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Abstract

The aim of this article is to expand the dialogue about how contemporary scholarship on the intersections between youth, literacy, and popular culture might inform literacy teacher education. Specifically, this article is designed to (a) orient literacy teacher educators who may be somewhat unfamiliar with this particular line of scholarship to a few of its major concepts and K-12 classroom implications and (b) propose several ways this line of scholarship might open up possibilities for literacy teacher educators to help pre-service literacy teachers develop culturally responsive teaching practices. To address these goals, this article first provides an introduction to several common ways popular culture has been theorized. From this introduction, the article explains the following three concepts within contemporary scholarship that investigates youth engagement with popular culture: (a) popular culture as a site of identity formation for youth; (b) popular culture as a context for literacy development; and (c) popular culture as a vehicle for sociopolitical critique and action. In addition, this article illustrates pedagogical implications these concepts have for K-12 literacy education, including how literacy instructors adopt ethnographic stances toward youth engagement with popular culture to reposition youth and ascertain their popular culture funds of knowledge, bridge standard literacy curricula to students' popular culture funds of knowledge, and develop literacy curricula to facilitate students' sociopolitical critique and action. Finally, this article explores how this line of scholarship may open up spaces within literacy teacher education for K-12 pre-service literacy teachers to grapple with the politics of literacy pedagogy.

> Whether we like it or not, popular culture touches all of our lives and the lives of our students. As educators, we cannot ignore popular culture.
>
> Gaztambide-Fernandez and Gruner (2003, p. 256)

For at least the past decade, a growing body of critical sociocultural research has investigated the intersections between youth, literacy, and popular culture.[1] In general, this scholarship notes that the ubiquitous nature of popular culture in our 21st-century world, especially in relation to young people, makes it an essential context to take into consideration when attempting to understand young people's literacy development, the various ways literacy functions in their lives, and their identities in contemporary society. Undergirding much of this scholarship is the idea that understanding the relationships between youth, literacy, and popular cultures offers literacy (and other) educators powerful pathways to facilitate young people's academic achievement and civic opportunities. Specifically, youth engagement with popular culture may afford literacy educators opportunities to develop culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris, 2012) that help create pedagogical third spaces (Gutierrez, 2008; Kirkland, 2008) that situate literacy curricula in the lives of students and repurpose traditional literacy curricula to be more useful and pertinent for the complex literate lives of today's K-12 students.

However, while this line of inquiry has done much to advance the field's understanding of the intersections between youth, literacy, popular culture, and K-12 literacy classroom possibilities, it has been less instructive about how these research and pedagogical advances might inform literacy teacher education. In addition, the current climate of test-driven curricula and the near universal adoption of Common Core State Standards in United States—both of which have the potential to make discussions and uses of popular culture within literacy pedagogy seem irrelevant to the goal of students' performance on traditional measures—provide an even greater exigency for increased attention to the intersections between youth popular culture and literacy education. The aim of this article, then, is to expand the dialogue about how this line of scholarship might help shape the preparation of K-12 pre-service literacy teachers. Specifically, this article is designed to (a) orient literacy teacher educators who may be somewhat unfamiliar with this particular line of scholarship to its major concepts and K-12 classroom implications, and (b) propose several ways this line of scholarship and its subsequent K-12 classroom implications might open up possibilities for literacy teacher educators to help pre-service literacy teachers develop the skills, practices, and

habits of mind to make sense of and draw upon youth engagement with popular culture to develop sustaining teaching practices.

To address these goals, this article provides a brief introduction to several common ways popular culture as a site of intellectual inquiry has been theorized. From this introduction, the article explains the following three concepts within contemporary scholarship that investigates youth engagement with popular culture: (a) popular culture as a site of identity formation for youth, (b) popular culture as a context for youth literacy development, and (c) popular culture as a vehicle for youth sociopolitical critique and action. Within the discussion of each of these concepts, this article illustrates pedagogical implications these concepts have for K-12 literacy education, including how literacy instructors adopt ethnographic stances toward youth engagement with popular culture to reposition youth and ascertain their popular culture funds of knowledge (Vasudevan, 2008), bridge standard literacy curricula to students' popular culture funds of knowledge (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2004), and develop literacy curricula to facilitate students' sociopolitical critique and action (Hill & Vasudevan, 2008; Petrone & Borsheim, 2008). Finally, this article explores How contemporary research on literacy and popular culture may open up spaces within literacy teacher education for K-12 pre-service literacy teachers to grapple with broader issues pertaining to the politics of literacy pedagogy.

What Is Popular Culture?

Popular culture is hard to avoid because it is at the center of the public sphere in U.S. society. Of course, popular culture is largely driven by commercial interests, which are private and concerned with profit. Nevertheless, popular culture is a site where people have a voice, a stake, and an interest. Except on rare occasions (national tragedies, presidential elections), popular culture is the conversation starter at school, work, and at social occasions. It often serves as social "glue" and a social divider: friendships solidify around a shared love for a particular band, music video, or television show, and being outside of the currents of the popular can lead to social isolation. Popular culture is also integral to the public sphere: Politicians campaign on late-night talk shows, and *The West Wing* and other television programs produce episodes that address terrorism and themes related to September 11. Thus, popular culture is not simply fluff that can be dismissed as irrelevant and insignificant; on the contrary, it has the capacity to intervene in the most critical civic issues and to shape public opinion. (Dolby, 2003, pp. 258-259)

When we think of popular culture, what is it we think about? Are movies, television shows, and music popular culture? What about boxing matches, local festivals, or skateboarding? Is popular culture only for young people? Is the opera popular culture? What if it is watched on television? What about jazz, which was considered lowbrow but now is a pinnacle of cultural achievement? Does something even have to be popular to be considered part of popular culture? What about the Internet? Facebook? Instant messaging? Texting? Are these forms of popular culture? Are there distinctions to be made *within* popular culture? Are there instances of good popular culture and bad popular culture? Is popular culture any one thing? Would it be better to use the term

"popular culture*s*," or not to use the term "popular culture" at all? What *isn't* popular culture?

As these questions attest, defining popular culture is at best difficult—others have noted that trying to define popular culture "is like nailing gelatin to a wall" (Alvermann, Xu, & Carpenter, 2003, p. 146). While it may be impossible, and perhaps undesirable, to arrive at a singular definition of popular culture, it is worthwhile to overview some general understandings of popular culture. In general, popular culture is conceptualized as part of a larger project of Cultural Studies, especially as developed through the work of the Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies [CCCS hereafter] at the University of Birmingham, England beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The CCCS reshaped the study of popular culture by reconceptualizing the concepts of *culture* and *popular*.

First, the CCCS conceptualized *culture* as the nexus of the Humanities and Social Sciences, suggesting that the development, enactment, expression, and therefore the study of popular culture does not only cohere within texts (in a literary sense) but also within how and why people lead their everyday lives (in an anthropological sense; Williams, 1961). This conceptualization of culture brought together literary and anthropological perspectives, which broadened the landscape of popular culture to include the study of texts such as films, songs, and video games *and* the study of lived cultures and communities, including, for instance, festivals, holidays, youth cultures, subcultures, concerts, and sporting events.

