

POPULAR CULTURE IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM:
A SURVEY

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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon Davies".

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the literature concerning popular culture texts in the English language arts classroom and considers the best way to use these texts. It finds that popular culture texts have been used to increase engagement by students, provide for alternative means for assessment, and as a way to bring student voices into the classroom. It suggests that further research be done in the realm of using fanfiction formats to help students develop new identities as writers.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

How can we best use youth culture in the language arts classroom? This question holds special interest to me. As a returning student, who was also a high school dropout, the only texts I was familiar with were popular culture texts of various forms. I was obsessed with the internet, movies, television, and popular novels. When I read Stephen King's *Danse Macabre* (1986), a discussion of horror as a genre, I was shown that there was room in at least a form of academia for my interests and my voice.

Writing was (and still is) a very difficult act for me. I had no real concept of standard middle class American English. What slowly taught me was my experiences in an online environment, called Elendor (www.elendor.net), where people from across the world with many levels of English proficiency, wrote collaborative fiction based on the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien. There, my lack of knowledge of formal grammar was not met with red circles and endless "C's", but rather discussions of how to make the shared stories better. I excelled in this social environment, and my seemingly endless fear of criticism slowly gave way to, if not confidence, a dogged willingness to try. It has been years since I logged on to Elendor (three of them, as a recent email I received from one of my fellow players reminded me), but I still remember that time fondly as when I really saw myself as a writer participating in a worldwide community.

But how can we as teachers bring this experience into the classroom? The stereotypical image of a language arts classroom does not include people working on collaborative online projects or doing real work with Stephen King novels. However, research has shown that students engage in a variety of literacy practices on their own,

and many theorists espouse using at-home literacies in the classroom. However, how to use at-home literacies remains elusive. Which brings us to the question at the center of this critical review. How can educators best use popular culture texts in the language arts classroom?

Rationale

The teaching of English skills has always been, for lack of a better word, tricky. The National Council of Teachers of English calls for teachers to embrace new technologies, and to include student voices in the design of their curricula and furthermore points out that students are likely to have a greater understanding of new literacies and technologies (NCTE, 2005). There is, however, no clear statement on what exactly that means, though there are many ideas. Most of the literature agrees that speaking to student interests and hearing student voices is central to teaching the student (NCTE, 2005). However, there are many ideas on how to do this.

One promising aspect of this idea is the use of youth culture in the classroom for various purposes. Moje (2002) defines youth cultural work as “how youth use literacy and text to navigate, synthesize, and hybridize multiple spaces” (p. 115). One of the areas where we see this the most is how adolescents interact with various popular culture texts. They are not just reading, or watching, but also commenting on and creating new texts in a wide variety of means.

The New London Group (1998) espouses the belief that literacy has fundamentally changed in the new millennium. NCTE (2005) agrees, and furthermore has stated that English teachers should engage this new version of literacy. How do we, as educators, access these literacies? How do adolescents access these literacies? Do they

have a place in the classroom, beyond a source of engagement? Are there negative cognitive effects to using popular culture texts?

Definitions

Youth Culture: Youth culture is popular culture text used by mainly by youth. For example, Pokemon cards are targeted specifically at children 6-12. As a counter example, the movie *It's Complicated* is certainly a popular culture text, but as its plot centers on a woman played by Meryl Streep in her fifties having an affair with her ex-husband, it can hardly be considered a youth culture text (IMDB, 2009).

Text: Griffith (2002) defines “text” as

“ is a written document that employs a symbolic system (words, mathematical symbols, images, musical notation). The structuralists expand ‘text’ to mean any system of codes. The poststructuralists go further by claiming that ... everything is text... New Historicists accept the structuralist concept of text...[and further state that] cultures consist of ‘texts,’ ‘discourses,’ and ‘ideologies,’ but people can analyze these texts and expose their weaknesses” (pg 132).

This definition is important because it is the definition of “text” that spawned the idea of multiple literacies. However, while this broad of definition is important for understanding the theoretical background of New Literacy Theory (NLT), it is too broad for practical use in the classroom, therefore for the purposes of this paper a “text” is a created document, regardless of form. A text can be (but is not limited to) a short story, an advertisement, a novel, a film, an instructional video, a video game or a text book.

Popular Culture Text: Using the expanded yet constrained definition of “text”, a “popular culture text” becomes a text generated for non-academic purposes, examples of popular

culture texts include (but are not limited to) trading cards, blogs, music videos, music lyrics, video games, journals, young adult novels, or comic books. Typically popular culture texts are created for entertainment purposes.

Popular Culture Form: With an expanded view of “texts”, it becomes syntactically difficult to express when different kinds of texts are being talked about as a group or as groups. Forms are kinds of texts, for example novels, films, and cartoons are all popular culture text forms.

Cannon: The cannon is a group of texts deemed appropriate for study. Generally, in this paper, the “cannon” refers to the language arts academic cannon.

Literacy: This term is a very slippery one. On the surface, it is easy. Literacy is the ability to read. However, by asking the question “the ability to read *what*” complications begin to occur. Here the impact of the broadening of the definition of “text” is most clearly seen. If nearly anything is a text, what does it mean to be literate? For example, if one can read a magazine but not *Moby Dick*, is that person fully literate? A view of literacy which is a gradient scale, ranging from illiterate to fully literate would say that that the person is not adept at literacy, perhaps even dooming them to the ghetto of “semi-literacy”. As another example, according to McCloud (1994) *manga* (Japanese comic books) are typically written right to left, starting at the top corner with action often crossing panels, as opposed to western comic books, which are written from right to left, starting at the top corner, with the action in the comic being sequential and discreet (action in one panel proceeds or follows action in another panel, they do not influence each other). Decoding a *manga* text requires skills that are different than decoding an American comic, and skills that are quite different from decoding *Moby Dick*. When one adds internet texts,

which frequently include links to other sources which are necessary to view in order to even understand what is on the screen and freely remix and reference content from still more sources the question of what is literacy becomes still more muddled.

When considering the concept of “literacy” then, it becomes helpful to consider literacy not as existing on a linear plane of illiterate to literate, but rather as a matrix, including literacy in different mediums and intersections between and across different literacies. For example, many of the skills used in literary analysis can be equally applied to film. This view of literacy arises from a broadened view of what counts as a text.

It is this concept of literacy, or “multiliteracies” that the New London Group (NLG) held. The theorists, researchers and teacher researchers that met in New London contend that these literacies not only exist, but that they should be embraced and included in the educational system (2002).

For the purposes of this paper, then, “literacy” is being skilled at decoding the signs and symbols of a particular kind of text (regardless of form), as opposed to the skill of decoding academically sanctioned printed text. Thus, one can be “computer literate”, or “graffiti literate”. A specific kind of literacy is “At-home literacy”, which is the literacy practices that one engages in outside of school or work contexts. This is typically involves the kinds of texts that people are the most familiar with.

Controversies

The controversy in this topic does not exist in whether or not to use popular culture texts in the classroom, as will be shown in the next chapter, this has been considered good practice by some as early as 1938 (Dewey). The question has become how to use popular culture texts in the classroom. Should popular culture texts be used as

bridging materials, engaging the students' interests so that they can be introduced to more academic material? Or should it act as a field of study in and of itself, beyond as topics for self-directed research?

In many classrooms, teacher selected texts remain the only sanctioned texts. In others, while student selected material is allowed, it is only used for reading groups or activities such as book reports (Wade and Moje, 2002). While some hold that this is the proper place for popular culture texts, others feel that popular culture texts should hold a central role in a language arts classroom (Donelson and Nilsen, 2005). In addition, others call for a revamping of the educational system to better use lessons learned from popular culture texts, such as Gee's lessons learned from video games (2007).

Limitations

Popular culture is an immense field, it would be beyond the scope of this paper to address every form of popular culture. In addition, while several theorists call for the restructuring of the educational system to make better use of at-home literacies, this act too is beyond the scope of this paper. Finally,

Summary

This chapter has examined my personal connection to popular culture texts. It has also produced a rationale for this critical review. It has defined key terms associated with the study of literacy in general. In addition, it describes some of the controversies around using popular culture texts in the classroom. Finally, it has set limitations for the research and suggested classroom practices. In the next chapter, I will discuss the history of many popular culture forms and describe some of public schooling's responses to them.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

The previous chapter introduced key terms and a rationale for considering how youth culture can be best used in the secondary language arts classroom. This chapter presents a brief history of youth culture texts, and their interactions with the education system. This chapter will also introduce some of the methods educators have suggested or used for interacting with students' at-home literacies.

A History of Popular/Youth Media Forms

Adolescent Fiction and Comic Books

Books written specifically to be read by adolescents (as opposed to for children or for adults) began to be written in 1817 with chapter books extolling the virtues of a young Christian life. In the 1930s, the books transitioned to being primarily formula adventure stories with male protagonists, the publishers noticing that girls would read books about boys, but boys would not typically read books about girls, Donelson and Nilsen suggest that this is because the books about girls were, simply put, boring. (2005).

Despite the evolving nature of the books, which began with authors such as Judy Bloom to develop into a much more nuanced literary form and addressing adolescent concerns as well as interests, schools continued to be reluctant (with many exceptions) to adopt young adult literature into the curriculum. Educators regarded it as their duty to push readers along, moving from high interest texts (such as serialized novels such as

Dragonlance or *The Hardy Boys*) to more “serious” literature. The educators felt that by pushing the students, the students would develop better reading skills, in the same way lifting heavy weights develop larger muscles. As the nineties progressed, some educators began to feel this practice was flawed, and that recreational reading should remain recreational (Donelson and Nilsen, 2005).

Comic books followed a different course. Comics began to gain popularity in the United States in the early twenties, with Superman entering the scene roughly ten years later (McCloud, 1994). As comics grew, many of the comic companies started producing horror and romance comics, which began to cause an uproar with parental and other watchdog groups. In a process that lasted many years, comics, as an industry, began a system of self-censorship, referred to as “The Comics Code”, which regulated the kinds of stories and images that can be depicted in comics (Spring, 2005). In the mid to late eighties, comics began to again address mature themes and topics, with Spiegelman’s *Maus* winning a Pulitzer Prize in 1992, this drew the attention of the academic world, and comics appreciation classes began to appear in colleges, though a similar movement has not yet occurred in secondary schools (Donnelson & Nilsen, 2005).

