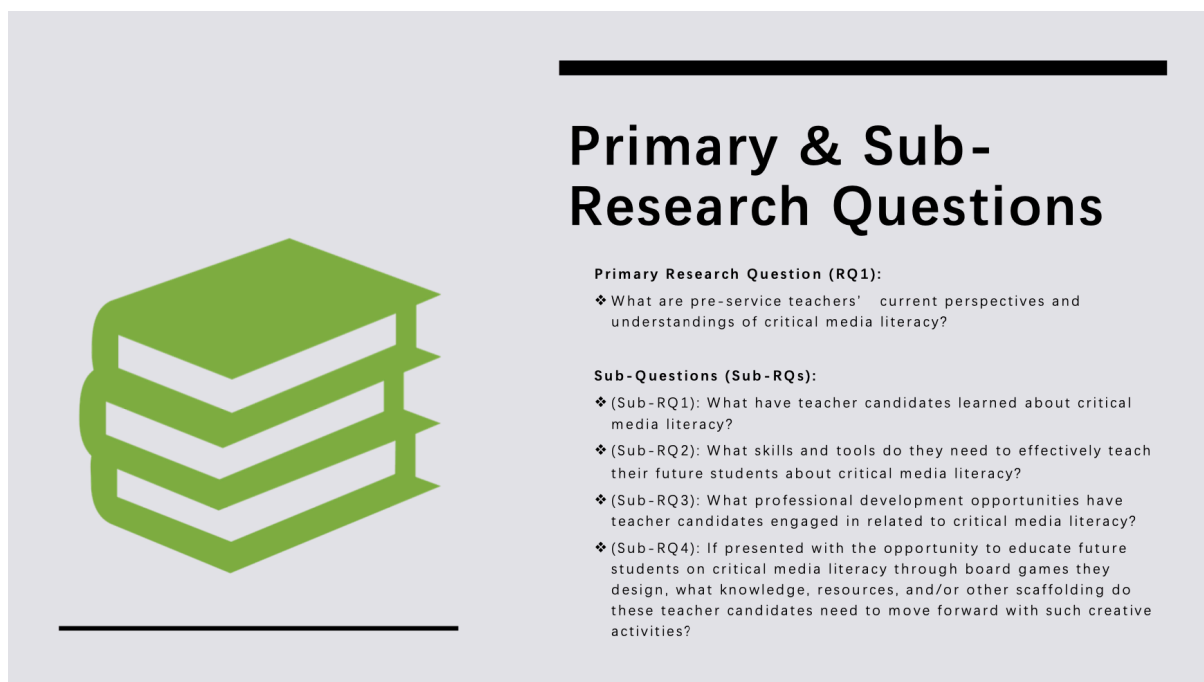
Cruz and Dorsch (2019): "Higher education institutions must make programmatic change to course offerings and graduation requirements, and must allocate funds and faculty positions for this new academic initiative" (p. 146).

Although there are many benefits of critical media literacy, an underexplored area is pre-service teachers' training on and preparedness to teach the subject in elementary and secondary classrooms

Butler (2019): "Education in critical media literacy needs to begin with teachers, preferably during their formal education" (p. 157).

Kallner and Share (2019): "In Canada, where media literacy is mandatory in every grade from 1-12, most new teachers are not receiving media literacy training in their pre-service programs" (p. 62).

Figure F5. Screenshot of fifth slide of the PowerPoint detailing the significance of the research.



Primary & Sub-Research Questions

Primary Research Question (RQ1):

- ❖ What are pre-service teachers' current perspectives and understandings of critical media literacy?

Sub-Questions (Sub-RQs):

- ❖ (Sub-RQ1): What have teacher candidates learned about critical media literacy?
- ❖ (Sub-RQ2): What skills and tools do they need to effectively teach their future students about critical media literacy?
- ❖ (Sub-RQ3): What professional development opportunities have teacher candidates engaged in related to critical media literacy?
- ❖ (Sub-RQ4): If presented with the opportunity to educate future students on critical media literacy through board games they design, what knowledge, resources, and/or other scaffolding do these teacher candidates need to move forward with such creative activities?