For instance, in his examination of skateboarding, Borden (2001) explored how skateboarders themselves make use of space and architecture in urban landscapes and how texts, such as magazines and videos, promote particular ideas about spatial critique within skateboarding. In another study that explores texts and practices, Lutz and Collins (1993), in their examination of the magazine, *National Geographic*, explored the magazine and how and why readers of the magazine made sense of and interacted with these photographs. Some scholars, however, such as Gee (2003), in his examination of video games, focused almost entirely on the games themselves as texts; whereas in his study of youth engagement in popular cultures, Gustavson (2007) emphasized the practices three young men engaged as part of their participation in zine writing, graffiti artistry, and turntablism rather than both texts and practices.

The CCCS conceptualized *popular* as a contested space in which competing interests get negotiated and reworked. They resisted—and in many ways were functioning in response to—the idea that popular culture was simply a mass culture developed and imposed by the culture industry to manipulate undiscriminating recipients with texts. Similarly, they acknowledged that popular culture was not entirely a folk or authentic culture emerging from the ground up or from "the people" without mediation from the culture industry. Neither entirely oppressive nor liberating, CCCS scholars understood popular culture as a complicated terrain of exchange between people and the culture industry, one in which the commodities produced by the culture industry are in dynamic interplay with those who consume them, or "a shifting balance of forces between resistance and incorporation" (Storey, 2009, p. 106). In other words, popular culture gets produced through the interactions between texts and people. As Moje and van Helden (2004) explain,

Popular culture is simultaneously a product of people's imaginations, curiosities, and expressions and an institution with goals of shaping desires and needs, selling products, and manipulating imaginations and expressions. Popular culture is made as people live in the everyday world, and it is made by *both* people living out their lives and industries trying to sell people goods. (p. 219)

Although the CCCS initially emphasized issues of class politics and conflicts in their examination and theorizing about popular culture, subsequent scholars have broadened the study of popular culture to include issues of race, gender, sexuality, meaning, pleasure, and other sociocultural factors. For instance, in an oft-cited American study of youth engagement in popular culture, Best (2000) examines how the iconic American event, the prom, functions as a form of popular culture through which young people engage a set of practices, rituals, and texts that facilitate their identity formation around issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and politics among themselves and in relation to adults, society, media, and schooling. Best describes how the act of getting ready for the prom created a space for young women to perform their feminine identities and to struggle—through their bodies—"over what it means to be feminine within culture today" (p. 16). She writes,

More than just a set of frivolous practices of primping, these [practices girls engage as they prepare for the prom] are fertile sites of identity negotiation and construction, where girls are making sense of what it means to be women in a culture that treats the surface of the body as the consummate canvas on which to express the feminine self. (p. 46)

Best further argues that the emergence of queer proms reveals another example of how popular culture (in this case, the prom and the myriad texts and practices associated with it) functions as a terrain of exchange between incorporation and resistance. She writes,

Queer proms exemplify a political strategy to take a cultural resource belonging to heterosexual society and use it to expose its tyranny, to challenge its hegemony. In doing so, queer proms capture the struggles of the disenfranchised to resist and subvert cultural practices that normalize and naturalize heterosexual romance. (p. 158)

In general, Best's analysis of "a night to remember"—the prom—reveals various ways popular culture functions as a venue whereby young people grapple with issues of identity, power, and politics.

In general, the CCCS and those subsequent scholars influenced by them believe that popular culture represents important sites of meaning making, identity formation, and political activity. By no means, though, is this shared sense of significance meant to suggest a static, fixed view of what constitutes popular culture; to the contrary, popular culture remains a highly contested area of study, where a range of issues continue to be debated, including distinctions between low and high culture, popular culture's potential for social transformation, aesthetics, and the viability and usefulness of traditional categories such as *subculture* and even *popular culture* itself. In addition,

the continued proliferation of digital technologies and blurring of lines between media, popular culture, corporate influence, and even schooling continue to push the study of popular culture to new theoretical, epistemological, and methodological directions. Therefore, as popular culture continues to evolve as a complex field of study and site of identity formation in people's lives, it provides a unique space for scholars and educators, especially those interested in youth, to understand how and why people make meaning in their everyday lives and the pedagogical possibilities these might make possible for transformative educational experiences.

A Selective Overview of Scholarship on Youth, Literacy, and Popular Culture

> Like all people, young people use popular cultural texts and experiences in unpredictable ways to make sense of and take power in their worlds. What is more, close-up studies of youth often show youth to be making productive uses of literacy, to be sophisticated users of print and other forms, and even to be kind and generous people who are concerned about making a difference in the world. (Moje, 2002, p. 116)

Contemporary scholarship on youth, popular culture, and literacy examines intersections between young people's literacy and learning practices and their participation in popular cultures across a range of contexts, including, but not limited to the following: literacy classrooms (Alvermann, 2010; Alvermann, Moon, & Hagwood, 1999; Beach & O'Brien, 2008; Buckingham & Sefton-Greene, 1994; Dyson, 2003; Morrell, 2004), youth cultures (Gustavson, 2007; Moje, 2002), video games (Gee, 2003), sports (Mahiri, 1998), community organizations and settings (Dimitriadis, 2009; Kinloch, 2009), spoken word and slam poetry (Fisher, 2007; Jocson, 2008), mass media (Beach, 2007; Buckingham, 2003; Hill & Vasudevan, 2008), television (Fisherkeller, 2002), hip-hop (Hill, 2009; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002, 2004), tattoo artistry (Kirkland, 2009), graffiti art (Moje, 2000), anime (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003), graphic novels (Botzakis, 2009), film production (S. Goodman, 2003), and various digital spaces (Alvermann, 2002; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, 2008).

In looking across the corpus of contemporary research that explores the intersections between youth, literacy, and popular culture, several broad concepts have developed that have advanced critical, sociocultural, theoretical understandings of literacy, learning, and youth and helped to open up a range of approaches to K-12 literacy classrooms. What follows is an explanation of three of these concepts and how each one has informed literacy instruction in K-12 classrooms (see table 1).

It is important to note that this selective overview is not meant to constitute a traditional review of research that encapsulates the entirety of the scholarship on youth, literacy, and popular culture. Rather, it explores a few overarching concepts that have particular implications for literacy teacher education and/or work well to provide entry points into this body of scholarship for literacy teacher educators who may be unfamiliar with it. Therefore, rather than a traditional approach to create a comprehensive

Table 1. Key Concepts From Scholarship and Implications for K-12 Literacy Education.

Key concepts for scholarship	Implications for K-12 literacy education
Popular culture as a site of intellectual, aesthetic, and political engagement for youth	Taking an ethnographic stance toward pop culture to reframe youth and ascertain funds of knowledge
Popular culture as a context for using and developing literacy	Bridging popular culture funds of knowledge with literacy curriculum
Popular culture as a vehicle for resistance to *and* incorporation into normativity	Developing literacy curricula to facilitate students' sociopolitical critique and action

literature review, for example, the selection of scholarship and the framing of this overview emerged from my goal to provide an accessible and focused exploration of concepts that might be readily available for integration into teacher education programs and clearly illustrate theory–practice connections.

