PUMP UP THE POD: POPULAR CULTURE AND PODCASTING IN A CRITICAL SECONDARY LANGUAGE ARTS COURSE

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I would like to thank Kenny who is always hopeful, kind, and, most importantly, hilarious.
ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative investigation of critical theory and pop-culture in a secondary classroom. The study occurred over a period of 38 days at a private parochial school in Honolulu, Hawaii and included 17 heterogeneously grouped students enrolled in an elective English course. Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2005) was applied to both the study design and the curriculum, to understand a) how adolescents engage with pop-culture literacy practices/texts and b) how adolescents experience podcasting as a replacement for traditional composition assignments. Data was collected through one questionnaire, individual interviews, group interviews, field notes and student artifacts (including analysis and transcripts of five student podcasts). Findings show that participants have integrated particular pop-culture literacy practices to radical degrees; that the wide use of such practices has impacted their epistemologies and even ontologies; and, that the use of podcasting as an alternative means of student expression has significant pedagogical potential.
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Before attempting to carve out a consequential curricular future for language arts, we ought to consider the phrase *manhandle*'s two denotations: 1. *To pull or push somebody or something around roughly* and 2. *To move something using human strength alone rather than machinery*. Since the most widely accepted connotation of manhandle so closely meets the initial denotation, the secondary meaning has, in modern education discourse, been unluckily disregarded.

It is futile to explore a future for language arts curriculum without acknowledging the educational framework that our contemporary language arts students loaf around in. Indeed, all we know as English teachers regarding the process of honoring primary discourses, engaging varied types of articulation, and creating opportunities for the merging of social and educational domains is mowed over in our present push towards national standards which rely on overdone and irrelevant materials and consistently extract lackluster, limited, and largely unoriginal responses from students.

Perhaps the fiercest way to describe the current language arts curriculum in effect at many secondary schools in the U.S. is through a description of rats. The phrase “rat kings” describes a phenomenon that occurs when infant rats close to one another in the nest find their tails entangled. The result is a living knot. In most instances, the rats are glued together by dirt and wounds and waste. Every time the rats try to separate, the knot tightens making the coveted escape more and more implausible. The largest rat king found included 32 rodents, (not an uncommon size for a high school English class). Rodents knitted into rat kings, are unable to forage for food and must be supported by other members of the community (Hendrickson, 1999, 92). They wander around, bumping into things, getting nowhere, united only by their lack of progress.

In this metaphor, the matted rats represent students. The gunk securing the knot is the curriculum, materials, and teachers’ epistemological approaches to teaching English. Aply so, the space in which the knitted together rats attempt to navigate is symbolic of a greater society. For those of us who have been swayed, seduced or bullied into perpetuating test driven curriculums dependent upon one type of literacy excluding alternative forms of literacy, the students as rats metaphor elicits morose laughter.
Many of us are, as I write this, entwined in a Gordian knot and without some dramatic force (think "manhandle") we will be petrified this way. But this phenomenon cannot be fully understood or explained through examinations of only the rats and their sorry state. In order to reach some understanding of the situation we must consider the space in which the rats must exist and forage it. Students' failure in school is not upsetting because school is of utmost importance in the realm of things. These failures in school settings are upsetting because schools are meant to mirror, prepare, and encourage students for the space in which they have to exist, navigate and 'forage' in.

It breaks down like this: we want sedulous students. We want students who are agents of productive, thoughtful, and reciprocal change. We want students who are independent members of community—who produce, give back, and shape their environments through thoughtful critiques and intentional articulations. These students—sedulous students, deserve manhandling out of the existing, ineffectual rat king stance. These students deserved to be ushered into a critical language arts experience filled with relevant and popular materials that mirror, prepare, and encourage students, not just to exist in the world, but also to navigate its multiple intricacies. Students are, all the time, learning these skills without school support.

*Pump up the Volume: Call to Arms for Literacy Instructors*

Cornered in a grubby basement, hemmed into the quintessentially alien suburb, Mark Hunter, working under the moniker Hard Harry, reaches a quaking adolescent hand towards the red plastic switch and all the looming possibilities it cradles.

He is, at once, joined to an otherwise inaccessible community around him. It happens just like that. With one movement, with the flip of one switch, Hard Harry bulldozes the partition, escapes the corner and is no longer alone; he rips the seams formerly hemming him in and satisfies the universal desire to be listened to. It is an archetypical transformation. It is Allan Moyle's 1990's film, *Pump Up the Volume* and it has everything to do with how we, as educators of adolescents in the Mac age, ought to be responding to the intensifying edu-sphere.

