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**Conversations About Book Challenges and Bans:
Civil Discourse through Talking Frames and Sentence Stems**

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Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement

Censorship of school and community libraries has increased dramatically in the last several years, according to statistics tracked by The American Library Association (ALA) (2022), leaving many individuals affected by the removal or ban of books, materials, and services. Connolly (2022) reports that the challenges have also left librarians feeling increased stress. One such librarian is April Stone, who, despite being a professional and trusting her own judgement, worries that parents will raise issue with a text she has chosen and begin a challenge. The idea of a challenge is stressful for many librarians, according to a 2016 survey done by the School Library Journal. In fact, 29% of those interviewed agreed that they more carefully consider the possible effects of controversial subject matter now more than they did even one or two years ago.

The ALA (2022) reports that in 2021, their Office for Intellectual Freedom tracked over 700 challenges to materials and services provided by libraries, schools, and upper education institutions, which resulted in over 1,597 individual instances of book challenges or removals nationwide. This is the highest number of challenges since the ALA began tracking them over twenty years ago. When books are taken from shelves, students lose access to a resource. That book could be a way to see themselves reflected in published material, often referred to as a *mirror*, a term coined by Bishop (1990). The removed book could also offer insight into the life of someone whose world is completely and entirely different from their own, giving the student the opportunity to experience a new worldview and expand their own; the term Bishop uses for this is a *window*. By taking these mirrors and windows off the shelves, students are losing the

opportunity to see themselves reflected in literature and to grow empathy for others' experiences.

Importance and Rationale

Each person should have the opportunity to see parts of their identity and their own life story in literature. In November of 2021, the ALA released a statement condemning the dramatic increase in censorship attempts and informed readers that often those whose identities are marginalized in one or more aspects are most often the ones whose voices are being challenged and literature being removed or banned. The ALA (2021) reports that books authored by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and all other gender identities and sexualities that are not cisgender, heterosexual, and heteroromantic (LGBTQ+) people and also those that have authors who are black, indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC) make up a disproportionate number of the challenged books. The same is true for books that include LGBTQ+ and BIPOC themes or stories. Therefore, those whose lives are already potentially more challenging because of their marginalized identities are also those whose stories are being suppressed. Whelan (2009) raises the voice of Pat Scales, who asserts that "The mistake that we make about young adult literature is that it's only for the student who can identify with it. But straight kids need to read... to learn about tolerance" (p. 49). It is to every person's benefit to read about a variety of life experiences. It is also to every person's detriment to intentionally exclude certain life experiences and remove the option to access them from interested individuals.

The issue is not limited to the challenge of books. Oltmann (2016) also reports that several public librarians surveyed disagree with the ALA (CITE) stance on intellectual freedom

which presses against the idea of internet filters as a viable catch-all for content. The librarians in some communities argued that according to the standards in their own communities, search systems which are in the libraries should have content filters to prevent the search of certain terms. “Several” out of a study with 108 respondents may not seem like a grave concern, but that actually equates to several *communities* that will be affected by the lack of intellectual freedom at those libraries, cutting them off from valuable resources that are found through internet searches.

When books are banned and ideas are censored, we lose information from various cultures, religions, social classes, ethnicities, sexualities, gender identities, political viewpoints, and first-hand accounts of history as told by both sides – not only the victors. In this digital age, it is hopeful that another tragedy on scale with the burning of the library of Alexandria could not happen, as digital records are preserved in multiple places and, as they say, once something is on the internet, it is there forever. However, that does not mean that attempts could not be made to fully censor information that could be valuable. In August of 2022, Isaac Dushku set out to create a book of maps in the style of the popular *Lord of the Rings* series by J.R.R. Tolkien on the crowdfunding site Kickstarter. The maps were focused on the United States, but also included two dozen other maps. In September, he updated those who supported his project – his backers – with a development that surprised him. As he had been planning to have the book printed in China, he was told that he would have to delete some of the maps, or the books would never make it out of customs. The world map contained Taiwan, Tibet, and Hong Kong, which he was told he would have to remove. He initially planned to remove the world map, but then was also asked to remove the map of India, then the one of Japan, and finally Korea as

well. He ultimately made the decision to utilize another printing company, particularly one in a country that does not censor the very existence of other places.

In some instances, censorship can cause situations that endanger the lives of others. Gostin (2004) recognizes this in his book *The AIDS Pandemic: Complacency, Injustice, and Unfulfilled Expectations*. He notes that when the AIDS crisis began, the only real treatment for many people was to make changes to the way they lived their lives. The World Health Organization began to promote the ideas of speaking up about real experiences, the truth of who could contract AIDS and in what ways, giving education to the population about AIDS and other sexual health matters, and promoted efforts to change laws that allowed discrimination based on HIV status and laws against “homosexual offenses” (p. xiv). Despite the efforts of many individuals and organizations to spread lifesaving and life-changing health information, Gostin (2004) reports that many country, organization, and health leaders as well as government officials fell into “embarrassed silence” (p. xiv). Due to a lack of available information to the public, or due to the suppression of that information, Gostin (2004) recalls that many people who contracted HIV/AIDS were stigmatized, treated with disdain, and discriminated against. Sometimes, censorship is a refusal to make information known, whether through malicious intent or through fearful complacency.

Background of the Project

Censorship is far from a new concept. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) (n.d.) defines censorship as “the suppression of words, images, or ideas that are ‘offensive,’ [which] happens whenever some people succeed in imposing their personal political or moral values on others” (n.p.). There have always been ideas that some groups of people find offensive or

distasteful, and suppressing the words and ideas that those in power object to has been a consistent theme throughout the world, especially in instances of war, takeovers, and occupations. Censorship is not limited to those extremes, however. Censorship can also be quiet, even done by one's own self, before a challenge can even be issued. The School Library Journal (SLJ) reports from its 2016 survey on controversial books that in elementary and middle school libraries, over 90% of librarians have intentionally not purchased a book due to the potential for controversy (p. 2). Book challenges are stressful events, as evidenced by the report from that same survey that 25% of librarians have said that experiencing a book challenge has affected their own selection process for the future. If it was an administrator who challenged the book, the number rises to 46%.

Hicks et al. (2022) remind their readers that the culture we experience is not stagnant, and that the qualifications for what is acceptable change constantly and also vary from person to person. In an effort to shield their children from content that goes against their own values, parents are challenging books with content that they disapprove of. This is a revised and reinvigorated contention, not a novel controversy.