Figure F6. Screenshot of sixth slide of the PowerPoint outlining the primary and sub-research questions.

What is Critical Media Literacy?



Board Games as a Medium to Teach Critical Media Literacy (Kowlessar, 2022)

"A theoretical framework and practical pedagogy in order to enhance individual sovereignty vis-à-vis media culture, empowering people to critically read, write, and create a better world"
(Kellner & Share, 2019, p. xi)

Figure F7. Screenshot of seventh slide of the PowerPoint offering a video-based definition of critical media literacy.

Inspiration for Research



I became interested in critical media literacy during my undergraduate degree in communication studies at York University



Mediations of Identity (COMN 4725) with Dr. Stephen Gennaro



Assignment: choose a theme and create a unique Monopoly board to highlight the principles of intersectional theory



I designed "Hip Hop- opoly" (preview on next slide)



This assignment encouraged critical and reflective thinking both personally and academically



The potential for games to be used as forms of pedagogy to teach the principles of critical media literacy

Figure F8. Screenshot of eighth slide of the PowerPoint explaining what inspired the research.

MA Thesis Research Summary





-  Qualitative study
-  Conducted ten one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with eligible participants from December 2022 – January 2023
-  Participants were final-year students in York University's BEd program
-  Eight guiding interview questions were posed to each participant (listed on following slide)

Figure F11. Screenshot of eleventh slide of the PowerPoint outlining a summary of the research conducted.

Guiding Interview Questions

1. During your time in the BEd program, what have you learned about media literacy?
2. When you hear the term "media literacy," what do you think of?
3. If you had unlimited time and resources, how would you teach your future students about media literacy?
4. Have you had any experiences with media literacy outside of your formal education (i.e. participation in after school clubs, work positions, etc.)?
5. What tools do you wish you would have had to prepare you to teach future students about critical media literacy?
6. Based on your knowledge of critical media literacy, do you believe there are benefits of teaching students about the subject in diverse ways?
7. Would you consider teaching your students about critical media literacy through remixed board games that they construct?
8. Do you think this method (remixed, student-created board games) would stimulate their creative abilities and encourage them to learn using different styles (visual, kinaesthetic and auditory)?

Figure F12. Screenshot of twelfth slide of the PowerPoint outlining the guiding interview questions posed to participants.



Figure F13. Screenshot of thirteenth slide of the PowerPoint detailing the study's preliminary findings.