To establish the specific concepts explored in this article, I brought together my reading of peer-reviewed literacy journals (e.g., *Reading Research Quarterly, Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*) and top-publisher books (especially the "Language and Literacy Series" by Teachers College Press), my participation in literacy professional organizations (e.g., National Council for Teachers of English Assembly for Research), and my experiences over the past decade working within this line of scholarship as a secondary literacy teacher, youth literacy researcher, and especially as a literacy teacher educator. In this way, the selective overview presented here emerged from an ongoing dialogue of sorts between current trends and publications in the field, my experiences working with these ideas, and the rhetorical aims of this article.

More specifically, in preparation for this manuscript, I initially revisited several peer-reviewed literacy practitioner-oriented journals (i.e., *Language Arts, English Journal*, and *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*) to understand how popular culture has informed K-12 literacy instruction over the past decade. Through my reading of these publications, I attended to oft-cited scholars (e.g., Alvermann, Mahiri, Moje), concepts (e.g., permeable curriculum), trends (e.g., the inclusion of hip-hop within literacy curricula), and particular publications (e.g., Morrell & Andrade-Duncan, 2002). From these citations, I explored a range of texts, including more research-focused literacy journals (e.g., Kirkland, 2009) and top-publisher books (e.g., Kinloch, 2009), which enabled me to trace both key ideas that circulate within this line of scholarship and how top rising scholars have built on the work of established scholars in the field. For example, Brass' (2008) case study of a students' use of out-of-school popular culture textual practices to connect with official literacy curricula builds on the concept's permeable curriculum (Dyson, 2003) and bridging (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2004)

Through this process, I developed a framework to organize the enduring ideas from this scholarship. I circulated this framework to scholars within and outside of this field of study for their review as well as tested these ideas in my own teaching of pre-service literacy teachers. As I continued to triangulate my continued reading of scholarship, peer critique, and my own experiences as a literacy teacher educator, I selected those concepts that seemed most immediately useful for literacy teacher educators. The overview below is necessarily limited; for example, issues of digital and multimodal literacies that constitute an important aspect of youth engagement with popular culture (Beach & O'Brien, 2008; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008) does not receive the attention in this overview that it might in an article with a different rhetorical context. Nonetheless, the overview below does provide entry points into three of the most significant concepts and pedagogical implications related to scholarship on the intersections between youth, literacy, and popular culture: (a) Adopting ethnographic stances toward popular culture to reframe youth and ascertain funds of knowledge; (b) Bridging popular culture funds of knowledge with academic literacies; (c) Using popular culture to facilitate critical media literacy and sociopolitical critique and action.

Adopting Ethnographic Stances Toward Popular Culture to Reframe Youth and Ascertain Funds of Knowledge

> Teachers should know each student as more than a "nonreader," "lowliterate," or a "troublemaker"—and see instead artists, poets, and designers. (Vasudevan, 2008, p. 255)

Much contemporary research within this tradition of critical sociocultural perspectives challenges common sense ways of knowing and representing youth, literacy, and popular culture. Commonsense ways of knowing young people within educational contexts—most of which stem from the paradigms of developmental and educational psychology—typically frame young people based on their biology (e.g., raging hormones), cognitive development (e.g., emergence of higher order thinking), and/or transgressive behaviors (e.g., rebellion, peer pressure, drug/alcohol usage). In general, these put forth a view of youth as deficient, incomplete people who are in need of particular forms of adult intervention (Lesko, 2001/2012).[2]

These views have significant and oftentimes detrimental consequences for young people's educational experiences, particularly for those from historically marginalized communities and cultures (Finders, 1997; Vadeboncoeur & Patel Stevens, 2004). For example, in her study of middle school girls' literacy practices, Finders (1997) documents how the prevalent idea that adolescents naturally want and need to distance from and rebel against adults, parents, and authority figures such as teachers, while seen as normal among middle-class parents and teens—and supported by the middle school they attended—was actually antithetical to the beliefs and ways of reasoning about adolescence of the working class young women and parents she studied. This contrast put these working class young women at a disadvantage academically and socially.

Furthermore, media, schools, and educational policies typically position youth as victims of popular culture, undiscriminating consumers of popular culture, deviant

due to their use of popular culture, or generally in crisis (Mahiri, 2004; Moje & van Helden, 2004; Springhall, 1998). For example, childhood literacy scholars Luke and Luke (2001) argue that so-called print literacy "crises" function "as a form of moral displacement and panic" and a "discourse surrogate" for anxieties about the identities and life opportunities new forms of literacy, popular culture, and new media have opened up for young people. Specifically, they argue that new media, popular culture, and new literacies have opened up new forms of identity, technological competencies and practices, and new life pathways for children and adolescents—all of which policy makers frame as putting children and adolescents at risk and in crisis—and that contemporary calls for print-based literacy interventions and policies are an effect of the clash between former and emerging conceptions of youth, which adults attempt to stave off and reframe as "dangerous." As a consequence, this literacy crisis discourse converts adolescents' competencies with new media to "incompetencies" with print literacy and their new media communities of practice as "threats" (p. 104).

In contrast, contemporary research such as Kirkland (2008, 2009) and Mahiri (2004) position young people as literate, innovative intellectuals who care deeply about aesthetic, social, and political conditions—and utilize popular culture texts and practices to help them do so. For instance, Kirkland (2009) examines how tattoos function as a form of literacy in which a young Black man makes meaning in his life and revises "a shattered self portrait" (p. 375). This reframing exposes how youth who are labeled "at-risk," "struggling," "semi-/illiterate," "deviant," or "underachieving" in contexts like school may be proficient, engaged, sophisticated, literate, and capable in other contexts. According to Donna Alvermann (2006), "Youth who do not excel in academic literacy may still be capable and literate individuals in arenas outside the normative ways of doing school" (p. 108). Overall, this scholarship argues that taking seriously youth's engagement in popular culture opens up new ways for educators to know young people—ways that engender more respectful and generative points of connections between educators, youth, popular culture, and pedagogy.

Drawing on this scholarship's insistence on taking seriously youth's engagement in popular culture, many literacy educators have adopted an ethnographic stance toward youth, literacy, and popular culture. Taking an ethnographic stance, or as it is sometimes referred, "teachers as ethnographers," consists of two key elements. First, teachers cultivate and enact a way of being in relation to students—one that respects and seeks to understand deeply and genuinely their engagement in popular culture. Second, teachers conduct research—formally or informally—to get to know about their students' engagement in popular cultures. While some educators conduct research formally by visiting their students' homes, interviewing their students and family members, and analyzing materials related to their students' engagement in popular cultures (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), it is unlikely that many full-time teachers will have the chance to conduct such in-depth explorations. For literacy educators, then, adopting an ethnographic stance might mean conducting research more informally by paying attention to the music, television, films, magazines, tattoos, clothing, websites, and other pop culture practices in

which their students spend countless hours participating and bringing into school with them (Mahiri, 1998; Morrell, 2004; Newkirk, 2002).