The ALA (2017) notes that in some communities, leaders feel that students and patrons should be able to access information via the internet, but also fear that there may come a time when inappropriate content may be accessed. Communities want to protect their youngest and – in their eyes – most vulnerable patrons from such content. Or perhaps the library in question is required to have filters to receive funding. However, the ALA (2001) is in opposition to filtering, as “there is no proven technology that both blocks out all illegal content and allows access to all constitutionally protected material” (p. 1). While internet content filters may keep

individuals from accessing pornographic material, it is also keeping those same individuals from accessing knowledge about how their own body works. In a study done by Gibson et al. (2020), women who did not have frequent, open communication about sexual health had greater sexual anxiety and were less likely to participate in a sexual health screening, in turn. Conservative discussions of sex and sexual health led to greater sexual anxiety, even in adulthood. In a review of existing literature by Simon and Daneback (2013) done to determine the extent that the internet is used by adolescents for sexual education, it was determined that in 36 studies, the percentage of the sample who did use the internet as a sexual education resourced ranged from 20% to 76.5%. From these conclusions, we can theorize that children from households only having conservative sexual health and sexual education conversations (or no conversations) are likely many of those doing internet research. If the only unmonitored access to internet that a patron has is at their library, the patron should be able to use that as a resource to learn about themselves – physically or otherwise.

Even when filters are applied with honorable intentions, the ALA (2015) notes that research has proven consistently that internet content filters are consistent in their inconsistency, both over- and under-filtering content. The ALA suggests that instead of applying these filters, children are taught about internet safety, where to find accurate and reliable sources, and how to research. The ALA also proposes that rather than filtering all content, individuals who misuse the technology granted to them (i.e., a student looking up pornography) be given consequences individually.

Libraries and the materials and resources contained within are precious and should be protected. Kevin Jennings (2006), who founded the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education

Network, says that libraries were “the first place I found any information about gay people that was objective and gave me a sense that I might have a future. I probably would not be exaggerating to say libraries saved my life” (p. 22). Jennings is not alone in this sentiment. Garry (2015) cites several studies that all reach the same conclusion: LGBTQ+ students feel safer in schools that have some LGBTQ+ resources, like clubs such as the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) or other supports. Library collections that have LGBTQ+ stories and voices add to the supports available for those students and make the school a safer place. Garry notes that schools with these supports also experience lower rates of harassment and bullying.

The Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC) (2021), a part of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, began collecting data on how many books per year were published by black authors. They began their work in 1985, and found that for that year, of the approximately 2,500 books published, only 18 of those books were by black authors. The data has a general upward trend, with the most recent data from 2021 stating that of the 3,420 books received at CCBC, 314 were written by black or African authors and 450 were about black or African characters. Starting from 2018 to 2021, they expanded their data collection to include indigenous, Asian, Latine, Pacific Islander, and Arab authors and characters. Looking at the numbers from CCBC, we see that just under 10% of the books published were by black or African authors. How many of those books were purchased for public or school libraries? Surely not all of them. Statistically, that means that unless specifically sought out and purchased by the librarian, it is likely that 10% or less of the books that were new to the library that year were providing black and African students to see themselves in literature. For other groups, even less. In 2021, there were 60 books by indigenous authors, 503 by Asian authors, 328 by

Latine authors, 24 by Arab authors, and 8 by Pacific Islander authors. Again, unless school and public librarians specifically seek out these books, there will be few opportunities for students and patrons in these groups to read books by authors who may share cultural connections with them.

With such comparatively low numbers of books published by BIPOC authors, censorship of these books makes collections and therefore available resources even smaller. In the ALA's 2021 Top 10 Most Challenged Books report, two thirds of the books are by LGBTQ+ or BIPOC authors. Black authors George M. Johnson, Angie Thomas, and Toni Morrison are all on that list. Approximately one third of the books that were in the top 10 most challenged were by black authors. Ashley Hope Perez is a Latina author, and Sherman Alexie is an indigenous author. When combined with the data above from CCBC (2021), the selection of books by BIPOC authors may be severely limited for patrons at some libraries.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project is to help alleviate some of the stress that librarians and teachers face when a book is being challenged or when a librarian or teacher must justify a purchase to a parent or administrator. This is a stressful process, and the goal is to give librarians and teachers talking points, backed up by research and statistics, in the form of a talking frame. This project will create a resource for those pushing against censorship, which can be used to engage individuals with concerns in meaningful conversation about their concerns, the rationale of these concerns, laws regarding censorship and intellectual freedom, and options available for moving forward.

Objectives of the Project

This project will use research-based articles, surveys, and press releases to create a talking frame that will guide a potentially difficult conversation about censorship, book challenges and bans, filtering, and content. Using accounts of conversations and objections raised previously, this project will seek to anticipate potential questions and concerns and provide answers that are grounded in research. Though this project will not stop censorship, it may give librarians and teachers more courage to purchase books they were reconsidering, reach out to concerned administrators and families, or even just provide peace of mind that librarians and teachers are doing the right thing by helping students grow through a diverse book collection.

Definition of Terms

Censorship – Defined by the ACLU (n.d.) as “the suppression of words, images, or ideas that are ‘offensive,’ [which] happens whenever some people succeed in imposing their personal political or moral values on others” (n.p.).

Mirror – A term coined by Bishop (1990) to describe the experience of seeing an aspect of oneself reflected in literature

Window – A term coined by Bishop (1990) to describe the experience of using literature to see life from another’s perspective that is different than one’s own

ALA – American Library Association. Their website states that the ALA (n.d.) is a library association whose mission is “to provide leadership for the development, promotion and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all” (n.p.).

ACLU – American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU (n.d.a) is “the nation’s largest public interest law firm” (n.p.) which defends the civil liberties of citizens of the United States of America.

LGBTQ+ - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and all other gender identities and sexualities that are not cisgender, heterosexual, and heteroromantic

BIPOC – Black, indigenous, and people of color

SLJ – School Library Journal. The SLJ (n.d.) defines itself as a publication that is for information specialists and librarians who work with children and teens. Their focus is on “literacy, best practices, technology, education policy and other issues of interest to the school library and greater educator community” (n.p.).

CRT - Critical race theory. A social theory that says that racism is not most often found in the extraordinary, but rather in the ordinary. Many aspects of racism (and indeed, other biases) are integrated into the daily lives and thoughts and actions of everyday people, and often require conscious effort to combat.

Transactional theory –Rosenblatt’s (1978) theory of reading that asserts that the reader is not a vessel for meaning to be poured into, rather the reader and the text interact with one another, the text offering its meaning and the reader bringing their own schema to it to interpret the text in their own way.

Civil discourse – Leskes (2013) says,

Discourse that is civil means that those involved: undertake a serious exchange of views; focus on the issues rather than on the individual(s) espousing them; defend their interpretations using verified information; thoughtfully listen to what others say; seek the sources of disagreements and points of common purpose; embody open-

mindedness and a willingness change their minds; assume they will need to compromise and are willing to do so; treat the ideas of others with respect; avoid violence (physical, emotional, and verbal). (2-3)

Scope and Limitations of the Project

This project will address concerns that have been raised previously about some books, reviewing conversations that have been had and giving K-12 librarians and teachers examples of possible dialogue about books that are being challenged. When a book is challenged, the framework this project will create will begin by seeking to clarify that the challenged book actually does meet the proper definition for the concerns raised against it (e.g., that a book being decried as “pornographic” actually has gratuitous explicit sexual content). This project will also seek to anticipate possible concerns and offer potential solutions or counterpoints to arguments made against a diverse library collection. This project will not be reviewing specific books and outlining and countering challenges against them, nor will it seek to provide recommended library titles. The goal of this project is to focus on the librarian or teacher who may be in a stressful situation and alleviate some stress by giving that authority figure a tool to use when speaking to other concerned adults.