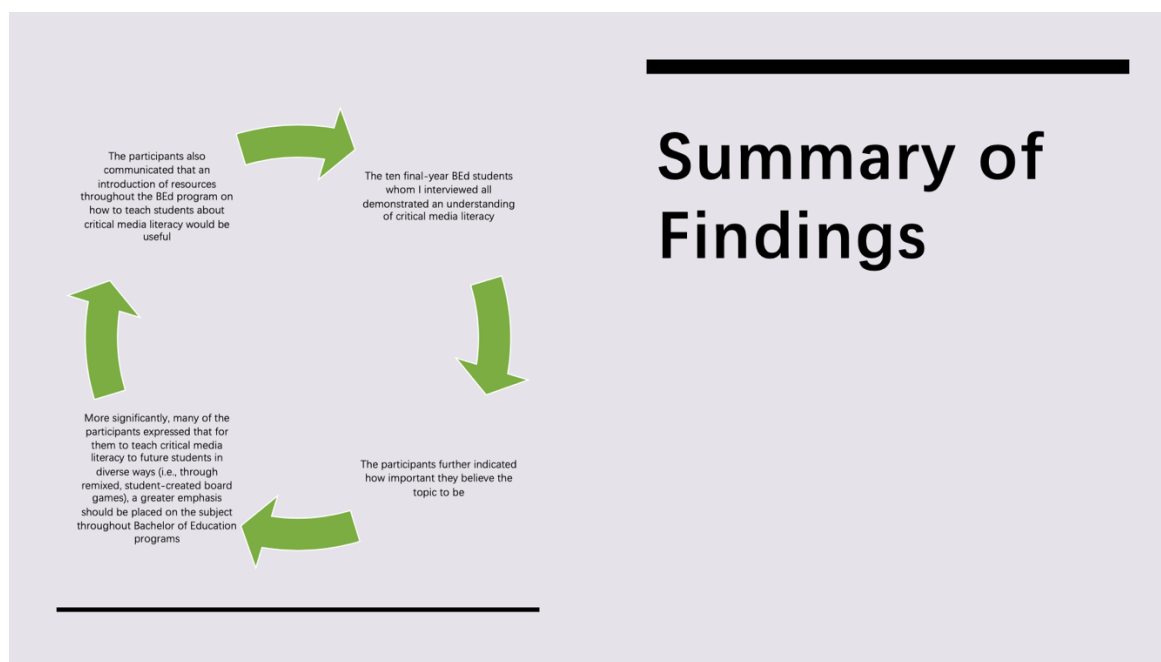


Figure F14. Screenshot of fourteenth slide of the PowerPoint providing a summary of the study's findings.

Next Steps



I am looking to continue this research at the doctoral level, conducting a longitudinal study with the BEd students who participated in my master's thesis research



My doctoral research would specifically observe the ten teacher candidates' students in classroom settings to determine how they feel about and create their own remixed board games to highlight themes pertinent to critical media literacy



This expanded study would address the question: How can student-created, remixed board games, such as Monopoly, that highlight themes pertinent to critical media literacy foster students' skills within the subject and their overall academic and personal growth?

Figure F15. Screenshot of fifteenth slide of the PowerPoint explaining the next steps in terms of succeeding research.

Additional Resources for Use in Your Future Classrooms

Websites

1. MediaSmarts: <https://mediasmarts.ca>
2. News Literacy Project: <https://newslit.org>
3. Canva: <https://www.canva.com>
4. Association for Media Literacy (AML): <https://aml.ca>
5. Critical Media Literacy Research Guide (UCLA): <https://guides.library.ucla.edu/c.php?g=1108715&p=8084564>
6. Media Literacy Now: <https://medialiteracynow.org/resources-for-teachers/>
7. Common Sense Education: <https://www.commonsense.org/education/articles/media-literacy-resources-for-classrooms#Media%20Literacy%20Courses%20and%20Curricula>
8. Critical Media Project: <https://criticalmediaproject.org>

Figure F16. Screenshot of sixteenth slide of the PowerPoint providing website resources for participants to employ in their future classrooms.

Additional Resources for Use in Your Future Classrooms Cont.

Books

Borba, M. (2016). *Unselfie: Why empathetic kids succeed in our all-about-me world* (First Edition). Touchstone.

Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2019). *The critical media literacy guide: Engaging media and transforming education*. Brill Sense.

Rogers, T., Winters, K.-L., Perry, M., & LaMonde, A.-M. (2015). *Youth, critical literacies, and civic engagement: Arts, media, and literacy in the lives of adolescents*. Routledge.

Journal Articles

Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2005). Toward critical media literacy: Core concepts, debates, organizations, and policy. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 26(3), 369–386. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01586300500200169>

Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2007). Critical media literacy: Crucial policy choices for a twenty-first-century democracy. *Policy Futures in Education*, 5(1), 59–69. <https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2007.5.1.59>

Kersch, D., & Lesley, M. (2019). Hosting and healing: A framework for critical media literacy pedagogy. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 11(3), 37–48. <https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2019-11-3-4>

McArthur, S. A. (2019). "It's like black and white!": Critical media literacy and social justice in the elementary classroom. *The International Journal of Critical Media Literacy*, 1(1), 118–127. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25900110-00101010>