Movies, Television and Radio

In 1910, the first movie theater opened in Paris and the movie industry began. Charlie Chaplin, often thought of as the first film star, began his career shortly after, in 1914. In 1924, he wrote, directed and starred in *Modern Times*, a movie that, with its labor sympathies, cemented the connection between film and the common man (Betts, 2004). From the beginning, the movie industry and the education system have had a deep and sometimes ambivalent relationship, with movies being presented to the NEA as an

educational tool. However, it was not until the thirties that serious interactions between education and cinema began to unfold (Spring, 2005).

During the nineteen thirties, a series of studies called the Payne studies found that watching movies was detrimental to children in a variety of ways, not the least being educationally (Spring, 2005). In reaction to these findings, the NCTE recommended adding movie appreciation courses to the secondary curriculum, believing that this will help students select movies that were morally acceptable. After attending these classes, students claimed to be able to identify “better” movies, and they attended more movies. In addition the NCTE and the MPPDA (Motion Picture Producers and Distributers of America) began to collaborate on study guides for movies, which were considered helpful for educators, and were certainly helpful to the movie industry. While the Hays Code was replaced by the modern ratings system, many of the biases built into the Hays Code continue to exist.

The power of television as an educational force has been considered since shortly after its inception. The first concerted effort to utilize television as an educational tool was by PBS who launched *Sesame Street* in 1969 (sesamestreet.org, 2009). As Shiring (1997) observed, the explosion of relatively inexpensive VCRs and televisions in the 1980s lead to their being increasingly used in the classroom (as opposed to *Sesame Street*, and other PBS educational programs, which targeted children at-home) (p. 570). However, while technology was inexpensive on an individual level, supplying an entire school was (and still is) a very expensive proposition. The “Channel One” controversy in 1990 brought this, and the problems associated with solving this, very much to light, as they were willing to fund the installation of the hardware in a school, but at the cost of

having the children watch advertisements (p. 572). In a sense, schools, which had always had a connection to economic and marketing concerns, now had the potential of becoming explicit billboards.

The eighties and nineties also brought more content from PBS, which, with the new equipment being installed in schools (either by Channel One or through many other means, including simply paying for the equipment), became easily accessible in the classroom. The effects of these programs were viewed as generally positive, with a high level of engagement and retention, especially when integrated into the curriculum (Shiring, 1997). However, the content remained translations of classic works or material expressly designed to be educational (Shiring, 1997). The content was determined by educators, and the delivery was in the language of the students, these were not popular culture texts, but rather academic texts acting as popular culture texts.

Radio

Radio also had a deep impact on the American entertainment field. At first, it was only available in homes, and then in 1930 radios began being included in cars. This meant that mass media was now in many of the spaces previously considered private by most people (Betts, 2004). Radio, while initially thought of as unimportant, also came under fire by educators, in 1934 the NEA stated that advertisements would have negative effects on children espousing a belief that “schools advance culture, while movies and radio destroy culture” (Spring, 2005). In 1935, CBS began self-censorship in response to pressure from PTAs and other community groups. This self-censorship mirrors the Hays Code, focusing on the morality of what was being portrayed on radio shows. While there was an effort to create a specific amount of radio programming

geared towards education, this was not to be, with the FCC stating that radio was doing a sufficient amount to promote education without specific standards being set (Spring, 2005).

Computers, Video Games and Cell Phones

In 1976, the term “Personal Computer” (or PC) entered into the national consciousness (Betts, 2004). Computer use has spread across the country steadily since then. Shortly after, in 1982 ARPANET was created, which was a network of computers for use by the United States government which would lead to the creation of the internet, which was accessible to anyone. In 1989 HTML (hyper text markup language) was created which made this information more accessible by including pictures and making it easier to switch between various sites (Betts, 2004). Computers, with their adaptability became highly desirable in schools, and computer companies were quick to capitalize on this from Apple’s early efforts to put their products in schools, to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which provides grants for high schools which often include the creation of computer centers (gatesfoundation.org).

Linked to computers is the rise of video games as an entertainment media. In 1976, Japanese and American developers created stand up video games, and video games got a real foothold in home entertainment in 1985 with the Nintendo Entertainment System. The video game industry did nothing but grow in the following years. Video games spent most of their span ignored by educators and activist groups alike until

Japanese Media

Japanese media is produced in Japan and released in the United States either dubbed (with the spoken Japanese being replaced with spoken English) or subtitled.

Typically, this process takes some time, which means that there is a lag, sometimes significant, between the release of the cartoons or comics in Japan and the United States. This results in media being available, but professional translations not being available to people who do not speak Japanese.

In 1963, Tezuka's *Astro Boy* aired in the United States, which was the first anime (Japanese cartoon, typically serial) to be shown in the country. Despite this early start, it would be some time before *anime* would become a staple of American youth culture (Betts, 2004). *Pokemon*, a game released for the Nintendo Game Boy in 1998, was cross merchandised with an *anime* as well as a collectable card game and is regarded by some to be the initiating event for an up swell in interest in Japanese media in children and adolescents (Gee, 2007). By 2009 there were several popular Japanese *anime* being aired on American television, including *Naruto* and *Bakugan* (tvguide.com, 2009).

Educators Responses to At-home Literacies

In theory, educators have been enthusiastic about using at-home literacies in schools for the last several decades. Dewey (1938) suggested using at-home literacies and relating what students experienced in their lives to the curriculum. The progressive stance stated that learning was more valuable when it related to what the students already know. Freire (1970) agreed, feeling that subjects taught should relate to the students' daily lives. Finally, the New London Group (NLG) () developed a theory of "multiliteracies", which states that there are many different literacies that people use, and that these literacies are socially constructed and valued, but no more or less stringent or worthy. Gee (2007), a member of the NLG, proposed that educators have much to learn from how video games are designed, specifically in the way learning environments are constructed.

In practice, according to Wade and Moje (2000) often there are two kinds of methods for approaching texts. The transmission approach, where the teacher selects the texts and, in essence, tells the students what they should take away from them and the participatory approach, where the students interact with texts in their own ways, guided by the teacher. The participatory approach draws extensively from Freire and Dewey, attempting to ground the reading in meaningful activities. Wade and Moje see one of the things that both of these approaches tend to leave out is unsanctioned texts, such as video games, comic books, and trading cards.

Summary

In this chapter, we have reviewed the history of many popular culture forms and seen that these forms have been influenced by their perceived roles (or lack thereof) in children's moral development. In addition, we have seen that often forms are ignored entirely, despite widespread acceptance by the people who the schools are serving. Finally, we have seen that while there is a great deal of theoretical support for the inclusion of popular culture media in the school systems, this is not always or often put into practice in the classroom. In the next chapter, we will review the some of the research that is currently available.

CHAPTER THREE: CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

There is no question that tapping into student's out-of-school identities and literacies can be a positive, or even imperative goal (NCTE, 2006). The question is really how, to what end, and what are the effects of doing so.

The previous two chapters established the educational relevance and historical contexts of using popular culture texts in the classroom. Chapter one defined key terms and discussed the rationale for questioning how popular culture texts can be used in the language arts classroom. Chapter two covered a brief history of popular culture forms and how these have intersected with public education.

In this chapter, the effects of popular culture media exposure are examined, as without considering what long and short term effects exposure to media has, it is difficult to recommend a particular course of action. Second, teacher attitudes towards popular media is examined, as we cannot suggest a revision of current beliefs and practices without seeing what the current state of media education is. Third, we will examine what literacy practices students are engaging in without school mediation to establish what possible avenues for development exist. Fourth, students' perceptions and uses of school based literacies will be reviewed, this will be useful to see if there are any convergences. Finally, we will consider what is being done to modify teacher practices.

What Are the Effects of Media Exposure?

What are the long term effects of media exposure? Selfout, Delsing, ter Bogt, and Meeus (2009) examined Dutch adolescents' media preferences and behavior. A Scottish study by Robertson, Blain, and Cowan (2005) examined how Scottish adolescents viewed

their own influences. Mokhtari, Reichard, and Gardner (2009) examined college students reading habits and practices. Iamotot, Cresell, and Caldwell (2007) examined how student perceive the impact of media on their lives.

One study by Selfhout et al. (2009) in the Netherlands asked

1. How stable are Dutch adolescents' preferences for the heavy metal and hip-hop youth culture styles over time? It has been suggested that youth culture style is a relatively stable feature of adolescent life (e.g., ter Bogt, 2000), and it was therefore expected that at least moderate ($B > .40$, see Cohen, 1988) stability would be found for adolescents' style preferences over a 2-year period. 2. To what extent do Dutch adolescents' preferences for youth culture styles predict later externalizing problem behavior, and to what extent does externalizing problem behavior predict later preferences for youth culture styles? Based on the empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives above, two contrasting hypotheses could be formulated, because different paradigms take different temporal sequences into account in modeling associations between youth culture style preferences and problem behavior: Youth culture style preferences may predict externalizing behavior or externalizing behavior may predict youth culture style preferences. 3. What role does gender play in longitudinal links between Dutch adolescents' cultural styles and externalizing problem behavior? Previous research (e.g., Lacourse et al., 2001) has suggested that girls in nonmainstream groups may be particularly at risk of developing problem behaviors, and therefore the effects of preferences for both nonmainstream youth culture styles on externalizing problems were expected to be more pronounced for girls.

This was a quantitative two year two wave longitudinal study using the CONAMORE (CONflicts And Management Of RElationships) survey. Students received 10 euro for participating. Youth culture style preferences were assessed with two measures, one related to crowd preference, the other to music preference. It used a Likert-type scale (1=not at all like me to 5=completely like me). Other questions were asked as distracters, only measured items pertaining to “heavy metal”, and “hip-hop”. Externalizing Problem Behavior (aggression) was also measured with a scale (ranging from 1-4), ranging between direct (“I kick someone”) to indirect (“I tell bad or false stories about someone”)(1=never, 4=very often). Delinquency was also measured using a four point scale (1=never, 4=four or more times) relating to 23 minor offences (such as vandalism). If the behavior exists before the crowd/music preference, then the group is determined by the behavior. If it is the other way around, the group influences the behavior. The subject group was 931 11-18 yr olds, 52.3% male, 43.7% female, 12.6% minorities (kinds unstated), 87.4% Dutch, 23.9% labor/lower track, 76.1% college or university, 8% attrition. They found that belonging to either the hip hop or heavy metal subculture is predictive of problem behavior. Ethnicity or social class had no impact. They also verified that youth cultural preferences are stable over time. There was a large sample, from a diverse background. Not teens from just one area, or one socio-economic or educational background, it was likely that what the researchers thought they were measuring was what they were measuring. Long term shows that these effects are not just fads, and that the kids preferences are stable it seems to be fairly generalizable. As it is the only study of its kind, it is difficult to assess dependability. It disagrees with students’ self reported influences, as will be shown at length, but given the very different

style of data collection, this does not impact its dependability one way or the other. Also, the teens are Dutch and from middle sized cities, and while it seems likely that teens are teens, that can't be disregarded. It doesn't mention if there are mandatory media literacy classes, which could impact the later behavior of the teens, if they are effective, and if listening to the musical causes (rather than just predicts) the problem behavior.