This project will be limited in scope. It will give example conversations of one book per age group (elementary, middle, and high school), but will provide talking frames based on various aspects of books. These will also be limited. The frames will be limited to picture books, graphic novels, novels, books with LGBTQ+ content, and books by and about BIPOC authors. The frames will anticipate possible questions and complaints and give a path forward for a conversation around the book, however this project will not be able to anticipate all possible

questions. The project will provide links to other helpful sources about book challenges and censorship to direct those who need assistance beyond the scope of this project.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Book bans, challenges, and removals have increased dramatically in the last several years, according to the ALA (2022). When books, materials, and resources are limited or removed, students lose access to information and material that is a potential reflection of their own life or a view of another's life, helping the reader to foster empathy. The loss of these books is often a form of censorship, defined by the ACLU (n.d.) as "the suppression of words, images, or ideas that are 'offensive,' [which] happens whenever some people succeed in imposing their personal political or moral values on others" (n.p.). The challenging of books has led to increased stress for librarians, as they report to the SLJ (2016), in that they now more carefully consider what they may purchase for the library, lest it be challenged.

The formation of the resources created in this project are predicated on several theories which provide a larger context as to why this project is important. The theories to be addressed include Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory and critical race theory as explained by Delgado and Stephancic (2017). After the theoretical rationale, there will be coverage of research and articles focusing on censorship, civil discourse, and sentence stems. Following that, a summary and conclusion of chapter two.

Theory/Rationale

This project is framed by two educational theories: Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory and critical race theory (CRT) as explained by Delgado and Stephancic (2017). These two theories give purpose to the fight against censorship in libraries, asking individuals to examine

the roles of the book and the reader in relation to one another and also to grapple with *why* some of these books, materials, and services are being challenged, banned, or removed.

Rosenblatt (1978) asserts that the role of the reader is not often brought to light when discussing a text. The reader is often relegated to being an empty vessel for the text, simply a receptacle for the impact of the text, without their own thoughts or interactions with the text being considered. Rosenblatt reminds us that the reader is in fact *not* an empty vessel – each reader brings experiences, beliefs, biases, and perspective to a text that are not identical to any other reader. With this in mind, this project seeks to remind the reader that each person interacts with and interprets text differently, and they are transacting with it in their own way. What each person derives from a text will depend on who they are: their personal background socially, religiously, politically, culturally, and in every other aspect of their identity.

If every person will interact with a text differently, and it is known that the reader is not merely a vessel in which to pour information and have it blindly accepted, the logical conclusion is that censoring a text because there are concerns that the reader will find certain topics contained therein acceptable when they were previously reprehensible is quite a flimsy argument. It is possible that a text can help the reader gain empathy for another and soften harshness and bias, but someone who is firmly against drug use is not likely to read a text with a character that smokes marijuana and decide to try it themselves based solely on the text they read. Indeed, Rosenblatt (1978) declares that “The finding of meanings involves both the authors’ text and what the reader brings to it” (p. 14).

Delgado and Stephancic (2017) put the root of the problem quite aptly: “The first feature [of Critical Race Theory], ordinariness, means that racism is difficult to address or cure

because it is not acknowledged” (p. 8). Indeed, many librarians may be making choices rooted in racism without meaning to or even with seemingly good intentions. When a librarian makes a display for the library, are there books by BIPOC authors? If not, why? If the answer is that there are simply no books that apply to that display by BIPOC authors, perhaps the librarian could consider being more intentional about purchasing books from author of all backgrounds. Perhaps this librarian simply wants to reflect the population they serve, which may be largely white. Even so, why detract from opportunities to broaden students’ horizons?

Delgado and Stephancic (2017) also posit that the racism leveraged against different people groups changes as it is convenient for those in power. At one point, those from the Middle East are *exotic*, seen with sheer, flowing outfits for the warm desert sun, standing near an oasis and full of fantastic tales. Yet, when the narrative must shift to fit the purpose of those in power, suddenly those same people from those same regions are *terrorists*, scary bomb-makers who huddle and talk in a foreign language – maybe about you – and plot to destroy your country.

Books by BIPOC authors offer authentic views of life for people of those cultures and backgrounds, rather than a fanciful or tainted scene painted through the lens of an artist who has only heard the tale secondhand. Authenticity in books is important as it gives genuine nuance to all aspects of the book. That is not to say that white authors should not include BIPOC characters – rather the opposite, if they are well-researched and done with cultural appreciation! However, librarians should seek out books that are accurate reflections of cultures, not those that play into stereotypes. In the words of Delgado and Stephancic (2017),

“...members of this country’s dominant racial group cannot easily grasp what it is like to be nonwhite” (p. 46). Who better to give those insights than those who are BIPOC?

CRT also brings to light the disquieting reality of revisionist history – that is, the truth of history is often lost to the rewritten, more palatable versions of history that those in power portray. For an example of this, we need only look at stories of Thanksgiving. The often-told tale is that of white pilgrims who formed a close friendship with the Native Americans in the area, and they celebrated and gave thanks with a feast, glad to have been taught how to survive the approaching winter. The reality, of course, is much darker. There are books about the real story of the white settlers and the surrounding Native American tribes, but they are sometimes lowly rated by reviewers online, with some comments even claiming that *these* stories are “revisionist history... [that] paints a picture of the European’s coming to America and lying, cheating, enslaving and murdering the native peoples just to steal their lands” (Lee, 2014) or even going so far as to claim that the historical accounts are “[presenting] the idea of greedy Pilgrims vs. noble and enlightened savages. Very unbalanced in its depiction of history” (Lover, 2008). Lies should not be given to children simply because they are more palatable than the truth. History is ugly and dark, and it must be learned from, lest it be repeated.

Research/Evaluation

Censorship

Steele (2020) asserts that “Censorship has been, is, and will continue to be one of the single most important issues for librarians” (p. 19). In her article *A History of Censorship in the United States*, Steele outlines censorship as it moved through the country in various media, due to various social or religious groups, and the laws that allowed or stood against it. She notes

that race has been a contentious point of censorship since the very beginning of censorship in the USA. When libraries were first established in communities that could afford them, they were largely by, for, and curated by upper class white men. Thus, the information contained therein was largely catering to the whims and wants of those men. When the H.W. Wilson Company began to publish their *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*, many libraries used this as their main influence for which periodicals they should purchase for their collection. However, this index did not allow for periodicals authored by minorities, meaning that many of those periodicals were effectively suppressed.