For example, teachers can become observers throughout their normal school day, noticing, for example, student clothing, conversations, the popular culture and media texts of the school and areas around it, and any of their students' involvement in popular cultures (e.g., members of rock bands, aspiring filmmakers). If time permits, teachers might spend time observing community-based, youth-dominated spaces, such as parks, malls, and even street corners, paying particular attention to the literacy practices youth engage in these spaces. In addition, teachers can collect and analyze popular culture artifacts, including commercially produced texts such as DVDs, magazines, and CDs, as well as student-generated texts, such as lyrics, music recordings, graffiti art, and films. Related to this, teachers can develop and administer a questionnaire to find out their students' participation, interests, literacy practices, and areas of expertise related to popular culture. Finally, teachers might create opportunities during the normal school day to informally interview/dialogue with students about their engagement in popular cultures (Morrell, 2004, pp. 121-127).

By adopting an ethnographic stance toward popular culture, literacy educators get to know their students differently than they might otherwise. This way of reknowing students has the potential to reframe them as holders of legitimate knowledge and experiences, a process that may be especially significant for those students who are usually known in deficit terms, such as "underachieving." For example, Lalitha M. Vasudevan (2008) illustrates how, as a literacy teacher, her taking an ethnographic stance helped her to reframe her understanding of one of her "struggling" students and facilitate his literacy learning. Specifically, she explains how she attended to the popular culture literacy practices of one student (Angel) to know him differently than his official school label of "low literate."

Her process of coming to know Angel began with clothing—"a bright, multi-colored leather jacket with the word KAWASAKI emblazoned on the back in neon green letters" (Vasudevan, 2008, p. 253). Seeing the jacket one day, she simply asked Angel if he liked Kawasaki motorcycles, to which he replied with surprise. During lunch that day, she showed him how to do Internet searches for motorcycles. This simple action began their relationship as "colearners" and "provided a foundation for other literacy activities, including working explicitly on Angel's reading and writing" (p. 254).

From there, Vasudevan and Angel together drew upon a range of multimodal textual practices related to Angel's engagement in popular cultures (e.g., clothing, tagging, magazines, and sketches) to help him find a "way in" to the "composing process in schools," namely print-based reading and writing. For example, the two used photographs and magazine images as prompts for Angel to tell Vasudevan stories, which would lead to his development of print-based reading and writing skills. She explains,

As Angel spoke, I recorded his words in writing. I typed up these stories and we used them as texts to read, a process through which he developed his reading fluency. Often he would make connections between his stories and the ways he read the graffiti world that he was familiar with, noting the instances of his friends' tags in the stories that he constructed. His

tag (ZOOM!) also provided several opportunities to play with onomatopoeia, and Angel used many of the pages of the sketchbook I bought him to draw variations of zoom so that they would look the way the word sounded to him. (p. 254)

By positioning herself as colearner with Angel, Vasudevan was able to know him as a literate, cultured person in the world—in ways well beyond his label of "low literate"—and more effectively facilitate his literacy learning and achievement. Drawing on her experience with Angel, Vasudevan argues that how teachers "come to know" young people in education "must change": "We must create spaces—within schools, after-school programs, and education programs in the justice system—where adolescents' worlds are welcome so that we may better hear their words" (Vasudevan, 2008, p. 255).

In addition to coming to know Angel differently than his "low literate" label, taking an ethnographic stance enabled Vasudevan to make pedagogical connections between Angel's engagement with popular culture and his literacy academic achievement. In this way, her ethnographic stance and inquiry helped her use Angel's engagement with popular culture as a *fund of knowledge*. Funds of knowledge, although originally not focused on popular culture, refer to the linguistic, cultural, and intellectual resources, skills, and frames of reference found within students' families, homes, and communities (Moll et al., 1992). Research has found that learning about and knowing students' funds of knowledge help educators make "strategic connections" between what students bring with them to school and curricula (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992). Building on this research, recent scholarship in literacy education has examined how popular culture functions as important funds of knowledge through which educators can facilitate students' academic achievement (L. Hall, Burns, & Edwards, 2011; Moje, Ciechanowski, Ellis, Carrilo, & Collazo, 2004). The next section will examine more specifically what contemporary research reveals about relationships between literacy and youth popular cultures, and how literacy educators have built on these ideas to build bridges between students' popular culture funds of knowledge and literacy curricula.

Bridging Popular Culture Funds of Knowledge With Academic Literacies

By realizing that students are already familiar with disciplinary concepts from the popular culture texts they consume outside of school, teachers can help them similarly understand and engage with academic texts. (L. Hall et al., 2011, p. 57)

Contemporary research within this critical sociocultural tradition reveals how popular culture facilitates young people's literacy learning and development in and outside of schools. Specifically, research demonstrates that popular culture provides young people with cultural frames of reference and resources to help them access and appropriate new forms of literacy (Dyson, 2003), increase academic motivation and achievement (Morrell, 2004), and forums to use, practice, and explore a range of new literacies (Beach & O'Brien, 2008; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Patel Stevens, 2004).

In addition, this scholarship explores how engagement in popular culture engenders qualitatively different learning environments, practices, and social arrangements than those that are oftentimes available within schooling contexts. For example, Gee (2003) and Gustavson (2007) examine how some popular cultures promote contextualized learning that is imbued with accepted and expected experimentation, purposeful evaluation and assessment, and venues for performance.

Furthermore, this research contributes theoretically to a broader understanding of what constitutes literacy. Specifically, contemporary research concerning youth, literacy, and popular culture moves beyond a focus on print-based texts to include a range of multimodal and media texts that youth consume, produce, and distribute as part of their participation in popular cultures. Therefore, what counts as literacy ranges from creating documentary films about the gentrification of urban areas (Kinloch, 2009) to composing and performing spoken word poems (Fisher, 2007) to designing and inscribing one's body with tattoos (Kirkland, 2009) to reading and discussing teen magazines (Finders, 1997).

Building on this scholarship, some literacy teachers have documented how *bridging* literacy curricula with students' popular culture funds of knowledge can foster academic achievement (Fisher, 2005; Frey & Fisher, 2004; Jocson, 2008). Bridging refers to connections made between students' cultural knowledge, skills, and practices and school-sanctioned knowledge, skills, and practices. Whereas the section above emphasized literacy educators adopting an ethnographic stance to reframe students and ascertain their popular culture funds of knowledge, this section focuses on how literacy educators draw upon their students' popular culture funds of knowledge to make connections between them and official curricula.

L. Hall et al. (2011) explain how popular culture funds of knowledge provide students with much of the same disciplinary concepts and skills that they are being asked to know and be able to do in literacy classrooms. They write, "When students consume popular culture texts—print or nonprint—they do not just consume particular storylines and ideas; they also absorb structures that they then recognize and that help them participate in future textual interactions" (p. 57). They explain that through their consumption of music, youth "encounter metaphors, similes, and other figurative language"; through comics and graphic novels, they learn irony; through television sitcoms, they learn "story grammars"—all of which, they argue, can be draw upon to help students in their engagement with official literacy curricula (p. 57).