Another study, this one based in Scotland, disagrees with the findings of Selfhout et al (2009). Robertson, Blain, and Cowan (2005) asked the question "What is the distribution and frequency of media use among Scottish teens and who do they say influence them?". In this mixed methods study, with a quantities initial questionnaire and qualitative interviews issued a questionnaire to fifteen schools representing a broad socioeconomic and cultural base, which was then followed up with interviews of 60 students to serve as a base for a later survey. It studied 423 13-14 year old Scottish students, and urban districts were under represented. The researchers clearly stated that these were tentative results. Students draw information from a variety of sources, with newspapers, TV news, school, books, internet, and radio all listed for between 150 and 200 respondents. Magazines were the most used with a little more than 200 respondents saying that they used them for information. Papers tended to be tabloids. Respondents consistently (over 200) listed parents as an influence (strongly agree, another 140 listed as "agree," the total is 340ish, which is more than 75% of those surveyed). They consistently listed TV and music as "strongly disagree" or "disagree." There was more diversity than expected in all forms of media consumption. There was no evident preference for media featuring sex and violence. However, the researchers did not elaborate on "broad socioeconomic and cultural base," and urban children

underrepresented. The respondents chose their responses, which means that they said what they perceived influenced them, as opposed to what actually influenced them (many people say that commercials do not influence their buying habits as well, but this is not the case). Scottish, the very different media model of the BBC means that the generalizability of this study is certainly under question.

Another study, this one based on American college students examined the students' time use. Mokhtari, Reichard, and Gardner (2009) asked, "What influences do internet and television use have on students' reading habits and practices? How much time do college students spend on recreational and academic writing?". In a mixed methods, largely quantitative, but an option for some qualitative elements (was conducted with a study that included space for comments, and acknowledged that the comments section could be expanded) study, Informants kept a journal detailing their time usage. It was divided into six hour blocks, and the informants were able to record all activities that were done in that block, which allowed for multiple items to be listed (for example, a student could list two hours of using the internet, three hours of reading in any one block). Students also rated how much they enjoyed activities. They found that students spend a lot of time engaging in information activities. They multi-task a great deal. There does not seem to be a correlation between time spent using the internet and time spent reading. The researchers raise the question: "How effective is multi-tasking, really?" by that they question if academic reading is effective if one is watching tv or listening to music at the same time. The sample is fairly large. The time use journal is less demanding, and could be more accurate. Identifies likely flaws. Based on random sampling (4,000 students were asked to participate, 1/3 of the college population).

However, the respondents were self-selected, so the sample ended up being skewed (more females than males, more likely to be white), the self-reporting numbers add up wrong, (students do not seem to be eating or sleeping much), however this could be explained by multi-tasking. Study was at a school with high admittance standards, students may not represent the average student. Transfer with caution.

Another effort was made on a qualitative level to see how depictions in the media effect perceptions of students, in their own perceptions, in research done by Tucciarone (2007). Tucciarone asked, “How do potential college-bound and current college students make meaning about the higher education experience from *National Lampoon’s Animal House?*” The undergraduate students were trained in content analysis and then asked to track what happens in NLAH. The students created lists and the results were averaged and divided by gender, these results were then divided into categories, these categories were theoretically what the students feel the film is “about”. The lead writer of the movie was then contacted and asked what he felt that movie was about. 26 male and 36 female undergraduate students were chosen by connivance and trained how to reply to the criteria, the study was not concerned with race/ethnicity or national origin. Tucciarone found that students felt that college as a mostly social endeavor. Because of the way that media influences minds, many incoming freshmen may also view college as a social endeavor (as opposed to academic). While this study was very grounded in discourse theory, The lack of variety in the group makes it unlikely that it is transferable. The level of trustworthiness is high. There was a large group processing the data, which reduces the bias. The convenience sample is troubling. To do their own coding means that they have to be trained, which reduces researcher bias due to misinterpretation (after all, they

are the subjects and the recorders). However, due to being in the same classes, in the same school, in the same study, it seems likely that their answers are likely to have influenced each other. There was no regard for race/ethnicity. Training in coding may influence results. Not certain that all of the theories that the author puts together actually go together. This study assumes that there are no other sources of information regarding college other than movies about college. This study also assumes that initial misconceptions will remain. And, quite frankly, at 18 college does have a very extensive social component, and has for some time. Finally, this study assumes that ideas observed are ideas held operates at a 1:1 ratio.

Another study examined how students perceive the impact of media on their lives, Iamoto, Cresell, and Caldwell (2007) asked “(1) What is the meaning ascribed to rap music by six ethnically and racially diverse Midwestern college students? (2) What is the context in which they experience rap music? (3) How can rap music be used to deal with everyday stressors, and how does it alter a person’s mood?”, in a qualitative, phenomenological study 8 19-26 year olds (1 White, 2 Asian American, 2 African American, 3 Latinos, 4 male, 4 female) participated in in-depth and semi-structured interviews, and the transcriptions and report were studied by participants, and other researchers.

These studies taken together show that much of popular culture’s impact depends on who is asking. The studies used a variety of methods to study a variety of students in a variety of places. The only consistent factor between these studies is that adolescents, regardless of age or location consume a great deal of popular media. But how have teachers interacted with popular media?

How Do Teachers Interact With Popular Media

We should always turn the mirror on ourselves, and see what attitudes teachers are bringing into the classroom regarding youth culture. While we examine the effects of media on students, we should also examine how teachers approach popular media in the classroom. Two studies address this area, one examining the beliefs of social studies teachers about popular media, and the other examining how these beliefs can be influenced with a long term intervention.

Mangram (2008) asked “How do social studies teacher make meaning of media and popular culture? And how do the meaning these social studies teachers make concerning media and popular culture influence their perspectives on their students as consumers of media and popular culture?” This qualitative, interview based discourse analysis using linguistic coding gathered a group of social studies teachers interested in movies and popular culture using snowballing. After interviewing them, the researcher coded the responses. This process gathered fifteen secondary teachers (six female, nine male, three black, the remainder white, nine from urban schools, one from a rural school, four from suburban schools). Mangram found that the teachers tended towards binary (and thus simplified) vies of popular culture: liberal/conservative, right/wrong, high/low. Teachers leaned towards protective stances (we will stop the brainwashing). The one teacher who showed a greater awareness did not talk about it in school, due to fears of people not getting it. The researcher intimated that this may not be the case. The researcher felt that a more complicated view of media may better serve the students. This study as very transferable, and there was much in the way of thick description, the methods were very clear, and the explanation of how to see what the researcher did was

extensive. It was quite confirmable. There was no triangulation, no persistent observation (informants may have felt on the spot in the interviews and simplified their views), member checks seemed subtle/non-existent, and somewhat unfair (only offered one perspective on what the researcher was hearing, not everyone holds to post-structural beliefs regarding media theory).

Lewis and Ketter (2008) felt that some of these limitations of teacher perspective can be corrected, and in their article said they “will show how the teachers perceived youth identity and culture in young adult literature and how they began to shift these perceptions and ways of reading”. This study was a long term (4 year) ethnographic research project that used coding to obtain data. The study was based on an ongoing literature circle. The codes were “Perceptions of Adolescence, Popular Culture, and Young Adult Literature as Moral Guide”. Within these codes, the teachers tended to take one of two stances, universalizing stance or and othering stance. The researcher participants lead the literature circle and focused on determining what multicultural books to read in the local schools. The study focused on the literature circle, which had variable membership. There were five teachers that formed the core, three English language arts, teaching middle school, and two upper elementary teachers. This group was a self-selected team of volunteers who were uncompensated. The school which this study was based in was a small, mostly white, rural, Midwestern combined elementary and middle school. The teachers took many stances when thinking of adolescents, and these stances were at times contradictory. They would at times universalize adolescence, and at others they would be aware of adolescence as a constructed period, influenced by culture. They also viewed adolescents from other cultures as “the other” at times, and felt

that they had an obligation to protect their (mostly white) students from the cruelty of the experiences of other races. At the same time, at times, they did challenge the view of the adolescent as “other”, and were aware of the sociopolitical and economic factors behind the readings. Also, the teacher’s identities and their perceptions of the student’s identities impacted how they interacted with the readings. In short, the teachers had very complex views of reading, which the literature circle helped examine. The researchers were very clear about what role they played in the study. In addition, they provide a great deal of rich detail, allowing the reader to see the town, the teachers, and their concerns. There was extensive member-checking. The researchers were very precise about their data gathering and analysis. The exceptional length of the study is also a solid strength. The two researchers acted to check each other’s data, which was triangulation. There were rich examples throughout the findings, and the record keeping allowed for a great deal of confirmability. The researchers went to great (at times almost distractingly great) lengths to detail their own theoretical backgrounds. While it is certainly not a weakness directly, this is one of the rare studies about rural teachers’ literacy habits. This makes dependability difficult to confirm, which in turn makes transferability difficult to gauge.

These studies show that teachers have interacted with youth culture in either a binary manner, emphasizing good and bad media, or have used youth culture media as bridging material, with the end effect of transforming all of the dialogues into the same kind of language. Both approaches were shown to be lacking. When teachers examine media as good or bad, they are re-emphasizing the assumptions regarding media that lead to the creation of the Hays Code and other similar acts. When teachers use popular media language to make all texts equally accessible, they are depriving the students from the

ability to switch between kinds of language, which is a vital skill in a multi-faceted society. To further understand this complex situation, it is necessary to examine the students' at-home practices.

What Are Students At-Home Literacy Practices?

In order to understand what educators can do with at-home literacies, it is necessary to examine what students' literacy practices currently are. One study examined what a fifteen year old's literacy practices are, while several other studies examined out of school internet practices of students.