Adrift, maladroit, and in general, a poster child for anesthetized loners, Hard Harry uses a low cost ham radio getup to broadcast a series of furtive vignettes and in the process welds an authentic explication
of his world. In short, he satisfies, a compulsory developmental dilemma (Erickson, 1968), a hybrid of national education standards, and in specifically a plexus of Language Arts and Technology objectives.

The unfortunate features of Hard Harry's literacy work has to do with locale. Hard Harry breezes through a series of literacy standards but not within the confines of a classroom and not with any guidance from his teachers. Rather than reveling in teacher support, he accomplishes his innovative manifestations of language standards pinned down in his parents' basement. The disconnect between literacy learning Harry experiences at school and the sort of literacy work he engages in at his home is illustrative of contemporary realities. At home he navigates through the literacy realm effectively, while at school he is knotted together with unanimated, anonymous peers.

**Hard Harry and Literacy Standards**

Critical literacy, described in part by NAEP standards, and adopted by countless classrooms across the United States entails a dubious but urgent goal. While frameworks differ within the greater context of critical literacy, the impetus remains the same: a push for students who can, "mount personal critique of all those issues which surround us as we live, learn and work-to help us understand, comment on and ultimately control the direction of our lives" (Withers, p 76. 1989). Because critical literacy has been difficult to masterfully integrate in traditional classrooms, it is beneficial to examine alternative instances of critical literacy.

One of the most commonly sighted frustrations between adolescents and teachers is their urge to constantly argue and point out inconsistencies (Brownlee, 1999). While these traits, believed to be functions of typical cognitive development irritate many teachers, it is just the type of quality needed to build a framework of critical theory. The need to fit in, coupled with the desire to critique all sources around a teenager, is examined through Moyles' character, Hard Harry, who wins his young audience members by critiquing these very developmental needs and simultaneously satisfying one of the most fragile literacy standards. In the following quotation, Hard Harry responds to a suicide in his community. He synthesizes and evaluates information, forms an opinion and articulates it effectively. In addition to maintaining an effectual stance, he offers important insights in what it means to be an adolescent.
"You hear about some kid who did something stupid, something desperate; what possessed him? How could he do such a terrible thing? Well, it's really quite simple, actually. Consider the life of a teenager - you have parents, teachers telling you what to do, you have movies, magazines and TV telling you what to do, but you know what to do...you know what your job is...to be accepted."

In addition to fulfilling critical literacy standards, Hard Harry satisfies more traditional literacy standards: adjusts his tone for listeners, is able to revise his shows’ objectives, uses vibrant figurative language and naturalistic metaphors, follows an intense range of subject matter, banks on transition phrases, practices foreshadowing, and draws references from pluralistic sites. His secret broadcasting affects not only his own literacy learning, but also the development of his identity and the identities and literacy skills of his listeners. In short, Hard Harry creates a curriculum built around spontaneous literacy practice, critical theory and in the process fuels an unusually fervid learning community.

Harry’s series of literacy acts is met with clashing responses: adult condemnation juxtaposed with adolescent admiration. The adult town members spend the duration of the film attempting to stifle the anonymous broadcaster’s shows, while the adolescent listeners make visibly symbiotic connections with his vignettes. In this paradox, both Hard Harry and his listeners are being told that their idea of what it means to be literate and to practice literacy is errant; as a result they are missing out on a chance to gain a sense of autonomy. While the adolescents are striving to keep the literacy project running, the adults are racing to cut its cords. Moyle’s ironic statement remains relevant 20 years after its debut.

The notion of implementing this type of spontaneous, uncensored literacy practice in standard curriculum might terrify us because it debunks the firmly held myth that some information is more appropriate and more accurate than others. If we open the doors to a more heterogeneous variety and, for that matter, influential collection of voices, then it will become impossible to plan how exactly to “teach” our students to react, think and feel. It will be especially difficult, if not impossible, for those teachers trained with the commercialized scripted programs so indicative of the recent trend in school restructurings under the No Child Left Behind Act. We worry that our students will not be able to navigate the perpetual fountain of contradicting, complementary, biased, agenda driven, confessional, apologetic, journalistic voices.
Just like Hard Harry’s listeners in the film, *Pump up the Volume* we cannot know what might happen next and that makes the listening experience completely organic. This leaves us, as teachers and students, completely vulnerable. It raises the bar. It requires that we shift our footing. Rather than have prepared responses to texts, we must develop ways to teach ourselves and our students to think, to criticize, to question, and to express connections between our textual worlds and our cultural realities.

Though frightening, this shift is essential. In the nascent spectrum of literacy practices, we must prepare our students through a critical framework. Our work must include alternative forms of literacy not because alternative texts are new and seductive but because they constitute literacy practices of the contemporary adolescent and because disconnecting school literacy and home literacy is profoundly ineffective.