One example of bridging students' popular culture funds of knowledge and academic literacies comes from the work of Ernest Morrell and Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade (2002, 2004) who demonstrate how hip-hop can be used as a way to build bridges to canonical poetry. As high school English teachers in an urban high school in northern California, Morrell and Duncan-Andrade noticed that many of their students demonstrated sophisticated analytical skills and critical perspectives when engaging hip-hop texts but failed to exhibit these same skills and depth of exploration when engaging canonical texts in the context of their English classes. Believing that student failure and academic underachievement was not due to cognitive or literacy deficiencies but rather the context and presentation of the academic literacies within their classroom,

these two educators developed a curricular intervention that used hip-hop music "as a vehicle" for their students "to develop academic literacy skills that . . . could transfer to other 'literary texts'" (p. 247) (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2004).

Mandated to teach the poetry of the Elizabethan Age, the Puritan Revolution, and the Romantics, they developed a unit of study titled "The Poet in Society." The unit focused on how understanding the historical context of a text facilitates a deeper appreciation of it, and examining the roles of poets across a range of historical and literary time periods. They focused the unit on those periods they were mandated to teach as well as the Civil War, Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights Movement, and Postindustrial Revolution. They used hip-hop to represent the poetry of the Postindustrial Revolution. Throughout the unit, they paired a canonical poem from each period with a hip-hop song. For example, when the students read and analyzed "Sonnet 29" by Shakespeare, they also read and analyzed "Affirmative Action" by Nas; "O Me! O Life!" By Walt Whitman with "Don't Believe the Hype" by Public Enemy. As the educators explain,

> It was our intention to place rap music and the postindustrial revolution right alongside these other historical periods and poems so that the students would be able to use a period and genre of poetry they were familiar with as a lens with which to examine other literary works. (p. 255) (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2004)

In making these pairings, Morrell and Duncan-Andrade helped their students develop abilities to engage in literary analyses of hip-hop songs and then transfer these to their analyses of canonical poetry. For instance, one group used their reading and analysis of Grand Master Flash's "The Message" to help them develop a deeper understanding of T.S Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." Specifically, they examined how Grand Master Flash and Eliot functioned as witnesses to "messengers" or "prophets" of "their rapidly deteriorating societies" (p. 265). (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2004) Another group demonstrated how Nas' "If I Ruled the World" deepened their understandings of metaphor, which they were then able to transfer to their reading of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." Overall, in developing and documenting this curricular bridge, Morrell and Andrade-Duncan reveal that young people's engagement with popular culture can be accessed as a resource, is illustrative of intellectual engagement and curiosity, and is something literacy educators can build upon and tap into as way to facilitate academic achievement.

While this example of connecting hip-hop to canonical poetry illustrates how literacy educators developed explicit curricular bridges, another view of bridging has to do with educators creating a *permeable curriculum* (Brass, 2008; Dyson, 2003). Developed by childhood literacy and learning scholar Anne Dyson, a permeable curriculum is one that allows and creates spaces for students to draw on their own popular culture frames of reference to access, learn, and develop academic literacies. For instance, Dyson (2003) documents how the "brothers and sisters," a group of first-grade African American boys and girls in an urban classroom, "transport" and "recontextualize" a variety of textual material from their "unofficial" literate and cultural

lives, especially related to popular culture (e.g., songs, animated films, and sporting events), to facilitate their development of "official" literacy, namely writing. From this perspective, then, bridging is not so much an explicit endeavor orchestrated by the teacher (as it is in the previous example on hip-hop) but rather about the teacher creating a learning environment that is permeable, meaning that connections between popular culture and official literacy activities are allowed and supported.

It is important to note that the concept of bridging has recently been critiqued and expanded as a framework for relevance and responsiveness. Alim (2007), for example, argues that an "ideological distinction" exists between curricula truly "based in" the lives of students and curricula that *use* students' lives "to teach them part of the 'acceptable curricular canon'" (p. 27). In this way, bridging may be viewed as a "trick" (Kirkland, 2008) used by teachers to move students toward seemingly more "important" knowledge and skills, and that ultimately the outcomes of bridging, even when the educators' goals are liberatory, are, in fact, assimilatory, as it may perpetuate a hierarchical relationship between students' literate lives and "official" sanctioned school knowledge. Instead, scholars have argued for a "third space" conceptual framework (Gutierrez, 2008; Kirkland, 2008) as a meeting (rather than a bridging) of students' funds of knowledge and academic literacies that does not "devalue either in the process of school learning and access" (Paris, 2012, p. 94). Therefore, as literacy educators develop pedagogies that involve students' engagement in popular cultures, it is important to be mindful how such practices can be potentially exploitive and counterproductive to the goal of "*sustaining* and *extending* the richness of our pluralist society" (Paris, 2012, p. 96, emphasis added).

Using Popular Culture to Facilitate Critical Media Literacy and Sociopolitical Critique and Action

> Our data show that youth use and are used by popular culture, and that working this tension, rather than simply avoiding popular culture, is the job of educators. (Moje & van Helden, 2004, pp. 219-220)

Contemporary scholarship that examines youth, literacy, and popular culture also emphasizes how popular culture facilitates young people's sociopolitical critique and action *and* their incorporation into broader, normative relations within society, including those related to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, consumerism, patriotism, and so on (Hill & Vasudevan, 2008; Moje & van Helden, 2004). For example, my own work (Petrone, 2010) reveals how skateboarding culture creates opportunities for male participants to explore nondominant forms of masculinity at the same time that it limits the types of gendered people these participants can be.

Therefore, at the same time that popular culture offers young people a space for resistance and liberation, where youth critique and rewrite dominant norms and institutions of society, it also functions as a space in which youth are incorporated and inscribed or written into dominant norms and institutions. In this way, youth engagement in popular culture is neither entirely celebratory nor wholly denigrating and

manipulative. Instead, by engaging popular culture, youth actively participate in the difficult process of creating, negotiating, and ascribing meaning to their lives and sociopolitical worlds. This two-way, dynamic interplay between their shaping the world and being shaped by the world is of particular significance for researchers in this line of inquiry because it enables them to better understand how to support young people's critical interrogation and transformation of the world.

Many literacy educators have integrated popular culture into their curricula to facilitate students' sociopolitical critique—including critiques of popular cultures and mass media—and social action. While terminology may vary, educators generally recognize the following two approaches to popular culture: "Critical Media Literacy" and "Popular Culture as Social Critique & Transformation."