Leander and Lovvorn (2006) examined the movement of and texts in the life of one student both in and out of school. This study was a case study drawn from a larger ethnographic study. Data was collected through, screening surveys, interviewing, field notes, the collection of written artifacts, digital capture and video taping of online interaction. The subject, Brian, a thirteen year old from the mid-south, was also observed online and in his English and history classrooms. In addition his family, teachers, and fellow students were interviewed. The researcher clearly states (and advocates) a critical stance based in ANT (actor network theory) and draws from (selectively) NLG theory. They engaged in triangulation and member-checking, these together make the research highly credible. The findings are similar (though the critical perspective is very different) to the findings of Black and Alvermann, which supports its credibility. The detail is very (almost excessively) rich, and the data collection process can easily be repeated (though not with Brian). The researcher acknowledges that the theory's applications in the social sciences in general, and in education in particular is incomplete. The very specificity of the study limits transferability.

With first generation and generation 1.5 immigrants, the internet provided a rich area for examining at will social and literacy networks. Student's out of school computer-mediated composition was one of the richest areas for recent research. Chandler-Olcott, Mahar, Black, and Yi have all contributed a great deal to this. Most frequently this composition was intertwined with youth culture at a deep level, as the students were writing about what matters to them. The two Chandler-Olcott studies focused on individual students in a middle school, Black focused on the practices of an international community, and Yi looked at a locally-based internet community.

Chandler-Olcott and Mahar published two studies in the same year, 2003, which explored the experiences of two middle school girls. The first, "Adolescents' anime-inspired 'fanfictions': An exploration of multiliteracies" (2003) made the statement "we hope that insights about out-of-school literacy practices that deeply absorb adolescents may help us devise new ways to make school literacy more meaningful and engaging". This case study was a examining in more depth the literacy practices used in anime fanfictions. This sub-study examines the writing in terms of *Multiliteracies*, as opposed to discourse coding. The researchers examined the two informants work for themes, and in terms of the multiliteracies framework. The researchers kept notes during conversations, read stories written by the informants, used other informants to help understand the material, and immersed themselves in an anime-based fanfiction website. The informants were two middle school girls operating at the fringe of the social groupings in their classes. The informants used the fanfictions to establish and maintain social networks, initially with close friends and family, and later with a world-wide audience. The informants did not bring this literacy into the classroom. It does seem that they could

have benefited from working with a more experienced person. The informants engaged in web design, showing a growing understanding of visual and print composition.

Fanfictions in general, and these fanfictions in particular engaged in intertextuality and hybridity, and showed a deep awareness of genre conventions. This is more of a further exploration of a particular aspect of another study. The researchers are very clear about their interest in new literacy practices, adding to their credibility. There were several examples illustrating their points, and the rich detail gave the reader a very clear idea of the students' literacy practices. The findings were very much in line with other studies of this nature (unsurprising, considering that they were involved with much of it). Some of the implications are not quite in line with the other authors writing on the topic of fanfictions, but the researcher's perspectives are quite different (and used a smaller and very different sample), I find it quite dependable. The data gathering practices are very clear and thorough, in total it is quite credible (though the triangulation and member-checking is somewhat wanting). The context of the students' backgrounds make it quite transferable. With much of the information likely still on the internet, and similar information easily available, it would be simple to reconstruct the researcher's findings, it is quite confirmable. The researchers did not seem to triangulate beyond themselves, nor did there appear to be much in the way of member-checking. The relationship between the researchers and the students seemed to go through many evolutions, which, while natural, were not fully explored.

Another aspect of the same study, "Tech-Savviness" meets multiliteracies: Exploring Adolescent Girls' Technology-Mediated Literacy Practices" (2003) asked "In what ways and for what purposes do adolescent girls use digital technologies in their

literacy practices beyond formal academic settings? How does their membership in various on-line communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) influence these technology-mediated literacy practices? How are constructions of gender implicated in the girls' technology-mediated literacy practices within these communities?”. It was a qualitative, teacher-researcher. Case study of two girls as well as ethnographic study of 10 other 7-8th grade girls. The two researchers oversee each other’s research. Two girls are interviewed at length, observed in class and at-home. 10 other subjects who used technology in different ways, but the study is focused on the two girls. The other girls are observed, interviewed and took surveys. The results were coded and charted and the two researchers looked for patterns in technology use. They used the multiliteracies framework as an analytical tool. 12 7-8th grade girls. Variety of socioeconomic background. Chosen for the variety of technologies they used, as opposed to technical proficiency. All white. School has 10% free and reduced lunch. The two focus informants are from a lower class and a middle class home. Both students used design and engaged in a mentorship process (the same as the one described in Gee). The girls used technological tools in “a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes”. Online spaces gives the girls a space to define their identities. The authors’ hypothesis is that technology can be used to engage students using their areas of interest. However, they suggest that sensitivity must be used. Just asking these students to mentor others would be unlikely to produce helpful results. Very thorough about detailing biases (NLG). There was a great deal of oversight over each other’s research. The behavior of the informants matched what would be expected if social constructivism is correct. The implications are well analyzed. May not be generalizable. No data from the initial research group of 12.

Seems to be two case studies together. Seems to be a more of a report on a study than an actual study. There was no triangulation. The two students were European American White.

Black (2009) asks “What sort of 21st-century skills are youths developing through participation in online fan-related contexts? What is the relationship between traditional, print-based and 21st-century literacy skills in online fan fiction spaces? What sorts of social roles or identities are associated with 21st-century proficiencies and literacy practices?”. In a case study of three ELL students interviews were conducted, and texts and feedback to texts were examined. Researcher was a participant observer. Researcher used discourse analytic and ethnographic methods. The study took place over three years. Three ELL students with a range of English proficiency and backgrounds, all female. One is a Filipina, one is 1.5 generation Chinese immigrant to Canada, and one is a second generation Taiwanese Canadian. The ages were not stated. The three informants engaged in a range of writing related activities, ranging from website design to peer feedback and editing. The fan community (FFN) provides feedback as well as support and one on one work to all writers, regardless of English proficiency. Acceptance of their errors and embrasure of them by the community provided inspiration for improvement. These factors contributed to the informants developing identities as creators in, and users of English.

In addition, the informants were not particularly tech-savvy before interacting with the fan community, and afterwards they demonstrated increased proficiency in technologically mediated multimodal literacies and a willingness to mentor other writers. Furthermore, all of the writers, and one in particular showed an ability to modify voice

and tone according to audience, and to present meaningful arguments in a Discourse community.

The researcher was very clear about her bias toward Discourse theory. The length of time spent on the site was exceptional, allowing the researcher to see changes in the behavior of the informants. The detail is very rich regarding the Discourse community and participants, though a bit slim on the writing itself. It does mirror and support the findings of Chandler-Olcott and Mahar, which adds significantly to its dependability.

There is no discussion on how the data was coded, and there are neither examples of the coding process, nor a mention of if there were member checks or triangulation. However, this is a sub-study within the context of a larger study, and that study may discuss these topics.

Yi has studied the literacy practices of a group of generation 1.5 Korean students extensively. In the ethnography “Relay writing in an adolescent online community”, Yi’s (2008) research questions were “How did the members of WTBC [Welcome to Buckeye City, an internet site maintained by Korean adolescents] conduct relay writing practices? What motivated their investment in this relay writing activity? What did they gain from their participation in relay writing practices (e.g., reading, writing, or responding to the relay writing postings)?” in addition she considered what these answers suggested about voluntary writing by adolescents. Through a larger study, the researcher gained access to a website, Welcome to Buckeye City, and became a member. The researcher conducted interviews with the informants once a week, in both English and Korean. In addition, the researcher took extensive notes on the website itself. The informants were 22 Korean adolescents and three college freshmen. Yi found that the students wrote extensively, in

an “out-of-school” setting. This seemed to be pleasure writing, and it seemed to be connected to their identity as “generation 1.5” Koreans. The researcher had very rich detail. She also conducted extensive member checking. This research connects to the research done by Black, and to a lesser extent to Alvermann. Because of these connections, it seems safe to say that it is fairly transferable. There are many examples of student writing, and many more of student feedback. There does not seem to be any triangulation done. In addition, while the information connects with Black’s studies, both of these relate to first and second generation Asian immigrants.

Yi’s (2005) study, *Asian Adolescents’ out-of-school encounters with English and Korean Literacy*, returns to the topic of Buckeye City. The paper was written with three goals, “to create a portrait of Asian adolescent ELLs’ literacy activities outside of school, to examine similarities and differences in the literacy encounters among these students and to explore possible relationships between out-of-school and academic literacy practices.” It addresses three research questions, “To what extent do Asian high school students engage in out-of-school literacy activities? What kinds of out-of-school literacy practices do they engage in? What are the purposes of these activities? What is their preferred language, L1 or L2, for these literacy practices? What medium do they use for these activities? How are their writing activities connected to their reading activities? What are some possible relationships between academic and out-of-school literacy practices?”. This case study of three students was based on a larger ethnography, three Korean students, two fifteen year old females and one sixteen year old female, the students were asked to keep journals, checklists and to participate in other self-monitoring activities. The researcher met with the students weekly for sixteen weeks.

Yi found that the out of school literacy practices are not completely separate from academic literacy practices. The students engaged in a wide variety of out of school literacy practices. The language the students used seemed to be connected with who they were interacting with. If they were sufficiently motivated, they would read/write in whichever language was necessary.

The description was very rich. The study agreed with other studies, language is highly socially situated, which does provide it with dependability. The researcher was quite clear about her critical perspective. There was very little procedural information. The researcher did not disclose if there was any member checking or triangulation. The sample base was three girls, very close in age, from the same nationality. While the researcher stated that a range was represented, that “range” seems to be the informants’ practices and linguistic background. Furthermore, the informants were selected from a larger study based on a literacy practice (the “Welcome to Buckeye City” website, which is in Korean) which means that the students were already inclined to write in Korean.