The explicit inclusion of popular cultural analysis in secondary English curriculum and in the creation and assessment of pedagogy that nurtures critical social thinking has the potential to alleviate our ratking nature. New technologically mediated literacies are constantly emerging and ought to be addressed as potential components of language arts curriculum. Not merely for their newness, not solely because they exist, but because they are new instruments of expression, and problem solving, and because, ultimately, they help adolescents solve important identity formation issues. As a result, they have great pedagogical potentials.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Across the nation, English departmental closets each harbor the same dusty drove of authors. From Shakespeare to Twain, high school English curriculum is one of the leading perpetuators of canonized literature. There is a significant need to more fully utilize new media in the English curriculum, a strategic move that, in part, would characterize a critical theory approach to English education. In the digital age, contemporary adolescents are immersed in new technologies, new medias, and new literacy practices. In contrast with the generations that preceded them, these adolescents face a substantially more diverse body of media in their lives. Changes in generational experiences leads us to cultural studies as an additional new approach to understanding student engagement and response in the English language arts classroom.

This study hinges on definitions of "reading" and "literacy" that are inclusive of popular cultural texts. Even though a recent resolution, put forth by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), supports the utilization of non-print media for composition purposes in language arts courses, empirical research that investigates the benefits and limitations of doing so are rare. Instructional techniques, aimed at valuing student expression, offered by Rosenblatt (1978) and clarified by Roberts and Trainor (2003), support otherwise recalcitrant efforts to integrate popular cultural texts and practices in a formal language arts setting, by valuing student responses to texts.

This study is a qualitative investigation of critical theory and new technology in a high school classroom. The study took place over a period of 38 days at a private parochial school in Honolulu, and included 17 heterogeneously grouped students enrolled in an elective English course called Novels. At the heart of the study was a curriculum founded on socially critical response and podcasting as a new medium for student expression.

The research questions that this qualitative case study was designed to address are as follows:

1) How do adolescent students describe their engagement with popular cultural texts and popular cultural literacy practices?

2) How do adolescent students respond to a critical language arts curriculum that focuses on popular cultural texts?
3) How do adolescent students experience the use of alternative student production (podcasting) as a replacement for traditional forms of student expression?

Above all else, this study was designed to explore what happens when a language arts teacher opens her curriculum doors to popular cultural literacies, and encourages students to treat those literacies similar to traditional texts. Podcasting, a very new popular-cultural literacy, was used to validate student responses to the curriculum by grounding the traditional school experience within a more familiar popular cultural medium. Rather than write the traditional responses to the course, students were invited to create podcasts, audio recordings, and publish them on the Internet.

In this respect, both the curriculum design and the study design called for the use of grounded theory from a constructivist framework which, according to Charmaz (2005), “provides new analytic tools for discerning and conceptualizing subtle empirical relationships.... adopts grounded theory guidelines as tools but does not subscribe to the objectivist, positivist assumptions...[and] emphasizes the studied phenomenon rather than the methods of studying it.” Charmaz (2005) describes a constructivist grounded theory, which requires the researcher to be steadily reflexive, and continually draw connections between realities and interpretations. The grounded theory researcher must also then, adjust her methods in response to particular findings.

Charmaz’s conception of grounded theory was applied, not only to the ways in which the study findings were interpreted, but also to the ways in which the curriculum was designed. Each unit was a reflexive next step, building upon the students’ work, ideas, and needs from the previous unit. In this way, the students were active participants in the curriculum design and implementation and in that respect this research is as much a reflection of their work as it is my own. The ways in which I have interpreted their work and responses to the critical curriculum are “interpretative renderings, not objective reportings” (Charmaz, 510, 2005).

The following chapter offers a review of the related literature, which has informed my understanding and use of critical theory, my integration of popular cultural literacies in curriculum design, and has contributed to a more dynamic understanding of the students’ podcasts. Within the review of literature, I aim to show how the need for Critical Theory in 21st century Language Arts courses is parallel with the
need to revise our malnourished literacy curriculum. The latter objective is advanced though a review of recent research exploring attempts to capitalize on popular cultural literacies in Language Arts settings. Finally, I offer an overview of Readers' Response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978), which informed my interpretations of the students' final podcasts and helps connect their experiences to looming questions about pedagogical effectiveness.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature discusses the development of critical theory, the need for critical theory in 21st century globalized schools, popular culture as a forum for critical thought, alternative and technologically mediated texts, and reader response theory. It serves as a theoretical foundation for the development, rationale and interpretation of the findings of this study.