Pinnavaia (2014) brings to light the difference between more traditional censorship and the censorship often seen in schools today. She notes that it is not generally a large-scale effort from the political, social, or religious powers that face public libraries, but rather attempts from individuals to shield themselves or their communities from what they perceive as “harmful behavior, such as physical and verbal abuse” (p. 217). However, Steele (2020) asserts that while there are many librarians who may find it difficult to obtain and circulate contentious or controversial materials in the libraries they maintain, it simply is not the librarian’s right to curate what others are allowed to read or what kind of lives they should live. It is an individual’s right to not read a certain book or to tell their own child not to read it. It is not that individual’s right to remove access to the book for other adults and children.

Steele (2020) regales how libraries in the late 1800s worked to limit the amount of fiction that was being circulated. Policies of closed shelves were adopted, in which a patron would have to ask the librarian to retrieve the book from the stacks in order to check it out. Later, patrons were allowed to check out two books at a time, but only one of those books

could be fiction. These limits in an attempt to further educate the populace may have had somewhat honorable intentions, but they were censorship nonetheless.

Pinnavaia (2014) notes that TV shows, film and movies, magazines, and newspapers often do not limit bad language, but books with so-called “bad language” are challenged. Steele (2020) recounts, however, Tipper Gore’s fight to censor the music industry. Originally, Gore’s group sought to give specific labels for various kinds of objectionable content. Ultimately, however, their group was able to get a generic warning printed on music that was considered explicit.

Post-World War II, some publishing companies began to publish books with alluring covers to attract new readers, according to Steele (2020). However, the arguments against those books echo ones often heard in objection to contemporary ones. That is, they would “[affect] the moral standards of the country and [lead] to increased juvenile delinquency” (p. 10). The moral panic of books (or the internet or music or any other number of popular media) being a gateway to the downfall of society is an age-old cry of those who wish to silence topics they find disagreeable.

LGBTQ+ families can find it difficult to access LGBTQ+ materials in public libraries due to parents frequently challenging books with LGBTQ+ themes or characters (Steele 2020). Often, these are censored as a claim of “protecting” children from these ideas. However, Steele (2020) reminds readers that adults with authority in a child’s life (teachers, parents, librarians, etc.) have a responsibility to prepare children and teens for realities that they will face later in life, including the fact that there are people who are part of the LGBTQ+ community. It is a

librarian's responsibility and professional duty to provide materials that contain information that meets the needs of their community, no matter the difference in beliefs or background.

Civil Discourse

The tenants of civil discourse are imperative to this project. Civil discourse, in its most simple definition, is a discussion in which there is an agreement in place to listen genuinely to one another's position and not allow outside factors to cloud judgement – taking the words of the other as genuine and well-meaning. Leskes (2013) implores readers to consider that the heated confrontations and vicious discourse that occurs in today's society is no modern phenomena. In a society where there are many differences, especially in religious, political, cultural, and moral stances, there are bound to be strong feelings and, consequently, strong disagreements. However, flinging hurtful words and defacing character is not the key to compromise. A civil discourse is what is needed, an opportunity for those with opposing viewpoints to really hear what the other is saying. Even if no agreement is reached, the individuals involved can hear the reasoning from the other party, listening to factual information and determining what they will assimilate into their schema.

If there is an inability to discuss conflicting ideas without fear of damaging or losing relationships, then something about the process of discussion must change. In order for real resolution to occur, there must be discussion with intent to understand, or at least honestly hear the other party out. The yearly conversations surrounding Thanksgiving are a great example of this. Inevitably, someone will comment that they are going to stir things up at Thanksgiving, or perhaps they will have to endure loud opinions from a family member they do not agree with but do not want to argue with. Crowley (2016) notes that "We dislike

disagreement because it seems to invite discord” (p. 26). Why is it so hard to have a discussion rather than an argument? Emotions surrounding the types of conversations that often occur when many family members with varying points of view are gathered are often quite strong. With topics such as religion, politics, LGBTQ+ rights, privilege and the existence of marginalized groups, etc., there are bound to be conflicting viewpoints when a large group of varying ages, generations, class, and other identities are gathered. The key is to be able to have a discussion in a civilized manner, and that civilized discussion is called civil discourse.

A challenge of civil discourse is that it must be taught (Leskes 2013). It is a specific process that involves the agreement of all parties to consent to follow the norms of the conversation. Some of those norms are outlined by Leskes (2013), who says,

Discourse that is civil means that those involved: undertake a serious exchange of views; focus on the issues rather than on the individual(s) espousing them; defend their interpretations using verified information; thoughtfully listen to what others say; seek the sources of disagreements and points of common purpose; embody open-mindedness and a willingness change their minds; assume they will need to compromise and are willing to do so; treat the ideas of others with respect; avoid violence (physical, emotional, and verbal). (2-3)

In order for civil discourse to be effective, we must have built up the cornerstone of civil discourse: respect for all those involved (Barrs 2016). If the participants hold no respect for one another, the discourse is not likely to be productive, as neither party will have a strong interest in believing that the other is genuine or, in any way, correct. Crowley (2006) insists that there must be some scholarly standards to rely upon and to base the ethics of analysis and

conversations. Disagreement is inevitable, and educators must be prepared for it. In some cases, an educator must be prepared to also prepare their conversation partner. That is, the educator may need to introduce civil discourse as a concept, then lay out the norms for the conversation.

Crowley (2016) notes that within belief systems, there is a sense of togetherness or similarities that those in a system afford one another. However, with that togetherness comes otherness. Anyone not within the system is an “other.” This binary thinking leads to a lack of nuance, and often results in beliefs that the system is safe while anything “other” is unsafe. That is a large part of why many parents are so passionate about the book challenges they set forth: they are, in their views, protecting their children from the unsafety of the “other” and the beliefs that come along with it. Therefore it is imperative that educators first break down the barrier of “us vs. them” before engaging in discourse.

When discussing the challenge, ban, or removal of a book, all parties involved must be able to civilly discuss concerns, definitions of the complaints lodged against the book (i.e., what does it really mean for a book to contain sexually explicit content), policy of the school or library, and next steps. If not all parties are prepared to agree to the norms of a civil discourse, the parties may not be ready to participate in that discussion. It may be wise for all parties to gather their thoughts and have the discussion at a later date.

Sentence Stems

Civil discourse is necessary for productive discussions when there are conflicting ideals. That being said, the sudden introduction of civil discourse will not necessarily come easily or naturally. To aid in the transition from argument to civil discourse, several tools are available.

The first, mentioned above, are the norms for conversation. Laying ground rules and expectations allows all parties to agree to civil actions, beliefs, and behaviors. However, just agreeing to the terms does not necessarily give a solid starting point. That is where the use of sentence stems can bridge the gap between the lack of argument and the uncertainty of how to start a civil discourse.