Critical media literacy focuses on raising students' awareness of and abilities to analyze and deconstruct the implicit and explicit messages conveyed through popular culture and media texts. This approach focuses on how these texts promote normative perspectives of race, age, class, gender, sexual orientation, consumerism, etc., and how and why these normative perspectives are oftentimes oppressive or otherwise problematic (Beach, 2007; Center for Media Literacy, n.d., www.medialit.org; Hurt, 2006; Marshall & Sensoy, 2011; Media Educational Foundation, n.d., www.mediaed. org; Trier, 2006; Wallowitz, 2004). *Popular culture as social critique and transformation* focuses on using popular culture texts to help students critique and transform broader oppressive social, cultural, and political conditions and power relations. In this way, popular culture texts and practices are used as springboards or vehicles to facilitate students' interrogation into the world at large (Beach & O'Brien, 2008; Hill, 2009; Hill & Vasudevan, 2008; Morrell, 2004, 2008).

An important aspect of both of these approaches is using media and popular culture as the means through which students can become voices and agents of critique, dissent, and ultimately, social action and transformation. Specifically, both of these approaches to popular culture involve helping students produce and distribute their own media and popular culture texts that work to critique and transform oppressive conditions—whether they relate to the media industry itself or to society more broadly (S. Goodman, 2003; Kinloch, 2009).

Informed by both of these critical approaches, several years ago, a secondary English teacher at a rural, Midwestern high school and I developed a 10th grade English curriculum in which we integrated popular culture texts to facilitate students' sociopolitical critique and action (Borsheim & Petrone, 2006; Petrone & Borsheim, 2008). Consistent with a critical media literacy approach, we developed a unit that helped students analyze how media texts worked to shape ideas of race, class, and gender. We organized the unit around the Center for Media Literacy's "Five Key Concepts and Questions" (see table 2).

Using these as a framework, the students deconstructed a variety of multimedia texts, including newspaper articles and broadcasts, photographs, advertisements, commercials, websites, magazine covers and articles, maps, news broadcasts, films, adbuster ads, and the documentary Merchants of Cool. For one lesson, we analyzed clips from several Disney films (e.g., *Peter Pan, Oliver, The Little Mermaid, Dumbo,*

Table 2. Key Concepts and Key Questions.

Five key concepts	Five key questions
1. All media messages are "constructed."	1. Who created this meaning?
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.	2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. Different people experience the same message differently.	3. How might different people understand this message differently?
4. Media have embedded values and points of view.	4. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from this message?
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.	5. Why is this message being sent?

The Lion King) to explore how these seemingly innocent texts promoted troubling perspectives of gender and race. For each clip, students wrote down who the characters were and how these characters were represented through their clothing, speech, and physical positioning (e.g., subservient, dominant). After each clip, students wrote and discussed how they thought viewers were meant to understand the characters and how these understandings were created by the text. For instance, our conversations moved from the depiction of Native Americans in *Peter Pan* as unintelligible and savage to the messages of femininity as passive conveyed in *The Little Mermaid*.

Consistent with the popular culture as social critique approach, we explored how popular culture texts could be used to help our students critique normative perspectives of various sociopolitical topics and institutions. For example, in one unit titled "Seeing Beyond," the students read *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, examined political cartoons, read a *New York Times* article titled "The Bikini and the Burka," and viewed and discussed an episode of *The Simpsons* ("Lisa the Vegetarian") and the film *The Truman Show* as a way to critically examine the institutions of school, family, government, and the agricultural and meat industries. For example, discussions of "Lisa the Vegetarian" focused on the episode's critiques of the U.S. meat industry and educational system, which are perhaps best exemplified by the ridicule and trouble Lisa endures when deciding to be a vegetarian. Similarly, the *Truman Show* helped the students' critique how the government controls who U.S. citizens can and cannot be and what is "normal" in society.

In an effort to move the students from critique to social action, the curriculum culminated in a unit in which students created and distributed multimedia texts designed to critique and potentially transform some troubling aspect of their school or community. For example, students explored the impact that chain stores such as Wal-Mart had on locally owned businesses, the physical segregation of special education classrooms within the school building, the history, and myths of the KKK involvement within the community, and the (in)adequacy of the district sex education curriculum. They produced and distributed an array of texts, including short films, power point presentations, brochures, letters to the editor, and alternative advertisements for the local and

school newspapers. Overall, the curriculum used popular culture and media texts as a way to facilitate students' critical interrogation of the media industry itself and broader sociopolitical conditions at the same time that it used media texts as the means through which students could participate in the transformation of these conditions.

Considerations for Literacy Teacher Education

As the previous overview illustrates, popular culture functions as a significant context in which young people form identities, use and develop literacy, and participate in sociopolitical critique and action. In addition, popular culture offers literacy educators a unique pathway toward not only cultivating more respectful and collaborative teacher–student relationships but also reconfiguring official literacy demands and curricula to be more responsive to, respectful of, and useful for the rich literate and cultural lives of today's young people. Building on these affordances for K-12 literacy teachers and students, this line of inquiry suggests that overarching goals for literacy teacher education include having pre-service literacy teachers feel comfortable with thinking about, using, and engaging K-12 students with popular culture—that they learn about how students make meaning in their lives through popular culture and how these understandings might be built on in classrooms.

This section offers several potential points of departure for literacy teacher educators to help stimulate future K-12 literacy teachers' thinking about these issues. Specifically, it suggests that literacy teacher education provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to examine their assumptions and beliefs about popular culture, to study popular culture textually and ethnographically, and to practice building curricular materials that include popular culture texts and practices. More importantly, this section explores how integrating popular culture perspectives into literacy teacher education can open up possibilities for future teachers to examine issues such as the politics and ideologies of literacy curriculum, teaching controversial material, and developing rationales for curriculum development. The underlying goal in presenting these suggestions is to help stimulate thinking about possibilities for popular culture within literacy teacher education, not to be prescriptive in their applications.

Accounting for Popular Culture Within Literacy Teacher Education

One of the most basic implications this scholarship has for literacy teacher education is that pre-service teachers need to learn about popular culture. One obvious way to achieve this goal is to have pre-service teachers read and discuss some of the scholarship within this line of inquiry. Given its attention to theoretical, pedagogical, and practical issues, much of this scholarship would be easily adaptable to a wide range of courses, including courses in literacy across the curriculum, literacy methods, and literacy theory. In addition, having pre-service literacy teachers read this scholarship could provide them with an introduction to many of the key journals within literacy education research and pedagogy.

A more hands-on approach to helping pre-service teachers learn about popular culture is by having them talk to, observe, and learn from youth about it. Specifically, pre-service teachers can learn and practice the tools of ethnographic inquiry to investigate youth engagement with popular culture. These ethnographic inquiries can occur as stand- alone projects, particularly within courses focused on theories of literacy, or be embedded within other classroom assignments or programmatic practices. For instance, many literacy teacher education programs require pre-service teachers, as part of their requisite classroom observations and/or practicum experiences, to complete "case studies" of students in their placements, which could include a component involving popular culture. In their practicum and/or student teaching experiences, pre-service teachers can write and conduct a survey that includes popular culture in it to help them create more responsive teaching approaches with that particular group of students. Another framework for having pre-service literacy teachers dialogue with youth about popular culture is to set up opportunities for K-12 students to come into university courses as guest speakers and popular culture experts. These opportunities could be organized as professional development opportunities for the pre-service teachers, in which they are positioned as learners and the K-12 students as teachers.