Critical Theory: Roots of Resistance and Assimilation

Since its origins in post World War I Germany, critical theory has been met with equal parts vehement opposition and ardent agreement. Seeking to revise established interpretations of the world, critical theory developed as a dialogue between social researchers concerned with the pivotal correlation between economics, power and hegemony. Early critical theorists, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse were initially interested in uncovering methods for resisting economic and cultural domination, within the already established interpretative frameworks set out by Kant and Hegel. Their preliminary work, articulations of social constructs, were further informed by their migration to California in response to the influx of Nazi ideologies. Adjustment to pluralistic American economic and social processes encouraged these theorists, particularly Marcuse, to revisit their thought processes and further examine alternative societal constructs affecting individual autonomy. As a result Marcuse began to develop highly influential pedagogical methods for becoming critically aware (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2004).

Numerous postmodern critical theorists, rooted in Marxist thought, have noted that individuals are largely affected by economic structures. Distilled to its simplest formula, many Marxist critical theorists subscribe to the belief that individuals are dependent upon their place in economy and are as a result either dominate others or are subjugated by others. The argument central to this framework is that individuals in democratic societies have been encoded as somnambulistic participants in relationships of ascendancy and subordination (Agger, 1992; Hinchey, 1998; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2004). This contention presupposes that economic status is a determinant in individual outcomes, and is therefore the primary and central societal factor worth researching critically. Evolving critical theorists have critiqued this view as myopically
singular and noted other factors impacting ones' role in society including race, gender, sexuality, and age (McLaren, 1997; Giroux, 1997). Sociolinguists often explore illustrations of linguistic hegemony in critical ways, noting unexposed power rules bounded in language forms existent in learning environments (Delpit, 1994). There has also been a notable movement toward deconstructing media as a prevailing societal feature (Giroux, 1997). None of the theorists in reconceptualized critical theory frameworks argue that economics are unimportant, only that there are other veins of influence, often connected with economics, well worth researching.

In general, critical theorists believe that power is both ambiguous and central to the makeup of society structures. Theorists are ultimately interested in identifying various expressions of power in society with unequivocal hopes of moving towards more egalitarian structures of existence. Green (2001) illuminates the guiding principles of critical literacy as those that, “reposition students as researchers of language, respect minority culture literacy practices, and problematize classroom and public texts.” For the critical theorists a quality education is one that encourages learners to read their world, critique their world and, as a result, negotiate their world as agents of conscious change.

**Critical Frameworks of Schooling and Pedagogy**

In harmony with these reconceptualized critical theorists is Hargreaves (2003) who, in *Teaching in the Knowledge Society*, delineates two primary subtopics worth considering when looking at curriculum: the cause and consequences of globalization, and the close reading of education in regards to those causes and consequences. His syllogistic argument points out that descriptions of power not only reflect society, but also serve to construct it.

Hargreaves defines the knowledge society as one of both prominent danger and eminent potential, but clarifies the direction of his argument by singling in on education’s role within the knowledge society. It is within this clarification that he urges teachers to fully consider the global framework in which they are working. In what he sees as a paradox, currently education is geared primarily toward the individual rather than the collective good, perpetuating a negative cycle. While the conflict between individual versus community precedes the onset of globalization, looking critically at the relationship between this
phenomena (expressed by globalization) and education is a valuable exercise. Hargreaves invites readers
to participate in this thinking exercise and to acknowledge work within and work beyond the phenomena.

Hargreaves stays faithful to a relatively simple equation of thought in terms of economic conse-
quences to the standardization of competing markets. Despite the seemingly simple nature of his cause and
effect approach there are actually a multitude of important layers beneath. The most fundamental of these
layers, which will bring us back to the thoughts of the reconceptualists, is the implicit concept that humans
and, therefore, communities are reactive on principle. This concept is approached in the text solely through
the explicit exploration of globalization. While he overtly discusses the role of industrialization in regards
to the “explosion” of public education in the United States, he perfectly confirms what practitioners intui-
tively understand: students are not islands, but exist in a multitude of frameworks and our curriculum ought
to reflect this sort of pluralistic identity and seek to encourage a critical awareness among students. This is
in perfect harmony with Giroux and Simon’s (1989) argument that educational programs should aim to
provide students with a strong understanding of the relationship between various forms of knowledge and
power.