Anderson and Dobie (2022) analyzed the use of sentence stems in online teacher professional development, particularly the stems “I notice...” and “I wonder...” when speaking to other teachers in an effort to give more constructive feedback rather than only praise. Though not the same situation, sentence stems can provide support for awkward or contentious conversations. When there is uncertainty about what to say or how to phrase something, a sentence stem can further conversation by shaping thoughts into questions or statements that fit within a civil discourse. In their findings, Anderson and Dobie (2022) suggest the creation of some stems for use when there is explicit disagreement between two parties, as a way to constructively build their perspective for communication to the other party. These stems should offer a statement of disagreement, respectfully. Communicating conflicting viewpoints in ways such as “I disagree with x because...” allows for civil discourse to take its course.

Hodges (2011) used sentence stems to determine client attitudes toward specific topics. She would read a stem to the client, and the client would complete the sentence. This gave a different frame for conversations and was an additional tool for use when assessing the needs of clients, as they were able to communicate their thoughts and emotions by completing the stem. In a similar way, during civil discourse on a library book challenge, the challenger could

complete the stem “I issued a challenge against this book because...” which allows the concerned party to take ownership of the challenge and give their reasoning. They could follow up with a statement such as “I find this inappropriate because...” and continue the discourse.

Educators use sentence stems when engaging students in conversation about a text or when asking students to engage in conversation with one another as a way to keep the conversation on track. In their 2022 article, Coulombe and Zuccaro give the examples of “I remember...; I learned...; and I wonder...” (p. 24) as sentence stems for students to use when discussing comprehension of a text. In a similar way, educators can make use of stems such as “I remember you saying...; Can you tell me more about...; I think I hear you saying...; The school’s policy on that is...; I hear you using the term x. I wonder if that meets the definition, let’s check that,” etc. Sentence stems are a tool for when conversation is uncertain, uncomfortable, or just plain tough. Having a list of sentence stems and examples can assist parties engaged in civil discourse in staying aligned with the norms agreed upon before the conversation.

Summary

Rosenblatt’s (1978) transactional theory asserts that the reader is transacting with the text, creating a meaning that is nuanced and specific to the reader. Two students may read the same poem but interpret it differently due to varying life experiences and culture; that is an example of the transactional theory at work. Readers are not mere vessels to be poured into, and a text cannot force an individual to adopt an idea that is at odds with their schema. When discussing the challenging and banning of books, it is important to consider these words from

Rosenblatt (1978): “The finding of meanings involves both the authors’ text and what the reader brings to it” (p. 14).

Delgado and Stephancic (2017) remind us that racism is often quiet, unassuming, and automatic. Racism in most individuals’ lives presents in ways that are likely subconscious or simply not thought about – the reinforcement of harmful or hurtful stereotypes, watching a BIPOC customer more closely than a white one, or moving a purse away from a pair speaking in an unfamiliar language nearby. Racism is often a product wariness or fear of the unknown. Books that are written from authentic voices are important in providing those not of that background or identity with accurate representations of their own experiences, making that identity or background more familiar.

Censorship has been prevalent in the United States since its inception (Steele 2020). In one way or another, there have always been attempts to limit or eliminate certain viewpoints, texts, or ideas. Censorship can take on many forms and is an incredibly important issue for teachers and librarians to consider when curating their collections. The building of a library, be it school, public, or classroom, must be done with intention. Censorship *can* be the age-old tale of the powerful victors rewriting history, but most commonly today is seen on a more individual basis, with case-to-case issues presenting concern about potential harm that a text can give, according to Pinnavaia (2014). Some censorship is even seen from within the library, but Steele (2020) insists that librarians are not within their rights if they are attempting to censor their collection. It is not their duty to decide what others are and are not allowed to read.

Civil discourse is a form of communication that is predicated on respect and certain other norms such as using factual information, being intentional about listening with openness

to what the other party is saying, and keeping in mind the issue at hand rather than the individual presenting their argument. Leskes (2013) asserts that the kinds of vicious discussions and irate debates that take place today are no new phenomenon, but rather history cycling, showing a new era of the same passionate disagreement. However, Leskes (2013) insists that civil discourse, though it must be taught, is an invaluable skill to have. Civil discourse establishes expectations for thoughtful communication with the express interest of all ideas being expressed and understood by all parties (Leskes 2013). When all parties feel that they are being heard and listened to, communication is much more likely to be effective. A civil discourse establishes the tone of respect that is necessary when discussing contentious topics (Barrs 2016).

Sentence stems are a structure used in conversation when articulating certain ideas may be difficult or awkward. By giving the parties a guide for potential sentence beginnings or responses, they are able to communicate ideas that they may have been uncertain of articulating. Anderson and Dobie (2022) used sentence stems to have teachers working in an online professional development offer not only praise to one another, but also to express disagreement. Sentence stems offer support in difficult conversations. They can help frame discussions respectfully and give options to the speakers for how to continue the conversation.

Conclusions

Censorship is as prevalent as it has always been, if not more so. Perhaps not on such a large scale, as in a nation rewriting the narrative of history, but the case-by-case instances of book, material, or service challenging and banning have surged in recent years according to the ALA (2021). This project serves to look back at the history of censorship, acknowledge previous

decisions made in regards to what the laws say is permissible, and offer teachers and librarians avenues to avoid censorship.

Civil discourse when discussing book challenges and bans is a must. If both parties are not respectful and truly listening to what the other is saying, then no proper conclusion can be reached. Each person brings with them their own life experiences when reading a text, as Rosenblatt (1978) has expressed. Those life experiences must be acknowledged, as well as the difference between each person, if individuals who are in conflict are going to be able to reach a resolution. The use of sentence stems can provide additional support in civil discourse, for both sides. The individual challenging a book can raise their concerns respectfully, and the teacher or librarian opposing the challenge can also articulate their perspective. The challenger could begin with "I believe x should be removed from the collection because..." and the opposing individual could make their argument heard while also presenting differing views with a stem such as, "I appreciate hearing your perspective. I heard you say that x book has y. Let's define y before we move on. Y is..." Civil discourse and sentence stems are tools that librarians and teachers can use to help combat censorship, book challenges or bans, and discuss controversial or contentious ideas.

Chapter Three: Project Description

Introduction

Censorship of school and public libraries is on the rise. The ALA (2022) reports record high numbers of book challenges, book bans, and reports of censorship. The goal of this project is not to prevent books from being challenged, but to give teachers, librarians, and administrators the words they need to have civil discourse with those seeking to challenge or ban books in their libraries. Through the use of a talking frame made of sentence stems, this project works to relieve some of the stress of these difficult conversations, opening the door for genuine conversation and open communication.

Within this chapter, there will be a description of the project components, the components themselves, and an evaluation of how the elements of this project are evaluated. The author will also describe what success with this project looks like, the conclusions the author has made about the project, and the plans for implementation of the talking frames.