Yi also examined one of the student’s composition practices at length. The case study “Engaging Literacy: A Biliterate Student’s composing practices beyond school”, was constructed to create a portrait of one student’s literacy practices, including “types of composing activities beyond school, purposes or motivations for out-of-school composing activities, attitudes towards composing practices and her own written work, and her perceptions of herself as a writer.” The researcher and the informant, a generation 1.5 female Korean student met once a week, in addition the study drew information from a variety of sources including, but not limited to internet chats, school papers, formal and informal conversations with teacher, relatives and peers and activity checklists. There

were constant informal member checks, as well as two formal member checks. To analyze the data, the researchers looked for themes, and engaged in coding. Yi found that Joan assumed many different roles and identities as a writer, depending on what she was doing/creating. The informant code-switched freely, and developed several ideas about what composition should be, and how popular culture artifacts should be used. Also, her online interactions positively impacted her learning of English, even though the standards for informal online English are very different (both in spelling and structurally) than academic English. Her screen name was variable, and a composing practice in and of itself reactive to and reflective of her current mood and situation. Joan engaged in editing during her out-of-school composing practices. Her work was diverse and rich and engaged in multiple forms. This study was almost swimming in rich detail. The researcher suggests several connections to the larger literature of multiliteracies and ELL research. The researcher engaged in many member checks. Critically speaking, all three studies lack any form of triangulation.

When examining what students are doing with their out of school time, it is also important to establish what kind of meaning the students are making from what they are reading and viewing. Fishkeller (2000) also examined out-of-school media awareness's of students. In an ethnographic study of 60 11-13 year olds, m/f, mixed ethnicity, mixed racially, acting as a participant observer, Fishkeller asked "Do students have tacit understandings about television as a system of communication with specific values and purposes in the United States, not unlike the understanding they have about language through their home communities?". Purely interpretive, interviews, home visits, spoke to eight families, and conducted classroom observations, tells the reader to look elsewhere

for precise information about method. Connected to other research by same author (which generated the pool for the informants, so it is a convenience sample, in a sense). Television use, television interpretation, possible uses in classroom, analyzing students' informal knowledge of television genre conventions. Fishkeller found that students were aware of genre conventions (typical characters, typical plots), the writers as writers, and of schedules within television as a medium (season, mid season breaks, reruns). The study was long (persistent observation), researcher engaged in member checks (see interviews), the description is thick (describes race, ethnicity, home culture, viewing preferences, etc), she is clear about her biases, she pays attention to the voice of the children (after all, it is all about them), this is shown (among other places) in her allowing them to choose their own pseudonyms. With the thick detail it seems to be highly transferable. However, Fishkeller is unclear about how she sorted her data, and did not discuss things that did not fit, nor how she reflected with a peer (peer debriefing, negative case analysis).

Alvermann, Hagood, Heron-Hruby, Hughes, Williams, and Yoon (2007) reported of their quantitative time-use survey "The findings reported in this sub-study focus solely on the similarities and differences in literacy practices that members of the two groups (intervention and comparison) recorded in their daily activity logs." Sixty "underachieving" students were involved in a study, and as part of the study they filled out daily activity logs. This study compares the answers. The log was taken seven days a week for fourteen weeks. There were six questions related to time spent on activities, with multiple answers acceptable. : 60 7th through 9th graders in South Eastern United States. 90% scored in the bottom quarter of standardized state tests. 56 African American,

3 European American, 1 Mexican. 30 attended a “media club”, where they met daily (while being paid) to discuss and engage in media related activities. The goal of the media club was to engage students in recreational reading, with the definition of “reading” taking into account internet media as well as print media. 30 were control. On question one (“While out of school today until I went to sleep, I...”), the intervention group played video games and used the internet roughly twice as frequently as the control group (30.54% vs. 16.9% and 14.99% vs 6.51% respectively). The control group read items from the library more frequently (60.28% vs. 58.14%). The media club members were more likely to read out of school materials (sets of directions, 28% vs. 14%, song lyrics 31% vs. 9%, billboard advertisements 21% vs. 9%, internet sites 16.97% vs. 5.59%). The intervention group also was more likely to read in places outside of home and school (public library 25.6% vs. 14.13%, outdoors 29.88% vs. 10.16%, car or bus 29.78% vs. 10.53%, friend’s house 21.91% vs. 5.20% and grocery store or mall 11.53% vs. 2.20%). There were no statistically significant difference between the two groups in the amount of time reported reading (29.4 minutes vs. 33.9 minutes). Many of these differences can be attributed to the intervention group having a set amount of unregulated (or less regulated, as Alvermann et al (2008) explores in another substudy related to this one and involving one of the members of the intervention group) time in the library. The sample was well chosen, and the over representation of African American students may be a reflection of the inequity of the public school system. The conditions are fairly broad, lending to generalizability. The length of the study suggests that the findings were consistent, as opposed to flukes.

It is quite possible that the intervention group is defining activities differently as opposed to actually engaging in reading related activities more often. The lack of difference between time reported reading between the two groups and the greater time spent doing reading activities by the intervention group suggests that the data is somehow off. The reason for the dramatically higher time spent reading reported in this study and other studies is unclear.

A study by Oates (2001) asked “What does it mean to consider the meaning people make of their literacy practices? What meanings do people have for their literacy and how does it influence their practices? Where do these meanings come from? What significance might this view of literacy have in terms of learning and teaching, specifically in high school language arts classes?”. This ethnographic case study considers the beliefs and systems of two high school students (two subjects, one 12th grade girl and one 12th grade boy. Case study subjects were selected from broader pool of observed students) and their Discourse practices. Case study aspects come from the bounded system influencing the discourse of the two students (namely both being practicing Mormons in good standing and the effects and opportunities for literary discourse presented in that specific culture, ie: journaling and presenting to the church). Guiding theory is Discourse theory. Data collected using participant observer techniques. Researcher observed one period for five months (1st). Interviews were taped and transcribed. Materials were gathered from the students and analyzed (journals, essays, other writing assignments) using coding techniques. The three categories used were textual practice, social practice, and relational practice. The three codes were not exclusive. Oates found that the students engaged in several kinds of Discourse throughout

their school career. However, academic was not necessarily one of them. Additionally, Oates noticed that by the teacher's connecting the text closely to the student's lives, and how close their out-of-school and in school discourse communities were, the students were not proficient at shifting their identities. Researcher attended every class for six months. Researcher performed regular member checks and was provided access to all of the informant's writing, including journals. The researcher recorded all interactions (classes, interviews). Researcher "studied the beliefs, understanding, and meanings that informed [the informants] uses of written language, as well as the relationships that influenced, were influenced by their literacy practices" (p. 218). Researcher clearly states his grounding in semiotics. While he does not state directly that his research was confirmed, in his results section, he mentions discussing this article with Alvermann, a noted theorist in this field. The information supports the trends seen in other research, which is that adolescents often have highly developed out of school literacies, but these are more difficult to interact with in an academic setting than would initially be thought (dependability).

While under typical circumstances, the religion of the informants would have no bearing on transferability, in this case the informant's Mormon religion imbeds a literacy practice (daily journaling) that deeply impacts their relationship with writing. Also, the connection of school and church brings to mind the question of what the teacher's out of school relationship was with the students. Finally, there is no mention of triangulation in the study.

These studies showed that youth culture is deeply intertwined with youth literacy practices on many levels. When left to their own devices, students engaged in a wide

variety of literacy practices. The internet was a particularly rich area of study, likely due to the self-selected nature of the medium. Regardless of the medium, however, many adolescents engaged in many different kinds of complex literacy practices.

Students' Interactions with School Literacy Practices

While it is very helpful to examine what the effects of popular culture on students and what their out-of-school practices are, we must also examine how they interact with academic literacy. In other words, how are students interacting with literacy from a social in school standpoint?

In Knoester's (2009) case study/ethnography, the researcher offered a hypothesis, "adolescents benefit if teachers view reading as a public act and use strategies that acknowledge reading as social, perhaps contributing to the positive identity development of adolescents". Part of the statement is due to the focus of the research changing mid-stream from homework practices to reading and social practices. The researcher used coded discourse analysis. The discourse analysis was performed on taped interviews using open-ended questions. There were a series of 10 interviews involving the student, their parent/guardian, and their teacher. The questions focused on what reading was done, where it was done, which practices counted (and didn't count) as reading, what the students did socially, as well as when these activities took place. The teachers were given the questions in advance, so that they could generate the data to corroborate the student's narratives. 10 fifth through seventh graders (11-13) in a small public school, seven boys and three girls, six African American, one Latina and three Caucasian. The students had a wide range of ability and range of success in the school. The researcher (a former teacher at the school) knew the students well. Though it was not stated in the study, the school

seems to be an alternative school of some sort (there is a lottery in place to gain admission, siblings are automatically admitted). Each of the students had study materials at-home, as well as a quiet place to study. Most of the students (9/10) read “a variety of materials” on a regular basis. The students all had some form of home support for their reading. They were all exposed to a variety of locations from which to obtain books. Four of the students identified themselves as people who did not like to read, and did not see how reading practices related to their lives. Knoester suggests that part of the problem for these students is not seeing themselves in the school texts, and that they are experiencing a conflict between their identities as black males and students. The similarity of the backgrounds and home lives of the students makes it easier to locate “social identity” as something separate from other factors.

The researcher’s close relationship with the students would grant him easier access to much of the information. While there was a lack of triangulation, his description of his data analysis was very clear. The use of John as an example provides some very rich detail. The results reflect Gee’s Discourse theory very closely, adding to the study’s dependability. Without knowing the background of the school, it is difficult to generalize the information. There was no mention of member-checking. The researcher’s familiarity and clear attachment to his former students may have influenced his findings.

Duff (2001) asked “What are the observed and reported challenges facing ESL [sic] students in two social studies classes in terms of language, literacy, content, and culture and how, if at all, are those challenges being met?”. This was a qualitative ethnography of two classes of 24-28, 25 of which were ELL. Duff used observation and interviews, this study was not designed to compare or evaluate the classrooms. Duff

interviewed the students and teachers and found that ELL students needed a greater understanding of local and popular culture to fully understand what was happening in the classroom. Teacher should attend to the structure of the text and also to how they pace the class, as well as make adjustments to allow for people whose English skills do not allow for quick jumping in. Persistent observation (2 years), does address the community of the ELL students, both at-home and at school. Includes samples which assist in confirmability. Goes to pains to establish authenticity (is clear about teachers methods, does not judge, goes out of way to approve of many of the methods used). Despite weaknesses, it seems to be both trustworthy and transferable, especially to schools with small to medium class-sizes. Peer debriefing? (doesn't say). This study doesn't state biases, or how perception has been changing throughout the two years. This study doesn't mention performing member checks.