It is important to note that having pre-service literacy teachers learn to cultivate ethnographic sensibilities as part of their pre-service literacy teacher education is not a new idea (cf. Frank, 1999); however, having pre-service teachers emphasize young people's engagement with/in popular culture may, as Mahiri (2000/2001) explains, help them "to become more aware of the motives and methods of youth engagement in pop culture in terms of why and how such engagement connects to students' personal identifications, their needs to construct meanings and their pursuit of pleasures and personal power," which may help them "explore how work in schools can make similar connections to students' lives" (p. 385). In this way, learning about youth engagement in popular culture is not necessarily about just transferring it into the classroom pedagogy but for pre-service teachers to know students more comprehensively. When I work with pre-service literacy teachers, I oftentimes liken taking an ethnographic approach toward K-12 students' engagement with popular culture to what my students learn in their multicultural education courses, which, when I ask them, they boil down to something like, "knowing who your students are, where they come from, what their linguistic and cultural resources can help you know your students as learners and make connections in the classroom." I suggest that they insert "pop cultural background and resources" into their thinking of students, because popular culture, for so many young people, constitutes such an important context for how they make meaning in their lives.

Another way to facilitate pre-service teachers' thinking about popular culture is to have them formally study popular culture textually, emphasizing the political, ideological, aesthetic, and literary characteristics of various forms of popular culture. It is one thing to have students examine, for example, how youth engage hip-hop and how educators have used hip-hop in literacy classrooms, but it is another to have pre-service teachers seriously study hip-hop as a legitimate literary and cultural artifact.

This approach is not meant to suggest an uncritical celebration of popular culture; rather, it suggests that students gain more access to the scholarly issues, debates, and theories found within popular culture studies. In addition to several texts that provide accessible and excellent introductions to popular culture studies (see, for example, Storey, 2009 and Strinati, 2004), many documentary films related to popular culture and media are available and could fit within a range of teacher education courses (see, for example, B. Goodman, 2001; Hurt, 2006; The Media Education Foundation, n.d., www.mediaed.org).

Ideally, students could take separate coursework focused on theories of and approaches to analyzing popular culture texts—and for secondary literacy pre-service teachers this might be possible through Departments of English or Communications—but most likely, pre-service literacy teachers will need to be provided opportunities to study popular culture within the context of their teacher preparation. This work can be integrated within several contexts. For instance, if students, as part of their practicum and/or student teaching experiences, learn about various forms of popular culture their K-12 students are engaging, they can research and provide analysis of the artifacts and practices they learn about. Within literacy methods classes, pre-service teachers could be asked to conduct research on a particular genre or artifact of popular culture and then create curricular resources and practices based on their research. For example, in a secondary literacy methods course I taught recently, students selected and researched an aspect of popular culture (e.g., graphic novels, basketball in rural communities, the Billboard Top 10 songs, *Twilight*) and then conceptualized and created a unit plan in which they linked their research and popular culture artifact with Common Core State Standards. One student developed a unit plan in which he linked teaching elements of literary analysis regarding *Beowulf* to the video game *World of Warcraft*; another student developed a unit plan in which she linked rural basketball and place-based research writing; another student developed a set of lesson plans in which she connected the process of selecting the top Billboard music to the politics of American literary canon formation for a secondary literature curriculum.

Potential Opportunities and Challenges

All of the ideas discussed thus far in this section are more or less irrelevant if pre-service literacy teachers do not see value in youth engagement with/in popular culture. Therefore, perhaps the most important implication for literacy teacher education to emerge from contemporary research on youth, literacy, and popular culture is simply that, regardless of personal attitudes toward popular culture in general or particular forms of popular culture, literacy educators must adopt a stance of inquiry and curiosity toward student engagement with popular culture. In fact, I would go so far as to argue that the sine qua non of facilitating future K-12 literacy teachers' deep thinking about youth engagement with popular culture is that they view popular culture as a legitimate arena for young people's creative expression, intellectual engagement, and social action. As Morrell (2004) suggests,

> Making the move toward incorporating popular culture necessitates a major change in the nature of knowledge consumption and production. In making this change, teachers are also expanding what counts as legitimate knowledge and challenging the notion that only certified adults possess relevant knowledge. (p.117)

Too often youth engagement with popular cultures is understood as frivolous or even dangerous, and young people themselves positioned as silly or deviant due to their participation in popular cultures. While youth engagement with/in popular cultures is certainly problematic at times it would be a mistake—and a missed pedagogical opportunity—to dismiss it wholesale. Therefore, a crucial step in helping future K-12 literacy teachers' work with issues related to popular culture is to help them examine their beliefs and attitudes toward popular culture and its role in literacy education.

In my experience working with future literacy teachers around these issues, three general responses typically emerge. For some pre-service teachers, envisioning popular culture as a pedagogical possibility seems consonant with their experiences as learners and users of literacy; in fact, for many of these pre-service teachers, their own engagement with/in popular culture is what drew them to literacy learning and teaching in the first place. These students tend to embrace popular culture as part of their literacy teacher education and oftentimes develop curricular plans for much of their teacher education coursework that involves concepts from scholarship that examines connections between literacy and popular culture.

Some pre-service teachers express ambivalence about the connections between popular culture and literacy pedagogy. Specifically, they tend to see it as type of gimmick or ploy in which they, as future teachers, might use to hook, or in the words of one of my former students, "trick," students into more advanced or acceptable forms of intellectual and academic work. Sometimes, these students will talk about how it would be "fun" to use popular culture as long as they can "get away with it." A third group of pre-service literacy teachers dismiss thinking about popular culture as in any way relevant to their work as literacy educators. These pre-service teachers tend not to see popular culture as having a legitimate place in the curriculum, wasting time, or functioning as some type of "watering down" of what constitutes literacy and high quality literacy education.

Initially, I found myself disappointed by the ambivalent and dismissive students. Over time, however, I have found that their responses actually help generate some of the most productive discussions and activities of students involving their assumptions and (implicit) beliefs about popular culture and youth as well as broader issues related to the politics and ideologies of literacy curriculum, the value of pedagogical rationales, and teaching controversial material. Opportunities to reveal and discuss their assumptions and beliefs about these issues oftentimes reveal themselves through conflicts and challenges that arise in class.