Saunders, J. M., Ash, G. E., Salazar, I., Pruitt, R., Wallach, D., Breed, E., Saldana, S., & Szachacz, A. (2017). "We're already somebody": High school students practicing critical media literacy in (in real life). *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 60(5), 515–526. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.617>

Yousman, L. B. (2019). "I am not alone": The additional benefits of critical media literacy. *The International Journal of Critical Media Literacy*, 1(1), 38–50. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25900110-00101003>

Figure F17. Screenshot of seventeenth slide of the PowerPoint providing book and journal article resources for participants to employ in their future classrooms.

References

Butler, A. (2019). Teacher education: The next needed step in critical media literacy education. *The International Journal of Critical Media Literacy*, 1(2), 153–172. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25900110-00102001>

Cruz, A., & Dorsch, J. (2019). Critical media literacy in global disquiet times. *The International Journal of Critical Media Literacy*, 1(2), 137–152. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25900110-00102002>

Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2019). *The critical media literacy guide: Engaging media and transforming education*. Brill Sense.

Figure F18. Screenshot of eighteenth slide of the PowerPoint outlining the references used.

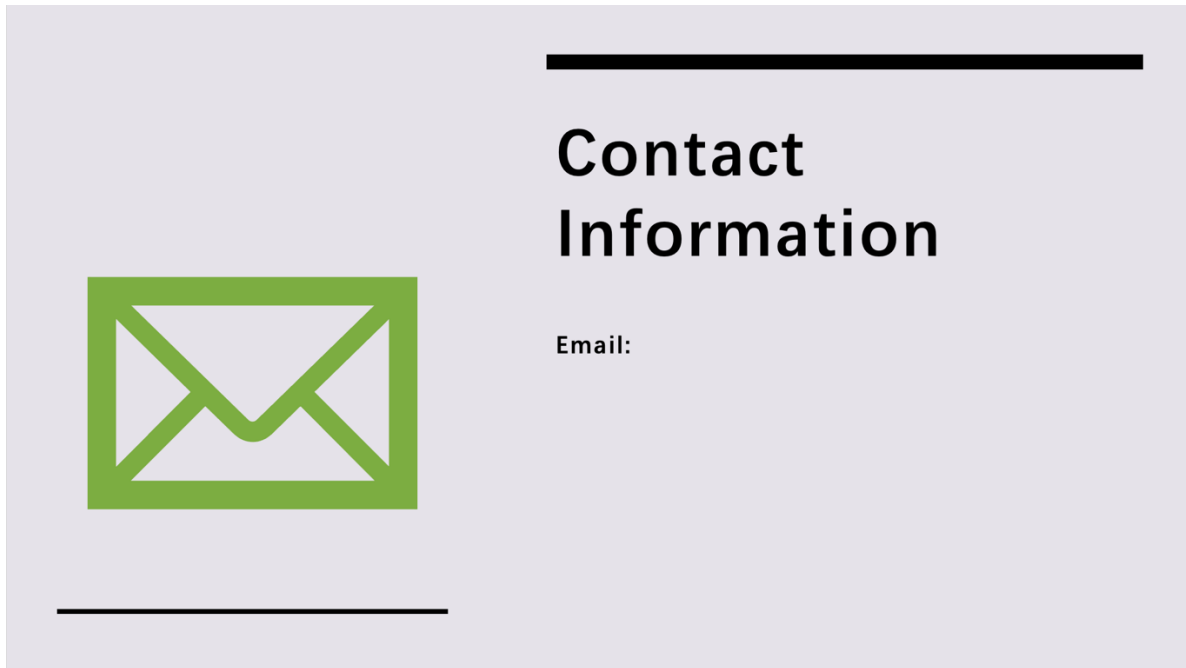


Figure F19. Screenshot of nineteenth and final slide of the PowerPoint, which includes my contact information for participants.