Alvermann, Young, Weaver, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps, Thrash, and Zalewski (1996) asked "a) What roles and relationships influence how students perceive their participation in classroom talk about texts? B) For what do they hold each other accountable? And c) what expectations do they hold for such discussions?" This was a multicase study. Several case studies spread across many participants and schools. The sites were selected to provide the widest range of discussion possibilities (small group, whole class, teacher-led, etc). Many of the researchers were also teacher researchers, but not all. Much of the primary data was collected by videotaping discussions. These were then showed three times to students. Students responded not only to their own observed discussions, but also to other discussions. There were asked a series of questions, including questions relating to how it felt to be observed and questions related to

practices in classrooms other than their own. While this process was going on, the researchers also actively triangulated their data, checking each other's transcriptions. Using this information, they identified "key linkages". There were 5 classes ranging from middle school to seniors in high school, representing a wide range of settings (suburban, urban, working class), with a wide range of ethnicities: African American, Arabic, Vietnamese, Ukrainian, Latino/a, Chinese. There were a total of 95 students in the study, and the researchers were meticulous about documenting the race, sex, and ethnicity of the students. Asian students were under represented. The classes were a wide mix of ability, ranging from primarily ELL students to honors seniors. The study found that "1: Students are aware of the conditions they believe to be conducive to discussion.... 2: Students say the tasks teacher present and the topics or subject matter they assign for reading influence participation in discussion....3: Students see discussion as helpful in understanding what they read." The researchers were very clear about their various biases and teaching philosophies. Data was very clear, and easily reproducible. The findings reflect findings elsewhere, specifically in Smagorinski, adding dependability. Their triangulation methods were extensive and meticulously described. Having the students view the recordings and be interviewed concerning their perceptions certainly qualifies as member checking. The many focal students create a very rich description of the classroom practices and atmosphere. However, the presence of the researchers certainly impacted both the student reactions, as well as their responses to the interview questions. One of the cases was not studied as long as the others, the decision to choose several focal students from each site limited the rich individual description.

What are some of the common sticking points when discussing or experiencing youth culture? Heron-Hruby, Hagood, and Alvermann (2008) explored this and asked “1. What were the points of conflict related to the use of popular culture text among educators and students? Within the conflict, were there any areas of shared meaning or experience? 2. When a conflict occurred between educators and students, how did it unfold? That is, what meanings or practices were reinforced or created as a result of the conflict? 3. How did the space of the other, for either educators or students, influence how a conflict unfolded?” in a qualitative, cross-case analysis/case study. The cases were selected from three other studies done by same researchers. Three were selected due to differences in age and background, so as to look for similarities in the difficulties faced by the students in the face of conflicts with authority. “Authority”, in two of the cases (Lil’J and Tamara) were teachers and school administration, in Cutie Pie’s case, “authority” was the public library’s young adult section’s librarian. The studies were constructed from field notes, audio-taped interviews, one included email exchanges. To compare the cases codes were developed and applied to the interactions of the informants and those they interacted with. Codes included race, language interactions (such as correction). The first layer of coding was based on what the researchers thought would be typical interactions, and the second was inductive, based on what the researchers were hearing/seeing in the interactions.

The subjects were three girls, Lil’J, a 13-year-old African American girl interested in fashion, Cutie Pie, a 14 year-old African American girl, interested in sports, and Tamara, a 17 year-old Caucasian girl interested in African American hip-hop culture. All three girls were considered low achievers in their respective schools. Lil’J and

Tamara primarily had interactions with the researchers at school, while Cutie Pie interacted with the researchers through a literacy workshop conducted at the local library. The researchers found that conflicts can provide an opportunity for growth and often a chance to help the student develop academically. Teachers may benefit from examining their views of popular culture, and what role it can or should play in the classroom. The findings also suggest that there may be areas of correspondence in the students' views of popular culture and the teachers' views of their popular culture. By deliberately selecting the subjects for their wide range of personal attributes, the researchers were able to pinpoint both similarities and differences. With the three researchers interacting so often while still working on their own research, this study often and deeply provides triangulation. The data coding is deep and full of examples that clearly demonstrate what is being coded. Because of the range of participants, this study seems very transferable. However, the relationships between the students and the researchers are very different, Hagood, for example, had a great deal of personal interaction with one of the subjects while being something of a mentor, which Alvermann was, more than anything else, an observer. This can dramatically affect how the students present themselves. While there was a great deal of fact checking, the necessarily different means of data collection could bring the findings into question, were the findings not so ambivalent. There did not appear to be a great deal of member checking.

These studies found that student interaction with school literacy was nearly as varied and complex as at-home literacies, and just as unregulated. The studies found that more meaningful interactions and fairly simple classroom practice changes had a

dramatic impact on the understanding of the students. But what happened when these interventions were more deliberate?

Effects of Interventions

Where can we modify our practices? Or, to put it another way, this is all well and good, but so what? The research on this front is slim, though stories of great successes interacting with youth culture abound. Slim, however, is not the same as non-existent. There seem to be two broad categories of classroom practices grounded in youth culture. The first is using elements of youth culture as bridging materials, and the second is building in youth culture composition practices into classroom activities, sometimes this is with the goal of creating a youth culture artifact, and other times the goal is the creation of a multimodal piece that uses the skills that youth culture privileges (such as referential material and ‘remixing’), instead of the skills that academic culture privileges (such as formal print composition).

In the article, “We can relate”, Stovall (2006) addressed the question “Can hip-hop, as an element of popular culture, be utilized as a central theme in developing critical pedagogy in secondary social studies curriculum?”. This ethnographic account details the teacher-researcher’s use of six hip-hop songs as guiding ideas in six interrelated workshops. The songs were used as the basis of six workshops. During and after the workshops field notes were recorded by a co-facilitator. The teacher-researcher and the co-facilitator would then debrief. In addition, the students would provide both formal and informal feedback. There was a certain improvisation that went with the creation of these workshops, in tune with Frère and hooks’ beliefs that lessons should be reactive to student’s immediate and individual wants and needs. The workshops were attended by 19

Black and Latino/a students. The students were engaged in the lessons, which successfully linked to the required social studies curriculum. However, the researcher felt that the selection of songs would have had more impact had the students selected them. In addition, the researcher felt that his addressing of the misogyny and glorification of materialism and violence which infuses the popular branches of hip hop were inadequately addressed. By checking in with the co-facilitator, and comparing notes, the researcher did limited triangulation. The researcher acknowledged that by selecting the music, they somewhat forced the class materials to work. There was a great deal of rich detail, including student responses and samples of the songs used. The researcher conducted extensive member checking, both during and after the research. The researcher discussed the theoretical underpinnings of their research at length. This study is highly and intentionally transferable, with the researcher offering suggestions for improvement.

There did not appear to be an outside auditor of any kind, which may not have been necessary, considering the nature of the question. It is difficult to judge dependability, although there is a great deal of antidotal evidence that supports this stance, there is very little actual classroom research. Even this study was only a study in the broadest sense of the term.

One of the key propionates of using youth cultural forms for composition is Smagorinski. This study in particular is interesting because it engages out-of-school literacies, though it does not use them in a typical out-of-school compositional style. Smagorinski and O'Donnell-Allen (1998) did a case study/ethnography which asked "1. What are the consequences of the specific intercontextual framework of the class under study on particular acts of composing with that framework? 2. How do intertextual

factors influence specific acts of composing on an intertextual continuum? 3. In what ways does a small-group setting potentially enable exploratory talk to contribute to the production of an interpretive text? 4. In what ways does the production of a multimedia interpretive text enable a particular group of students to compose meaning for a work of literature?” They spent a year in the classroom, substituting and observing as opportunities presented themselves. The researcher and the teacher worked together to code the dialogues recorded of the students while working in groups on multi-media projects. The coding did not follow any particular style. The case study focuses on five students and their dialogues during the creation of a multi-media “body biography”, all of the students were European American, four of them were female, one was male. The students were selected due to their presence in the middle level of achievement in the class. The students created an assignment that met the parameters set by the teacher, and while doing so set goals, divided labor and established social roles. Their out of school lives informed their compositional decisions. While doing this they created meaning from the text, using the text itself and personal and/or collective associations. Their exploratory talk helped them to understand the literal text of the play. The methodology is very well documented, if unorthodox, adding to the conformability of the study. The school setting and students seem quite typical for a suburban area, and in that context seems highly transferable. The researcher is very clear about his theoretical position, as well as making his decision-making and data gathering process highly transparent, which adds to the credibility of the study. This study does not directly correlate with typical research patterns. It examines one group of students over a year in the same classroom, which could make it a case study or ethnography, but the description is not as thick as it could

be. The researcher freely playing fast and loose with coding practices. There was no member checking, as the students graduated. The only triangulation done was between the teacher and the researcher.

Bruce (2008) asked “can lower achieving students using video demonstrate Smagorinsky’s definition of “composition” (1. the use of an appropriate tool or set of tools 2. an understanding of the conventions and genres within which one is working and an understanding of the effects of breaking these conventions 3. an extended process that usually includes planning, drafting, feedback, reflection, and revising 4. building on prior knowledge and understanding as a basis for the construction of new ideas and a new text 5. new learning that takes place through the process of composing 6 rewarding both the process of composing and the ultimate texts as sources of meaning)?”. This was a qualitative, teacher-researcher study where Bruce systematically documented the process which the students created a music video. One semester long. Short answer and Likert scale questions (generally regarding the students feelings about reading/writing) survey. He used Retrospective Think aloud protocols, interview, kept a journal. Bruce reviewed his findings and charted findings according to gender, achievement level, and type of answer. Bruce also did some discourse analysis, mainly with trends in answers. There were 82 students in the study, however the focus was on four male students. Bruce found that the students, lower achieving males, demonstrated all six levels of composition while creating a music video. Students acquired composition skills by critically engaging and deconstructing popular media. The researcher was very clear about which methods he used when. Generally used thick description when describing the end product (music video) and group interactions. Left a great deal of the interviews, which helps with the

confirmability. However, the general (beyond the focus group) results not made clear. Glaring assumptions regarding ethnicity and student cultural backgrounds. Apparently heavily biased towards white culture. Shows “comprehension gap” regarding ethnicity, especially considering that the song the video was made for was a rap song. Assumes that the students’ background as “low achievers” means that they did not have sophisticated academic critical thinking skills. Lack of specificity about students makes transferring information difficult. To what why are these students “low achievers”. I would have liked to see a link to the final video project. With no check in from another teacher, it is difficult to fully trust his assessment (question of triangulation). Member checks: The researcher does not verify that these students are doing more/better work in this project than in others, which leaves the question, “do they always do this, and teachers don’t see it because of their bias towards writing composition, or was it the nature of the assignment that made them more interested in using intuitive composition skills?” Dependability question: the kids have been in classes for a whole year, shouldn’t their composition skills increase just by that? The researcher is fairly biased towards his method, he does not quite address other reasons for his conclusion (question of authenticity).