Project Components

The sentence stems within the talking frames in this project (found in the appendices) are a tool created to ease some of the stress of potentially harrowing conversations and to give words where they may be challenging to supply independently. This project acknowledges that often those challenging a book are doing so in the interest of protecting those around them (Steele 2020). Thus, this project seeks to give both the challenger and the book advocate (i.e., teachers, librarians, and administrators) supports for a difficult conversation by establishing a talking frame. These frames will also provide sentence stems for civil discourse for all parties, including ways to express concerns and disagreements. The appendices will be organized

according to complaint, followed by definitions of common challenges books face. The sentence frames offer space for each party to note the ideas of their conversation partner – giving each an opportunity to better understand the other. The appendices are as follows: Appendix A: Norms for Civil Discourse on the Topic of Book Challenges and Bans; Appendix B: Talking Frames for Use in Civil Discourse on Book Challenges and Bans via Sentence Stems for a Teacher, Librarian, or Administrator; Appendix C: Concrete Definitions for Common Book Challenge Objections; Appendix D: Talking Frames for Use in Civil Discourse on the Topic of Book Challenges and Bans via Sentence Stems for an Individual Challenging the Book; Appendix E: Post-Conversation Survey.

Appendix A: Norms for Civil Discourse on the Topic of Book Challenges and Bans is a pre-conversation agreement for all parties involved in the discussion in accordance with the norms set forth by Leskes (2013). This should be used to set the tone of the ensuing conversation. Norms are set in place to ensure that all parties have the same understandings and expectations for the conversation, as well as outlining other important details, such as ending the conversation if the discussion does not remain respectful (see Appendix A). Appendix B: Talking Frames for Use in Civil Discourse on Book Challenges and Bans via Sentence Stems for a Teacher, Librarian, or Administrator is the talking frame document for use by those defending books in a book challenge conversation. This document makes use of sentence stems, as Anderson and Dobie (2022) recommend for conversations which are challenging, to give support to the speakers when they may be uncertain of how to best express their ideas. Appendix C: Concrete Definitions for Common Book Challenge Objections gives some suggested definitions for terms that may be used in a book challenge, so that all parties have an agreed-

upon definition, and all parties are referencing the same description of content. These definitions are gathered from various sources. If needed, parties can further discuss the definitions, ensuring shared understanding around each term, and add them to Appendix A with the other norms. Appendix D: Talking Frames for Use in Civil Discourse on the Topic of Book Challenges and Bans via Sentence Stems for an Individual Challenging the Book gives the challenger sentence stems to support their stance. Anderson and Dobie (2022) recommend the use of sentence stems especially for disagreement, which will likely occur during the discussion. This recommendation seeks to give all parties an avenue for having their voice heard in a respectful manner. The purpose of Appendix D is to ensure that the party who is challenging a book also has a resource that includes respectful suggestions for how to enter into a civil discourse. Appendix E: Post-Conversation Survey is a survey for the benefit of the author, in order to gather information about how the sentence frames have been used, their effectiveness, and how they could be improved for future use.

Project Evaluation

In order to be successful, the talking frames must be available for teachers and librarians to use. The data gathered from the number of downloads and reviews left on the product will give an idea of the need for the talking frames. The success of the conversations may not always be that the book is no longer considered a challenged book in that library, but that both parties are able to express their viewpoints, concerns, and work toward a solution. The solution may not be one that both parties are entirely satisfied with, but if it is reached through civil discourse, this project will have been successful. This data is anecdotal and may be difficult to obtain unless volunteered by those who make use of the talking frames. Therefore, a post

conversation survey will be included in the download for the talking frames (see Appendix E). This will be available as a paper copy that can be emailed or as a link to a Google Form.

Project Conclusions

This project invites individuals with concerns or opposing viewpoints to come together for honest communication regarding books that are being challenged or are in danger of being banned. This project relieves some of the stress of heavy and awkward communication by providing sentence stems to each party in order to give speaking options that are respectful and aimed at following the norms of civil discourse. The use of the talking frames contained in the appendices will give those advocating for the books the words they need to express the importance of the book being challenged and the dangers of censorship. The definitions in the following appendix give solid definitions for possible challenges – in this way, there is no ambiguity as to what “sexually explicit” or “bad language” refer to. Through the use of these talking frames (see Appendices B and D) and sentence stems contained therein, this project seeks to ease the stress of tough conversations surrounding book challenges and book bans through the use of a civil discourse.

Plans for Implementation

This project’s appendices will be uploaded as free resources on Teachers Pay Teachers and Pinterest, sites that are frequented by many educators. The project will also be submitted to the ALA as a resource, though whether they will post it or not remains to be seen. This paper will also be available through Grand Valley State University ScholarWorks.

There are many avenues for interested parties to continue the research collected in this project. There is much information about the history of censorship and also a good deal of data

about the censorship currently happening, but little information is available about constructive responses to censorship. There have been few who have studied the responses of librarians and teachers to the challenges of books and very little written about what has been most effective. The frames in these appendices are a starting point. Going forward, those inclined to further this topic may pursue such things as book challenge processes for use in schools, form letters for librarians to pass on to families explaining the value of various perspectives and critical thinking, or a professional development for librarians and teachers about censorship and ways to address it.

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Appendix A

Norms for Civil Discourse on the Topic of Book Challenges and Bans

Norms are guidelines that both parties agree to follow when holding a discussion. These norms guide the discussion to create civil discourse – communication in which both parties listen openly and put in effort to understand one another.

Norms:

- ___ We will presume positive intentions – each party wants the best outcome for children and students and therefore is speaking genuinely.
- ___ We will listen with open minds – the other party may have a new perspective or new information to share.
- ___ We will center the topic at hand rather than the individuals presenting the ideas.
- ___ We will stay on topic and respect one another’s time.
- ___ We will give one another time to pause and reflect or gather thoughts if needed.
- ___ We will consider one another’s perspective, acknowledging differences in background and identity.
- ___ We will remain respectful in our words and tone, or we will end the conversation.
- ___ We will resume the conversation at another time if necessary.
- ___ We acknowledge that there may not be a concrete answer by the end of this conversation.
- ___ Additional norms from one or both parties, if applicable:

○ _____

Appendix B

Talking Frames for Use in Civil Discourse on Book Challenges and Bans via Sentence Stems

Teacher, Librarian, or Administrator

Discussion Point	Sentence Stems	Relevant Resources
Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hello, I am ____, and my position here is ____. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. It's good to meet you. - Good to see you again, ____. Thank you for coming in today. - Welcome, ____. I'm ____. I appreciate the time you've taken to meet with me to discuss ____. 	
Norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Before we start, let's go over these norms for our talk today. - The norm that stands out to me today is ____ because ____. - I would like to add ____ if that is agreeable? - Do you feel that we are missing anything? - These norms are important to our talk because ____. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appendix A, pg. 36 - "Civil Discourse" Chapter 2, pg. 20-22 - Leskes, A. (2013). A plea for civil discourse: needed, the academy's leadership. <i>Liberal Education</i>, 99(4). - Crowley, S. (2006). <i>Toward a civil discourse: Rhetoric and fundamentalism</i>. University of Pittsburgh Press. - Barrs, K. (2016). Setting the stage for civil discourse. <i>Social Education</i> 80(5), 272– 275.
Book Challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - So today, we are discussing ____. - What are the concerns you have today? - When we spoke previously, you mentioned ____. - Is this a book you have read? - What do you find objectionable in this book? 	