Giroux and Simon (1989) clarify paradoxical elements of critical theory as it relates specifically to
various pedagogical movements. Noting disproportions between viewing schools as places of social repro-
duction and viewing schools as places of resistance, they negotiate traditionally radical interpretations of
school by contending that schools are active components in both the legitimization and production of
knowledge. In this regard, they attempt to challenge the accepted critical theorists’ interpretations of soci-
ety into a more inclusive framework. In other words, Giroux and Simon include school as a societal factor
influencing individuals and note both external (outside of schools) and internal (within traditional schools)
plexus of power systems and illustrations of hegemony. Within this amalgam of interpretations, Giroux and
Simon (1989) understand the student to be in a precarious spot, perpetually at the brink of simultaneous
disempowerment and empowerment. Because of the complicated nature of schools, the plexus of identities
present and the traditional relationship between authority figures and students, critical theory is difficult to
successfully employ. It is too easy to present what one considers a critical theory curriculum that is offen-
sive, irrelevant, or out of date. Similar to Delpit’s (1994) observations about well meaning but pedagogi-
cally ill fated teachers, Giroux and Simon assert that even with an ideological correctness, even suited with
the objective to impart critical thinking, teachers have the overwhelming potential to be pedagogically ineffective.

Acknowledging pedagogy as a broker of power is essential, but we must also recognize the complicated nature of power within schools. Early critical theorist Marx argued that the dominant culture initiated and perpetuated systems in which non-dominant members were systematically pushed into dormancy. Conflict Theorists, such as Bourdieu implicate schools as places where "symbolic violence" manifests as the intrusion of one group onto another (Bourdieu, 1982). Others however, have complicated this notion, in part by expounding on Gramsci’s notion of hegemony and consent. By drawing upon Gramsci’s articulations on hegemony and power, critical thinkers began to see schools as reciprocal settings, in which the dominant group seeks the consent of the non-dominant group. In this model of thought, the shifting of power is non-linear, multifaceted, and nebulous. Giroux contends, “while school cultures may take complex and heterogeneous forms, the principle that remains constant is that they are situated within a network of power relations from which they cannot escape” (Giroux, 1983). The complicated nature of power illustrated in pedagogy and schools does not excuse it from our attention.

Power relations in education have been examined for epochs, leading to minor reappraisals and restructurings of schools. In the past several decades, we have enjoyed the work of theorists such as Giroux (1989) Simon (1989), Friere (1998), and hooks (1994) who not only attempt to analyze various factors of power within schools and pedagogies but also argue for democratic learning communities through the explicit integration and reassessments of critical theory in curricular.

Bringing critical theory into curriculums complicates the already convoluted power structures in schools because there is no measurable predetermined learning outcome. While more traditional curriculums involve a particular set of learner outcomes, a critical curriculum depends largely upon the knowledge and experiences of students in addition to the ever-changing media landscape. This organic nature can be seen as chaotic and frustrating, though without it the critical curriculum would be irrelevant. It is arduous then to uphold traditional relationships between the teacher and students when the teacher is no longer the sole source of relevant knowledge. This implication of critical theory has not yet been widely addressed, though Shor (1996) illuminates power struggles within critical curriculum experiments, via a first person
recounting of such an experiment with community college students in the text, *When Students Have Power: Negotiating Authority in a critical pedagogy*.

Critical literacy, however difficult to integrate into educational systems shrouded by power struggles, must be the focus. Leu and Kinzer (2000) distinguish three factors that they believe will shape our definitions of literacy and our treatment of literacy in terms of formal curriculum: global economic competition, the relationship between literacy and information and communication technologies (ICT) and public policy initiatives. Leu and Kinzer, drawing upon historical literacy research as well as current trends in the alternative texts, conclude that the literacy demands in a globally competitive world are more wide-ranging, cover a broader scope, and will compel changes in public policy lest there be a shortage in literate employees. We have seen that students demand a more inclusive literacy curriculum as well as a global market, which requires changes. So far, it has been argued that contemporary students and schools have higher literacy demands in general. The following section will initiate a discussion as to the variety of popular cultural literacy practices used by contemporary adolescents.

*Popular Culture Literacy Practices*

The term popular culture refers to a simulated layer of society consisting of various forms of social texts. Historically these texts have been limited to the print world, but burgeoning technologies have expanded the ambit of social texts to include film, music, television, podcasts and other more subtle mediums.

Popular cultural texts comprise of digital literacies (cell phones, computers, video games, blogs), alternative literacies (*Zines, graphic novels, song literacies) characterized in part by their ordinary exclusion from traditional curriculums, and revised approaches to traditional literacies (i.e., reality television is a relatively new form of programming). Traditionally popular culture has been included in formal curriculums intermittently with varying degrees of effectiveness and for different reasons.

In the past decade, myriad methods of electronic communication have emerged, gained popularity and contented fans, only to be replaced by newer, more digitally convenient forms of communication. Trends such as Instant Messaging, text messaging, web blogging, profile websites, and podcasting, serve to intensify in place habits of communication. While these digital literacies have different functions, purposes,
and options they each constitute a significant role in the 21st century digital literacy realm. For the adolescent user, these literacies seem to serve several purposes: they offer pleasure, they provide a place for identity work, and they are potential tools for disrupting or rebelling against power structures.