Finally, it is worthwhile to see how interventions work with younger students. Rosenkoetter, Rosenkoetter, Ozertich, and Acock (2008) asked “Would a year long intervention with a sustained focus opposing TV violence result in participating children (1) watching fewer violent TV programs (2) Identify less with violent TV heroes (3) behave in less aggressive ways towards their peers (4) Have a less positive attitude towards TV violence”. In this quantitative intervention, 1-2 half hour education classes

on television violence a week for a school year. There was a questionnaire issued to children before and after, rating *the other children* on their behavior.

The questionnaires were varied, some were T/F assessment, others were likert scale (1-4), others were television viewing assessments. The study was an intervention which focused on several principals: a: Television is a powerful teacher. B: all television shows teach. C: all television shows do not teach the same lesson. D: some teach violence. E: Violence is not a wonderful problem solver in the real world, (f) violence often creates additional problems, (g) TV violence is contrived to capture and hold viewers so that the television industry can make money, (h) some tv programs teach us to solve problems by thinking and talking, (i) we can choose which programs we will watch, (j) it is best to choose TV programs that teach good lessons, (k) we ought not imitate and/or wish to be like TV characters that solve problems with violence, and (l) TV violence looks real, but it is actually staged using special effects. : N=139, control 47, total was 173, 2/3rd graders, Oregon. Chosen for convenience (study was conducted out of University of Oregon, children were in Eugene elementary school) Did not reduce TV viewing with boys, did reduce aggression. Did reduce viewing with girls. Did not reduce identification with boys (but process is flawed, see strengths and weaknesses). Seems to show that education can reduce acts of aggression. The children were perceived as less aggressive by their peers. Researchers were very forthright about the flaws of their study. Researchers did not take the fickle tastes of the children into account, many of their program choices were not selected. Reduction of television behavior could be connected to the weather. Reduction of aggressive behavior could be related to growing maturity and growing familiarity of classmates. Teachers changed parameters of intervention mid-

stream. Children realized what the researchers were trying to accomplish, which means that they knew what answers they wanted.

Generalizability is very low. Some of the influences may include “history”, due to the weather, the children’s television watching habits may have changed. Maturation in a year long study may influence the lessened violent behavior. Testing may have played a part, as the children discovered the researchers’ goals and this impacted how the intervention was perceived.

Summary

In this chapter, we have reviewed the literature on how media affects adolescents, we have also considered how teachers approach popular media. Next we looked at how adolescents and young adults use popular media on their own and in the classroom, finally we discussed some way popular culture is currently being used in the classroom. In the next chapter, we will review the findings and assess what the next step should be in using popular culture in the secondary language arts classroom.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

Introduction

In the first chapter, we discussed the rationale for investigating the uses of popular culture texts in the language arts classroom. We reviewed key terms and addressed the mixed stance of the educational system towards popular culture. In the second chapter, we examined the intertwined history of education and popular culture text forms and discussed how there is a disconnect between educational theory and educational practice. The third chapter examined and critiqued much of the literature on the uses and effects of popular culture in a variety of classroom and home settings. In this chapter we will discuss the findings of the literature revolving around popular culture texts in the classroom.

Summary of Findings

Findings concerning effects of popular media consumption

Selfout, Delsing, ter Bogt and Meeus (2009) found that there was a correlation between a preference for heavy metal and hip hop cultural styles and later negative behavior in Dutch teens. In addition, they found that tastes in music and style were stable over time. They did find that these musical and style choices were predictive for socially negative behavior. However, they did not discuss if there were media awareness classes in any of the students' education, also the study did not ascertain if the lifestyle choices affected the behavior or simply predicted it.

Robertson, Blain, and Cowan (2005) examined the media use of Scottish teens and asked what the major influences on their lives were. They found that the teens used information from a variety of sources, and that the teens said that their parents and

schools were the major influences in their lives. While this view somewhat disagrees with the prior study, the teens were exposed to a different entertainment and educational model.

Mokhtari, Reichard, and Gardner (2009) examined media use among college students and asked how this affected their reading habits. They found that they students generally spent a great deal of time engaged in information gathering activities, and that this did not take away from their studies. This study was focused on self-selected, self-reported results with the sample being skewed towards white females.

Tucciarone (2007) examined how students make meaning of the college experience through the lens of viewing *National Lampoon's Animal House*. The students were self-selected, trained in content analysis and asked to track what happens in the film. Tucciarone found that the students regarded college as a largely social endeavor, as opposed to an academic one.

Finally, Iamoto, Cresell and Caldwell (2007) asked how rap music influenced the lives of Midwestern college students. These students were a small, well mixed racially and genderwise and self selected. They found that rap was a positive influence on the students' lives.

These studies were mixed between quantitative and qualitative and in most cases the informants were self-selected. In addition, the studies were focused on the informants' perceptions of their own behavior, as opposed to outside observations. This leads to the studies showing the informants' perceptions of themselves, which may not be accurate. For example, if students believe that the hip-hop image consists of being a rule-breaking outsider, they may identify more of their behavior as being rule-breaking, when

they may not actually perform these actions. As a counter example, students at a college may view themselves as being successful in school-based endeavors and therefore identify their musical preferences as contributing to that success.

The two quantitative studies made extensive use of questionnaires, which by their nature limit the kinds of responses which can be made. The kinds of questions asked may have impacted the results found. For example, the students in the Robertson, Blain and Corwin (2005) study were asked what influenced their actions, while the students in the Selfhout, Delsing, ter Bogt and Meeus (2009) study were asked what their actions were. While both used a five point Likert scale, the difference in the questions impact how positive or negative the responses are viewed. The former lends itself towards favoring authority figures (the choices were parents, school, and media), and the latter lends itself towards favoring actions, when offered the choice between several anti-social activities, it seems more likely that the students will select at least one.

Generally, studies focusing on college students produced more strongly positive results. This may be because the students are already academically successful, and therefore identify more strongly with activities that are pro-school, as well as activities that favor affirming their own agency. Simply put, they get to make decisions, and therefore those decisions are more likely to be correct.

Findings concerning teacher views of popular media

Meegram (2008) examined the meanings social studies teachers made of media and popular culture. The researcher found that the teachers tended to make dualistic assessments of media (high/low, good/bad, etc) and favored teaching students how to protect themselves from the negative effects of media. This qualitative study had very

thick descriptions, but seemed to avoid member checking, focusing instead on how the researcher interpreted the coding process.

Lewis and Ketter (2008) attempted to apply the NLG's multiliteracy awareness in an extended intervention and attempted to shift teachers' perceptions and ways of reading. The teachers tended to either universalize or other the novels read at first, but showed a greater awareness as the intervention continued. They found that as the teachers discussed the books, their perceptions broadened.

Taken together, these studies generally agree with each other, and the Meegram (2008) study could be seen as the beginning state for the teachers in the Lewis and Ketter (2008) intervention. Both of these studies were qualitative, and both focused on using coding. This raises the question of what the informants think about what the researchers perceive. Lewis and Ketter engaged in a great deal of member checking, so one can assume that their findings were consistent with what the teachers were actually experiencing, while the Meegram study runs dangerously close to putting words in teachers' mouths (or, to be more accurate, thoughts in their minds). The Lewis and Ketter (2008) study suggests that by discussing various forms of adolescent media teachers can broaden their own perceptions, complicating their view of the world portrayed in adolescent literature.

These studies favored white female informants. This reflects the general state of the teaching profession, and so can be viewed as a strength. These studies also seem to indicate that many teachers have a protective stance towards their students in regards to media consumption.

Findings concerning at-home literacy practices

Leander and Lovvorn (2006) engaged in a case study examining the literacy practices of a thirteen year old from the mid-south. They found that he engaged in a variety of literacy practices both on and off-line and used different strategies dependant on where (both in physical and virtual space) he was. He was adept at code-switching, meaning that he engaged with texts in different ways based on context. He was more likely to write in out of school spaces.

Chandler-Olcott and Mahar performed two studies in 2003, both examining the composition practices of two middle school girls. These case studies found that the girls engaged in a composition process on their own outside of the school setting. They set goals for themselves, sought outside help, published their work, and proceeded to help others in their creation of internet media. Both studies noted that the informants were more involved in their fan-based creations (drawing and writing) and willing to experiment. In these settings, the girls developed identities as creators. However, Chandler-Olcott and Mahar expressed worries that this was not easily translatable to academic settings, as the girls were not held in very high regard socially and suffered from some social anxiety that being put in the spotlight may intensify.

Black (2009) analyzed the skills developed in online fan-fiction communities. The researcher found that the informants (three ELL students with a wide range of English fluency) all improved their writing skills and engaged in a writing process outside of school where they asked for and responded to specific feedback and experimented with writing in different genres. This case study took place over three years and Black was a participant observer.

Yi (2008a) asked how Korean adolescents were invested in an out of school writing website. As a participant observer, Yi found that the students wrote extensively on the website, and that much of the writing centered around their personal experiences as “generation 1.5” Koreans. She also worked with this group in 2005, and published a case study examining Asian adolescent ELLs literacy activities outside of the school setting. She found that school and home writing were not necessarily separate, and the students engaged in a wide variety of practices. Finally, Yi (2008b) performed an in-depth case study of one student. Yi examined the student’s school, online, chat, and personal writings to create a full portrait of the student’s English and Korean language composition skills and practices. Yi found that the student’s English improved dramatically, even though the “rules” of formal and informal English are dramatically different. In addition, Yi found that the student engaged in extensive editing practices.

Fishkeller (2000) examined the popular culture media awareness of students. As a participant observer, Fishkeller sought to understand what kinds of meanings 60 students from 11-13 made of television show. The researcher found that the students had a deep awareness of the “rules” of television, both in terms of genre conventions (typical characters and plots) and as a medium (writers getting bored, “jumping the shark”, mid season breaks).

Alvermann, Hagood, Heron-Hruby, Hughes, Williams and Yoon (2007) compared the literacy practices of a group of 60 “underachieving” 7th-9th grade students involved in a media awareness intervention group to the practices of a similar group not involved in the year long study. The members of the group were more likely to read out of school materials, and were also more likely to identify acts as reading (seeing

billboards, for example), however, there was no statistically significant difference in time spent reading in general. The researchers suggested that the intervention group may be defining “reading” differently than the control group, suggesting a broadening of their identities as “readers”.