Clarification of Objections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you show me where that is located in the book? - What page is that on? - Can you please explain that a bit more? - Tell me more about ____. - What do you mean by that? - Will you clarify ____? - How did you discover ____? - I think I hear you saying _____. 	
Challenger's Viewpoint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why do you find ____ to be a problem? - Is this something you think no child/student should read? - Would there still be a problem if we limit access to this for only your child? - Why do you feel that no one should have access to this title? - Would you feel the same if ____ was ____ instead? - What makes ____ a problem for you? - Do you think that others share your viewpoint? - Do you think your student/child feels the same way? - Is this a topic/theme you avoid in your own home? 	
Disagreement, Opposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not quite. Rather, _____. - In this case I don't agree because _____. - Consider it differently: _____. - I understand your perspective. Please consider: _____. - That doesn't align with our policy. - Unfortunately, no. - I hear your frustration. Thank you for sharing your perspective. Here is my perspective _____. 	
Agreement, Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absolutely. - I hadn't thought about ____ in that way before. - Thank you for phrasing it like that, _____ is a helpful way to think of that concept. - That is a valid point. - I understand. - Thank you for sharing that with me. - Yes! Exactly. - Yes, _____ is correct. 	

<p>Challenge of Sexually Explicit Content</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What do you consider to be sexually explicit?</i> - <i>The definition of sexually explicit is _____. Let's see if this book qualifies.</i> - <i>This book is currently available to _____. At what point would you consider it acceptable for a student to read it?</i> - <i>What parts of this book have explicit content?</i> - <i>Is there literary merit to this book?</i> - <i>Is existing explicit content the focus, or an aside?</i> - <i>This book's intended audience is _____.</i> 	<p>- Appendix C</p>
<p>Challenge of Graphic Depiction of Violence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Why do you consider this book to have graphic depictions of violence?</i> - <i>What pages show the graphic depictions of violence?</i> - <i>Is violence the focus of the book?</i> - <i>What age group do you consider appropriate for this book?</i> - <i>The intended age group for this book is _____.</i> - <i>Let's review to see if this meets the criteria to be a graphic depiction of violence. The definition is _____.</i> - <i>What are you most concerned about if patrons do read this book?</i> 	<p>- Appendix C</p>
<p>Challenge of Indoctrination or Hate Speech</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What do you consider to be indoctrinating in this book?</i> - <i>Is this something you can discuss with your child/student?</i> - <i>What is harmful in this book?</i> - <i>Why do you consider _____ to be _____?</i> - <i>What is your understanding of _____?</i> - <i>The definition of _____ is _____. Does that match with what is in this book?</i> - <i>Is there something to be learned from the themes in this book?</i> - <i>Is the _____ aimed toward a character or toward real people? Is there a consequence or resolution?</i> - <i>Why did the author include _____?</i> 	<p>- Appendix C</p>
<p>Challenge of Foul Language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What do you consider to be foul language?</i> - <i>In what way does the foul language affect this book?</i> - <i>Where is the foul language in this book?</i> 	<p>- Appendix C</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How often does _____ occur? - What is the recommended age for this book? - What would you consider acceptable? - What would the corresponding rating be if this were a movie rather than a book? 	
Challenge of Sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the concern here? - Would you feel this way if there were only heterosexual characters? - Is there explicit sexual content, or only discussion of sexuality? - In what way is _____ objectionable? - Is this a concern for only your student/child, or for everyone reading this book? - Why is _____ concerning for you? - The policy is _____. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appendix C - School or library policy
Challenge of Objectional Graphics or Pictures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where are the objectional graphics or pictures? - How often do they occur in the book? - What is the concern with this image? - Let's look at the definition for _____. - What age level do you feel this is appropriate for? - What would your solution for this be? - What is most troubling to you about _____? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appendix C
School or Library's Stance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As you may know, our policy is _____. - The dangers of removing this book are _____. - This book is a valuable resource to our patrons because _____. - The process for reviewing a book is _____. - This book was purchased and added to our collection because _____. - This book shows the perspective of _____. - In a similar challenge, _____. It resolved _____. - We at _____ follow _____, which says _____. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Copy of school or library policy on books - Process for reviewing books - Process for selecting books - American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights
Clarification of School or Library's Stance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - _____ in this case refers to _____. - Yes, _____. - Not quite. Rather, _____. - The policy states _____. - Here at _____, we _____. - I'm not sure. I will clarify that and get back to you. 	
Dangers of Censorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Censorship can lead to _____. - This would be censorship because _____. - Avoiding censorship is important because _____. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Censorship often favors those in power, erasing voices such as _____.</i> - <i>Censorship can be disguised as curating a collection.</i> - <i>Most censorship occurs on a small scale, such as _____.</i> - <i>Censorship silences important voices such as _____.</i> 	
Benefits to Keeping the Book	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>This book offers _____ perspective.</i> - <i>Our community is _____, and this book give perspective on _____.</i> - <i>_____ is a great resource for those curious about _____.</i> - <i>I know _____ is a concern for you, but the benefits of _____ must be considered.</i> - <i>This book resonates with students/children who are also _____.</i> - <i>This book is an authentic voice for _____.</i> - <i>This book offers perspective for _____ into the life of _____.</i> - <i>This book is different from our daily lives.</i> - <i>This book has merit in _____.</i> - <i>Students who have read this have said _____.</i> 	
Potential Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I can make use of the notes feature in our library system to make a note that _____ should not check out this book.</i> - <i>Notes such as these allow one student to avoid a topic but other students to engage with it.</i> - <i>The process for a challenge is _____.</i> - <i>Have you had a discussion with _____ about this book or books like it?</i> - <i>Does your family discuss your values?</i> - <i>Do not underestimate children/students, as they are capable of integrating or rejecting new information they read.</i> - <i>Family discussions promote the values of your family without controlling what other families can consume.</i> - <i>Let's try _____.</i> - <i>I like your idea of _____. Let's run that by _____.</i> - <i>Maybe _____ has some ideas?</i> 	

Resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thank you for working together with me today. - I feel that this was a productive conversation because _____. - To recap, _____. - Today we discussed _____. - The solution we are going to try is _____. - We will meet again to continue _____. 	
Conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thank you for coming in today, _____. I appreciate your time. - Thank you for sharing your perspective with me and keeping an open mind. - Remember our norms. If we are getting too heated, we can continue another day. - I believe we need to stop this conversation for today and return to it later. - Thank you for your time and honest opinions today. - I really appreciated when you said _____. That will stick with me. - I know we both want what is best for children/students, so thank you for _____. - I appreciate the conversation we had today. - Do you have any further questions about _____? - Please feel free to reach out via _____ if you have questions. 	