On a very basic level, these digital literacies change the nature of dialogic interactions. Instant messaging and blogging, both computer based literacy practices, allow users to communicate in real time with multiple users, some of whom may be traditionally unknown to them. Instant messaging allows users to hold ongoing and temporary conversations with multiple people, through shorthand. Instant messaging content is organic, instantaneous and develops based upon the participants' interests. Blogging, on the other hand, which allows an ongoing written conversation, is less instantaneous than Instant Messaging but more lasting. Users join blogs, based on their content, and post comments that may or may not be responded to by other, potentially unknown users. Blogs remained published for some time, until at least the host discontinues the active link. Text messaging, a cell phone based practice, allows users to communicate via written text in shorthand instantaneously. Adolescents commonly use text messaging in situations when traditional cell phone use is not permitted (i.e. during class, at the movies etc). Profile websites, such as those found on MySpace, Friendster, Black Planet, and those made through Geocities, are like cyberskins. Users create mixed media representations of themselves that can be viewed and commented on by other users, either known or unknown to them. Podcasting, the newest of these digital literacies, allows users to create audio shows on any topic, of any length and post to the Internet for a minimal fee. Podcasters post their shows to specific directories and, after attracting faithful listeners, create more and more shows on their topics. Within the recreational domain these digital literacies allow users to do two things: to communicate conveniently and to receive feedback from numerous peoples.

Within a critical framework, we can see these digital literacies not only as recreational devices but also as tools for change in education. Podcasting and blogging are media creation devices that allow for individuals outside of established media sources to participate in what Foucault (1981) termed knowledge/power sharing. Blogging is important because one can host an influential blog without being part of a mainstream outlet, without formal journalism training, and without commercial sponsorship. In this way blogging disrupts academia, challenges hegemonic communication monopolies and invites a truly democratic and multifarious array of voices and perspectives free of restrictions. Similarly, podcasting is notable
because it transgresses familiar broadcasting styles, lengths, and content choices. It allows listeners access to previously unheard perspectives and voices from around the globe without commercial or governmental restrictions. Podcasting, like pirate radio minus the need for extravagant resources, relies on generative themes (Friere, 1970) unspoiled by commercial sponsorship or ideological hegemony.

Text messaging and instant messaging can also be seen within a critical framework, even though the communication passed through these forms are temporal. Text messaging, most commonly used in situations when traditional cell phone use would not be permitted, allows users to pass private messages instantaneously. The disruption in power structures that this form of communication offers extends from classroom settings where adolescent students choose to send messages without the teacher’s knowledge to more hostile environments where subjected individuals have the opportunity to communicate important messages to a friendly audience minus potentially negative consequences. Text messaging and instant messaging have also informed traditional press publications affecting the process of writing copy and increasing the availability of news. The immediacy provided by these tools in addition to their private nature, excuses the societal constructed need, in certain circumstances, for permission to communicate to widespread audiences thus contributing to a more dialogic system of power/knowledge making and sharing.

Participants in these digital literacies have, in many ways, embarked on a critical journey through which they concomitantly revise their relationship with the traditional, objective, and omnipotent sources of knowledge and power. Recent articles following developments in the digital literacy world promise revolutions. It is not any one tool or digital literacy that can be catalyst for a knowledge/power making revolution but the very nature of the methods, the ways in which the methods are used, and the people who engage in their practice. In this regard, it is essential that we open our classroom doors for these explosive literacy devices rather than attempt to ignore the obvious.

Empirical explorations of the use of popular cultural literacies in curriculum are limited. Of the more relevant studies Lewis and Fabos (2005), found that adolescents used Instant Messaging for several purposes. They were able to code data into three substantial categories, each describing the participants’ use(s) of IM technology: Surveillance, Social Networks, and Language Use. Messages that were characterized as being of the surveillance variety included comments between two or more participants about another peer, not present during the on-line conversation. Messages described as the social network variety
included on-line conversations in which participants were making direct communication with others and using phrases that indicated relationship validation. In addition to serving social needs, the researchers also noted that teen users reported being attracted to the medium because of the flexibility in language use it offered. The researchers were ultimately interested in both the pedagogical and social roles of new interactive digitally mediated forms of communication, though their research is largely concerned with the social implications of such communicative devices.