Oates (2001) performed an ethnographic case study on two Mormon 12th grade students, one male and the other female to examine their literacy practices and what meanings they had for the informants. The researcher was a participant observer and engaged in several discussions with the students as well as their teachers, friends, and families. Oates found that when all parts of the students’ writing lives informed and impacted each other.

These studies were all case studies, and generally conducted by participant observers. As a whole, they support each other, stating that students have a range of literacy practices, and that these practices support their growth as writers, especially when the writing is something that they are personally motivated to do. The studies that focused on students that are ELL all found that the out of school writing supported the growth of their academic writing. However, these studies also share a common flaw, and that is lack of triangulation. With the extended duration (the shortest one was nine months), one has to ask if the researchers are seeing such striking results because they are getting to know the informants and becoming more familiar with their writing, which makes the writing become clearer, but only for the researcher. Generally this group of studies seems to favor ELL and low income students as informants. However, this may be because these students are the ones that have the most to gain from literacy

interventions. The dramatic favoring of case studies in this section likely has something to do with the complicated nature of measuring literacy.

Findings concerning students' interactions with school literacy practices

Knoester (2009) performed a case study examining reading as a social act. This case study examined ten eleven through thirteen year-olds. The researcher was deeply involved with the students and found that even with home support (the school was an alternative school), the African American male students did not identify as readers. Knoester hypothesized that this is because the reader identity was in conflict with the identity as a black male. The researcher suggested that teachers provide more black male role-models, both in person and from examples in classes.

Duff (2002) examined the challenges facing ELL students in two social studies classes in a two year qualitative ethnography. The researcher found that ELL students needed a greater understanding of local and popular culture to fully understand what is going on in the classroom. Duff suggested a number of classroom practices that could potentially help ELL students succeed in the classroom, including ways of sharing at-home literacies with the rest of the class.

Alvermann, Young, Weaver, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps, Thrash, and Zalewski (1996) conducted a series of case studies examining student participation in classroom talk about texts. They found that students were aware of what made a good discussion and that teachers' selections of readings and topics directly influences student participation. This study had a large number of informants for a case study (95) and focused on students from the full range of socioeconomic backgrounds.

Heron-Hruby, Hagood and Alvermann (2008) examined points of conflict relating to popular culture texts between educators and students. This study was a qualitative, cross-case analysis/case study drawn from other studies done by the same researchers. It is unique in that the researchers consider modes of dress as “texts”. The researchers found that popular culture texts, and the relationship between the educators’ texts and the students’, provided opportunities for connection that the educators missed.

As in other portions of this literature review, all of the research is qualitative. In general, it favors populations often considered “at risk”, this may be because these are the populations that are having the greatest difficulty navigating the public school system. Many of these findings are consistent with idea that students who have their development of an academic identity that is in congruence with their home identity may be better served. However, three of the studies identify trouble spots, as opposed to offering successful interventions.

Findings concerning effects of interventions

Stovall (2006) used hip-hop songs as the basis of workshops in an ethnography examining 19 Black and Latino/a students. The selection of songs was successfully connected to the curriculum, however the researcher felt that student voice was not present in the selection of the songs, and that it would have helped the engagement levels if it had been. In addition, the researcher felt that the lessons should have spent more time addressing the sexism and materialism prevalent in the songs themselves. This study had few weaknesses, except that there was no clear criterion for how it could have gone otherwise.

Another approach was attempted by Smagorinski and O'Donnell-Allen (1998). Instead of framing their lessons with popular culture texts as Stovall (2006) did, they used the students' out of school literacies to inform their school practices. All of the students were European American and performing at the middle level in their classes. By interacting with the text in a variety of ways, the students' gained a greater comprehension of the school based text. However, this study lacked thick detail and the coding practices were unclear and the question of maturation continues to loom.

Bruce (2008) applied Smagorinski's definition to the creation of multi-media, in this case, video. Focusing on low achieving students, Bruce had them create a music video as a means to fulfill composition requirements. These students did perform the activity. However, the researcher was very unclear about what made the students "low achieving", beyond their grades in his class. This makes the study very difficult to use.

Finally, Rosenkoetter, Rosenkoetter, Ozertich and Acock (2008) performed a quantitative intervention with young students (2nd and 3rd grade) examining if media awareness classes could positively influence students' behavior and television viewing choices. While their intervention was technically successful, they had to admit that the intervention construction was basically flawed. The students realized what the researchers' goals were, and therefore tended to give the answers that they felt that the researchers wanted.

Each of these studies uses a different approach to addressing popular culture in the classroom. Stovall (2008) uses it to address curricular goals, Smagorinski and O'Donnell-Allen (1998) encouraged the use of "code-switching" while creating a mixed media final assessment. Bruce (2008) had students create a popular culture artifact and

assessed this artifact as a composition would be. Finally Rosenkoetter, Rosenkotter, Ozertich and Acock (2008) attempted to influence students' use of popular culture. They all suffer from the same failing as studies, which is a question of maturation. Would the students have learned the material without the popular culture?

Classroom Implications

From the research, we can see that a scattershot use of youth culture is not particularly helpful (Oates, 2001). To fulfill the goals of the NCTE in preparing students for the world, a much more disciplined approach is helpful, especially when considering how to engage students' out-of-school literacies in a classroom. To sum up the recommendations, teachers should take the time to make themselves familiar with what it is that the students are doing outside of the classroom. While this is simply a good practice for connecting with students, it also helps the teacher find connections in his or her own life and history, which, in turn, will help the teacher connect to the students. But connection alone isn't enough.

The bridges between out-of-school and in school practices must be built, as opposed to joining the worlds. As Gee (2008) observes, the challenge for students in the world is learning how to translate a skill from one domain to another. Many of the approaches in the studies reviewed did just that. Smagorinski (1996) provided multiple entry points to the exercise, allowing students to take their knowledge and apply it. Bruce (2008) allowed students to explore the creation of a popular culture artifact, and showed them how it was a form of composition as well. Stovall (2008) used history to give context to popular music, answering the question "what does all of this learning have to do with us?". What these approaches share is that the interaction with youth

culture does not happen for its own sake, and does not just provide engagement. They allow the students to use skills and interests that they already have in an academic context, the material or tasks are not in any way dumbed down. In addition, the use of youth culture in the classroom allows the students to see themselves in the work, which supports the development of an academic identity based on achievement, as opposed to conformity.

This construction of identity is key. Many of the studies focus on people of color, as these are the students that are often facing challenges in the school setting. Knoester (2009) speaks to the heart of this while questioning why black male students do not identify themselves as readers, regardless of how they are doing in the classroom. The researcher suggests that the creation of an academic identity may be in direct conflict with the student's at-home and social identity. By including popular culture texts the teacher may be able to create a place where a student can see themselves in an academic setting.

There is a challenge inherent to work with youth culture. Alvermann and others point out that by using youth culture texts as a focus of school work (instead of just an aspect of it) runs the risk of removing the fun from the activity. "Meaningful play" is a useful learning tool (Gee), however, putting too much emphasis on the "meaningful" takes away from the "play". This is a balancing act, where the traditional curricula can actually act to enhance the interactions with youth culture, making both work together, as opposed to at cross purposes.

One of the most intriguing aspects of my research was the discovery of the way that online interactions created learning communities and enhanced language acquisition.

Some of the findings from Yi and Black's research are immediately useful in the classroom. For example, treating the L1 as a resource as opposed to a difficulty to be overcome is certainly valuable and easily implementable in the classroom. However, this has been known to be a good practice for some time, and is the basis of additive bilingual education. The creation of communities that directly support compositional skill development while exploring youth culture is very significant, but using this in a classroom is difficult and requires more research.

Suggestions for Further Research

Most of the research on the use of popular culture in the language arts classroom is qualitative. Earlier, it was suggested that part of the reason for this is that identity construction and multiple literacies are difficult things to measure. However, this focus has created very lopsided studies that focus purely on success when one has to ask, would an attentive teacher produce the same results while using the traditional curriculum? To address this concern, it would be necessary to create a situation with a control group, perhaps with a teacher that has had consistently good results working with students.

While some of the research has been performed with heterogeneous groups, most of the subjects have been homogenous, typically either all white, all self-selected college students, all Black and Latino/a, all ELL, or all Asian. While these groups certainly have a great deal of diversity within them, groups such as these make it somewhat easier to find shared popular culture texts. As Duff (2001) observed, ELL students often have difficulty following conversations that are laced with popular culture references, this problem would be aggravated if the curriculum was based on a popular culture text. While this is an extreme example, the same situation exists between other groups of

students. Texts which are highly engaging to a *manga* fan would not have the same appeal to a hip hop fan.

The most striking stories were those of Black (2009), where the students were self-motivated to engage in a writing process that had evolved peer review practices. One aspect that was particularly striking is that the informants had constructed deliberate identities as writers, with names and speaking patterns (as opposed to unconsciously developed identities), as well as a protocol for how to best deliver criticism. It may be that anonymity is what helped the informants shed their self-consciousness concerning their writing and develop the identity as a writer. A case study could be conducted where the students were asked to create an identity on an on-line forum and do their writing as that person. Thus, a student whose social identity may forbid deliberate development as a writer could construct an identity that allows growth.

Conclusion

In the first chapter, we discussed the rationale for investigating the uses of popular culture texts in the language arts classroom. We reviewed key terms and addressed the mixed stance of the educational system towards popular culture. In the second chapter, we examined the intertwined history of education and popular culture text forms and discussed how there is a disconnect between educational theory and educational practice. The third chapter examined and critiqued much of the literature on the uses and effects of popular culture in a variety of classroom and home settings. In this chapter we will discuss the findings of the literature revolving around popular culture texts in the classroom. The literature suggests that adolescents engage in a variety of literary practices when engaging with popular culture texts outside of school. ELL students seem

to have the most to gain from these practices. However, efforts to use these out of school literacies in the classroom, while promising, have not been conclusive.

Despite this, broadening the definition of “literacy” has allowed researchers to see that adolescents use very cognitively complicated processes to interact with popular culture texts. These processes do translate to academic literacy practices. Adolescents are, on their own, through popular culture texts, engaging in the writing process. They are creating their own websites, helping each other learn about how to write better. And while we are just beginning to see how to use this in the classroom, there are many promising practices that are bearing fruit.

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