Appendix C

Concrete Definitions for Common Book Challenge Objections

These definitions are a guide for conversation. If there is already a definition in use at the school or library, that may be used instead. If there is a disagreement about the term, pause the larger conversation to come to an agreement about the term so that all parties are conversing with the same understanding of terms.

Sexually explicit – Describing in detail the act(s) of sex. The Iowa Administrative Code (2022) defines material as sexually explicit when there are graphic sexual acts. This includes any kind of penetrative sex, oral sex, or other detailed sex act. Could refer to graphic novels showing the act of sex explicitly.

Sexually mature – It is implied that the characters are engaging in sex, but it is not explicit. Archive of Our Own (n.d.) refers to mature content as content that is not “as graphic as explicit-rated content.” Often this means that euphemistic terms are used and sexual scenes are implied.

Graphic depictions of violence – Detailed, frame-by-frame descriptions of acts of violence described in the text that are extreme, such as intentional dismemberment, decapitation, murder, suicide, torture, etc. Also includes sexual violence such as graphic rape or sexual assault. Can also refer to graphic novels showing any of the above. In the Twitter (n.d.) sensitive media policy, graphic violence includes these as well as physical child abuse and severely injured animals.

Depictions of violence – Descriptions or images showing violence such as war, accidents resulting in grave injury, intentional harm to oneself or another person, broken limbs, etc.

Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines violence as “the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy” (n.p.).

Indoctrination or hate speech – Indoctrination refers to an intentional effort by a person or groups of people to revise a person’s perspective on an issue, usually one at odds with their current ideals. A book containing different ideas than one’s own is not necessarily aimed at indoctrinating readers. To be indoctrination, there must be conviction that all other viewpoints are wrong, factually and morally. The Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines indoctrination as “the process of repeating an idea or belief to someone until they accept it without criticism or question” (n.p.). Hate speech includes encouragement of violence against a particular group due to their identity, background, religion, or culture; slurs or harmful stereotypes being leveraged against people in those groups; dehumanization; or other speech designed to sow seeds of distrust and malice against a particular group. The ALA (n.d.A) notes that there must be the intent to “vilify, humiliate, or incite hatred” (n.p.).

Foul language – Swearing, cursing, cussing, etc. Consider the Motion Picture Association’s (2020) movie rating standards when analyzing language – usually language will not be present in G rated films, may be used several times when requiring parental guidance, with some frequency when rated PG-13, and often in films intended for adult audiences.

Sexuality – Sexuality includes discussion of one’s attraction to others or lack thereof, romantically or sexually. Sexuality is not included as sexually mature or explicit unless also meeting the criteria above. If a discussion of sexuality is done using descriptions of sexual acts, it may be considered explicit in nature. However, discussing attraction to others is not inherently sexual, as defined by the Human Rights Campaign (n.d.) “An inherent or immutable

enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.” Note that this is not necessarily indicative of explicit implications or conversations.

Critical Race Theory – CRT. A social theory. In CRT, it is accepted that racism is often subtle, subconscious, or accidental (Delgado & Stephancic 2017). The majority of racism is not large acts of hate speech and violence. However, reinforcing harmful stereotypes can sow seeds of distrust toward those who are different. Racism is often something that must be unlearned with intentionality.

Appendix D

Talking Frames for Use in Civil Discourse on Book Challenges and Bans via Sentence Stems

Individual Challenging the Book

Discussion Point	Sentence Stems
Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hello, I am ____, and I am ____'s _____. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. It's good to meet you. - Good to see you again, _____. Thank you for having me today. - Hi, _____. I'm _____. I appreciate the time you've taken to meet with me to discuss _____.
Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am concerned that _____. - The book I am bringing up for consideration today is _____. I find _____ to be a problem because _____. - _____ occurs on the following pages: _____. - I am worried about _____. - I believe this is a problem that affects _____. - What are the possible solutions for confronting _____? - I discovered _____ when _____. - I feel that _____. - In my opinion, _____. - My perspective is that _____.
Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes, I believe _____. - That's correct. - Yes, I hadn't thought of it that way. - Yes, that is what I was saying. - That is my perspective, yes. - I agree.
Disagreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - My perspective is a bit different. To me, _____. - I see where you're coming from. However, _____. - For me, _____. - I see things a little differently. _____. - That is a valid point, but consider _____. - I disagree because _____. - To my understanding, _____.
Clarification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you mean by _____? - Can you clarify _____ for me? - Who does _____ apply to? - Can you explain _____ a bit more? - Will you please explain _____ in more detail?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Say more about ____, please. - How so?
Resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I think a solution to this could be ____. - Some of the ideas I have are ____. - I like your idea of ____. - I feel that the best ideas are ____. - I don't think we have reached a solution. Maybe we should continue this discussion ____? - That's a great idea. - What do you think of ____.
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thank you for sharing your perspective with me and keeping an open mind. - Remember our norms. If we are getting too heated, we can continue another day. - I believe we need to stop this conversation for today and return to it later. - Thank you for your time and honest opinions today. - I really appreciated when you said _____. That will stick with me. - I know we both want what is best for children/students, so thank you for _____. - I appreciate the conversation we had today. - Thank you for inviting me in today. - This has helped me better understand _____.

Appendix E

Evaluation Tool: A Post-Use Survey

Link to the Google Form of this survey: <https://forms.gle/VHTbiAkW4Mh4x7DE7>

Thank you for your interest in and use of these talking frames! If you could fill out this short survey and email it to liabenoa@mail.gvsu.edu or click and follow the link above to a digital version of this survey, it would be very much appreciated!

1. For what reason did you download these talking frames?

2. Were these talking frames useful? In what ways?

3. What improvements would you make next time you use these talking frames?

4. Will you use these again? If yes, will you make changes to your next conversation?

Additional comments: _____



The signature of the individual below indicates that the individual has read and approved the project of *your name* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Literacy Studies.

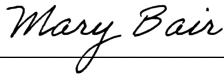


 Elizabeth Petroelje Stolle, Ph.D., Project Advisor 12/16/2022
Date

Accepted and approved on behalf of the
Literacy Studies Program

Accepted and approved on behalf of the Literacy
Educational Foundations & Technology Unit

_____ 

_____ 

Elizabeth Stolle, Ph.D., Graduate Program Director

Mary Bair, Ph.D., Unit Head

 12/16/2022
 Date

 12/16/2022
 Date