One of the first concerns many pre-service literacy teachers express is the controversial nature of some popular culture. The following are common questions: "What about the language or the nudity?" "So many of those songs use derogatory language—I don't

know if I am comfortable with using them in my class." "Won't I get in trouble?" While these questions reveal very legitimate concerns, they also provide opportunities to examine deeper reasoning about what counts as legitimate literacy curriculum. For instance, Morrell (2004) argues that there need be consistent guidelines in determining appropriateness for *all* texts. For example, *Romeo and Juliet* involves premarital, teenage sex; *Native Son*, a gruesome murder—and yet, these are classic, canonical texts. Therefore, in addition to discussing with pre-service literacy teachers' issues related to not teaching anything with which they are personally uncomfortable, finding alternative popular culture texts that are not controversial and would serve valuable pedagogical goals, and providing clear rationales for the use of popular culture texts, I also attempt to engage them in explorations of the criteria they are using to evaluate the appropriateness of particular texts (e.g., canonical literary texts) against other texts (e.g., popular culture). Often, these discussions lead to issues of aesthetics, canon formation, and the power of institutionally sanctioned legitimacy to determine their decision making and pedagogical reasoning. For instance, a student during one of these conversations justified her *not* using popular culture in this way: "I've taken classes in Shakespeare; I've never taken a class in Hip-hop—it's not what it is valued." In addition, these discussions typically lead to explorations of how to handle censorship, teaching controversial material, and articulating rationales to various stakeholders, including parents, colleagues, and administrators.

Another common concern raised by pre-service literacy teachers has to do with potentially "co-opting" youth cultural practices. The argument goes something like this: "Youth enjoy popular culture, in part, because it isn't school. If we bring it into school, won't we be ruining it for them or won't they be resistant? Won't it lose its significance and pleasure for them?" These questions help to facilitate dialogue about the relationships between school and nonschool literacy, learning, and identities. We discuss, for example, that while some literacy scholars share these concerns, others suggest that the divides between "outside" and "inside" are artificial, and that students themselves import their "outside" lives and popular culture practices into the official world of schools all the time (Dyson, 2003). For example, Kirkland (2006) found that his research participants talked about *Beowulf outside* of the classroom and wrote raps *inside* the classroom. We also discuss distinctions (and their consequences) that get made between "official" and "unofficial" knowledge, skills, and activities. This discussion typically pushes pre-service teachers to examine their assumptions about what their goals are as literacy teachers, where they come from, and how they are situated ideologically.

Another concern often raised by pre-service literacy teachers involves making space for popular culture in the curriculum. Questions such as the following emerge: "If popular culture is added, what will be taken away?" "How am I going to teach all of the required materials *and* this?" Similar to the concern about teaching controversial content, this very valid concern brings to light several broad issues related to literacy pedagogy. For instance, these questions oftentimes spark discussions related to what constitutes literacy, including explorations of textuality (e.g., print vs. nonprint, multimodal and media texts), and the overarching aims of literacy education. Therefore,

while addressing the more pragmatic concerns related to selecting, organizing, and prioritizing curricular materials, exploring the pedagogical possibilities of popular culture also facilitates dialogue about the larger sociopolitical contexts of literacy education, discussions that inevitably explore state and federal policies and standards.

Conclusion

Perhaps more than its particular practical implications, scholarship on youth engagement with popular culture may be most valuable within literacy teacher education for the potential pathways it creates for pre-service literacy teachers to deepen their examination of their assumptions and beliefs about youth, literacy, and schooling, as well as the ideological issues it brings to light. This line of scholarship asks literacy educators to broaden what constitutes literacy, call into question how and why literacy gets taught, and to get curious about students in ways that are oftentimes deemed irrelevant and even contradictory to standard educational processes and purposes. Furthermore, given its insistence that K-12 students need to see their lives and worlds reflected in school curricula and that literacy curricula must function to help students meet the increasingly complex demands in the world, scholarship on youth engagement with popular culture may, in fact, be one of the most useful vehicles to stimulate pre-service teachers' thinking about current trends in education, including the recent development and near-universal adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

It would be relatively easy to argue that—despite its demonstrated rigor, relevance, and complexity, as well as its many affordances for K-12 literacy education—scholarship on youth engagement with popular culture may be in danger of being ignored, seen as irrelevant, or viewed as yet another "add on" in light of CCSS. And while I think this argument is a productive one to make to help ensure that this does not, in fact, happen, I am more interested in understanding how CCSS may provide opportunities for K-12 pre-service teachers to learn to work within and against any set of standards or other externally developed and imposed assessments—of which CCSS will certainly not be last pre-service literacy teachers will confront in their careers.

As scholars and educators within this line of inquiry have demonstrated, popular culture coexists well with traditional literacy curricula frameworks and can be utilized in a variety of ways to facilitate student academic achievement. In addition, this scholarship reveals how popular culture is one of the—and often *the*—most important funds of knowledge K-12 students bring to and draw upon in school (Moje et al., 2004), which suggests that choosing *not* to attend to popular culture is more an active process of turning away from how students learn and engage the world than a passive process of omission. In these ways, CCSS offer a venue through which pre-service literacy teachers can conceptualize and implement connections between popular culture and standards. Approaching CCSS in this way may help open up ways for pre-service teachers to think about how standards may be used to help ground curricula in the lives of students and develop sustaining teaching practices that also meet institutional requirements.

However, this approach of imagining how popular culture might be used to support CCSS does not negate the need to help pre-service literacy teachers address the

limitations and constraints of CCSS, including its lack of sustained attention to digital, media, and critical literacies, seemingly homogenized views of learners and learning, and an insistence on linkages between text complexities and grade-levels (Beach, Haertling-Thein, & Webb, 2012). In fact, scholarship on youth engagement with popular culture can provide pre-service literacy teachers a theoretical framework through which they might read, analyze, critique, and conceptualize instructional practices that reach beyond CCSS. In these ways, scholarship on youth engagement with popular culture may provide pre-service literacy teachers a lens to critically interrogate official policies as well as develop pedagogical practices to which such official policies may not attend.

Whether connected to CCSS, other educational policies, or more general issues related to the process of learning to teach, deeper understandings of how scholarship on youth engagement with popular culture informs literacy teacher education are needed. It may be helpful, for instance, to understand better the conditions and circumstances in which pre-service literacy teachers develop understandings of popular culture. Explorations of how pre-service literacy teachers discursively position popular culture in relation to issues of identity, authority, and curricula may be generative to help pre- service teachers examine their assumptions and "discursive filters" (Finders, 1998/1999) shaping their thinking about teaching. In general, such inquiries into the complexities and consequences of placing youth engagement with popular culture in literacy teacher education may help advance our understandings of how best to work with our K-12 pre-service literacy teachers to best work with their future students.

Notes

1. In addition to the scholarship mentioned throughout this article, see, for example, the following journal publications that have special-themed issues on popular culture and (literacy) education: *English Journal* (L. Reid, Ed.), 2004, Vol. 93, No. 3; *Harvard Educational Review*, 2003, Vol. 73, No. 3; *Language Arts* (K. G. Short, J. Schroeder, G. Kauffman,

& S. Kaser, Eds.), 2003, Vol. 81, No. 2; *Rethinking Popular Culture and Media*, 2011 (E. Marshall & O. Sensoy, Eds.).

2. For more on discourses of youth, see the following texts: Alvermann, 2009; Austin & Willard, 1998; Finders, 1998/1999; Hine, 1998; Lewis & Finders, 2002; Palladino, 1996; Petrone & Lewis, 2012; Rogoff, 2003; Sarigianides, 2012. Each explores how the concepts of *youth, adolescence*, and *teenager* have been constructed; some explore the consequences these constructions have on educational policies and practices.

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