*Zines for Social Justice: Adolescent Girls Writing on their own a study* conducted by Gamboa and Guzzetti (2004), was designed to explore the relationship between the literacy practices of adolescent females and their social consciousness. Females participating in this study belonged to a culture known as the ‘zinsters. Zines, a socialized deconstruction/reconstruction of traditional magazine formats, most commonly associated with the do it yourself ethic of punk rock culture, are generally written, produced and distributed among a close knit group. Gamboa and Guzzetti’s (2004) research aimed to understand the relationship between the participants and literacy, their influences, and the development of their identities. The authors were interested in outside of school literacy practices among adolescents, feminist texts in general, critical literacy, and texts produced by students.

Gamboa and Guzzetti’s (2004) findings refer to a group of students whose capacity for traditional literacy is manifested in an alternative expressive manner. Lewis and Fabos (2005) look at the communicative practices of students, namely the role of Instant Messaging. Though the type of literacy practice differs a great deal in the two studies, Lewis and Fabos’ (2005) findings are supportive of Gambo and Guzzetti’s (2004).

Theoretical writing on the subject of integrate popular cultural literacy practices into language arts settings are more available. Gee focused on video games in a recent publication, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy* (2003). Americans have a love/hate relationship with video gaming, and while vocal adversaries spin diatribes about incessant violence and oftentimes-hideous portrayal of women, thousands more log in each day to spend hours dwelling in their fantastical realms. This issue is ubiquitous. *Video Games are their Majors So Don’t Call them Slackers*, an article published in the New York Times (2005), described the acceptance of video games as curriculum material into more than three-dozen institutes of higher learning. Students at these institutions are now able to study both the devel-
opment and production of video games, or look at video games through a critical framework in anthropology, education, and media communication majors. Several institutions are providing opportunities to major in the study of video games.

Within the text, Gee focused on the situated experiences that video games provide as authentic engaging literacy experiences, and argues that while games should not and will not replace traditional texts in the classroom they do provide insight into newer teaching mediums as well as valuable information about how people prefer to learn. Gee maintained that video games allow participants to "situate meaning in a multimodal space through embodied experiences to solve problems and reflect on the intricacies of the design of imagined worlds and the design of both real and imagined social relationships in the modern world" (Gee 48). In other words, video games allow participants to 'live' the story in a more concentrated manner, with several thousand potential outcomes, where as traditional texts may feel more flat with predetermined outcomes. It is important to note that Gee's contention regarding situating meaning aligns with NCTE language arts standards 3: Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw upon prior experience...and their understanding of textual features (e.g., context and graphics) as well as NCTE language arts standard 8: students use a variety of technological information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate (www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm).

Gee (2003), Lewis and Fabos (2005), and Gamboa and Guzzetti (2004) have argued for the pedagogical potentials of popular cultural literacies, but do not fully address the downfalls of so-called pedagogies of pleasure. While adolescent learners might enjoy these practices at home or with friends, the experience would change in the classroom. If we ask students to apply our critical thinking techniques to their private experiences, then there would surely be, on some level, revolt. The apparent chaos that often accompanies classrooms where students' funds of knowledge are not only valued but also central to the curriculum makeup must be considered before leaping into impulsive curricular changes. This can most effectively be addressed through a discussion of critical literacy.
Critical Literacy

The rift between conventional classroom literacy and outside of school literacy is growing. Without developing our understanding of classroom literacy to include alternative forms of literacy, our students are graduating with incapacitated literacy skills. They may be able to read a traditional text, but are left without guidance as to how to interpret a nontraditional text. The ratio of nontraditional texts they encounter daily is significantly higher than the traditional novel.

A compelling way to integrate popular-media, social, and or cultural texts that are not of the traditional print variety in a language arts course is to exploit them as forums for investigating diction, syntax, figurative language and presence of other rhetorical tools. This sort of lesson effectuates students perceiving hierarchal linguistic realities depicted in media images through a critical framework, synthesizing other experiences with the treatments of various discourses, and questioning connections between language and power.

It is important to note that critical theorists interested in popular culture do not question the power and importance of print literacy. They see the realm of literacy expanding to include new technologies. Described at times as the New Literacy Challenge the goal to equip students with the skills and intent to deconstruct discourses, text, and various discursive meanings in social texts as well as in the tradition print text is quickly escalating (Green, 1998). The response to the New Literacy Challenge, sometimes combined with Visual Literacy can be seen in additions to national and state literacy education standards.

As a universal forum of implicit and explicit cultural messages, the media serves as a breeding ground for social constructs. Theorists concerned with the influence of media have acknowledged the insidious transference of belief systems, beauty preferences, linguistic codes and ethics through video games, television, film, music and advertisements (Luke et al., 1994; Gee, 2004; Sterns, 2004). Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) illuminate the transference of explicit and implicit knowledge via media through the term cultural pedagogy. In their critical context, the concept of cultural pedagogy argues that certain societal participants manufacture hegemonic ways of knowing and being in the world. Embedded within their contention is the recurring categorization of mass media as an entirely detrimental entity. Their contention is supported by Lewis' (1989) findings; popular culture texts, even those from mass media, can serve as fo-
rums for critical literacy development, however Lewis (1989) does not conclude that media is a “big bad wolf”, rather a system of messages well worth our critical reading.

Shor (1997) illuminated critical literacy as “language use that questions the social construction of the self”. Social texts, left unexamined, are instruments for the formation and negotiation of social identities. As viewers and readers of social texts we are located within a reality constructed by the text creator. In this formula recipients of social texts are unknowingly manipulated by a set of social messages that then lead directly to our self-understanding as well as our understanding of the world around us (Durrant & Green, 2000, Wilson 1999). A simplistic understanding of this argument would include the belief that, by design, we are constructed to believe that our role in the relationship with media is one of passive acceptance. Without urging, few viewers would stop to question the content of social texts. While consumers are not forced to purchase products per se, it is socially uncommon to question or challenge the implicit and explicit messages embedded within social texts highlighting particular products. In this regard, potential consumers of physical products are, oftentimes without knowing it, consuming abstract products: a plexus of social messages and constructs.

These social texts are confirmed by both word and image messages within popular culture media. Understanding the relationship between linguistic patterns, diction, cultural voice and inclinations among students is central to creating potential for fruitful learning. Variant communication patterns are widely discussed in higher academic circles but are only vaporously and perhaps dubiously approached in secondary language arts classes. Faced with an abundance of economic fluctuations, language shifts, and schools tattooed with the ever more present term: “failing”, this generation of teachers must look at what they are teaching, the words and patterns with which they teach, and the treatment of words and language outside of the classroom.

Linguistic components of popular-media are not the sole basis for critical language arts classroom exploration. Incongruent representations of gender, race, age, economic status, and religions depicted within popular cultural literacy texts, such as television, film, and print media, affect individual recipients greatly and also have a place in the language arts classroom. In these cases, the media again confirms the empirical experiences of minorities while those without first hand experience of subjugation are left acquiring their lessons from a constructed, oftentimes inaccurate, hyper reality.
Student realities have the potential to impact pedagogical effectiveness of the critical popular cultural curriculum. If the content is not relevant, or is unskillfully produced, then there is the chance for certain students to feel even more marginalized, or diabolized depending upon their personal situatedness within the social text.

While utilizing linguistic critical frameworks in a secondary language arts course is indubitably difficult, it is promising because using popular culture as a medium, allows teachers and students to explore critical issues, connect contemporary issues with those present in cannon or otherwise more traditional texts, and practice innovative and socially relevant forms of literacy practice, while drawing from multiple critical frameworks.

We can begin to attend to this phenomenon by focusing our energy in several places: exploring forms of hegemony and exploitation within popular culture as extensions of colonialism and cultural domination, investigating attitudes and beliefs about others that are products of our experiences with media as well as the impact of these views on our students' literacy learning, and by examining ways to include and, in the process, validate students' experiences with popular cultural literacy practices. In focusing energy in these arenas we arch towards revisions of traditionally stratified school structures leading to an expansion of school-worthy literacy practices, which respond to the evolving literacy needs of our students.

Whatever changes occur in response to the emerging alternative text field, it is valuable to consider with what theories and constructs these texts can be taught. It is safe to assume that adolescent students will have considerable more familiarity and knowledge of new, alternative texts—a phenomenon that has the potential to upset conventional paradigms of power in the classroom.

*Pedagogical support for critical popular cultural literacy*

Many critical researchers argue for explicit inclusion of cultural analysis in general curriculum, citing benefits of pedagogy that nurture critical social thinking (Stearns, 2004; Friere, 1998; Delpit 1994). For instance, Delpit (1994) and Friere (1998) introduce the pedagogical potential for dissecting linguistic hegemonies in courses, while Stearns envisions a curriculum enshrouded with exercises in cultural analysis. While a majority of the research has been dedicated to understanding the potential role of ubiquitous popu-
lar culture and mass media in a critical curriculum, only a small percentage outlines pedagogical potentials and limitations in doing so.

Rosenblatt (1978) outlined Reader Response Theory, a constructivist-based theory, which puts the majority of emphasis on the reader's reaction to a text. The underlying premise is that individual readers, depending upon their personal schemas, construct each text differently. Schema theory, elucidated by Rumelhart (1980) gives greater clarity to why reader's response theory is effective in the classroom. Following the reader's response framework, diverse interpretations, based on the reader's personal experiences, are both expected and valued. Students in a reader response class are encouraged to develop a variety of responses, interpretations and frameworks through which to better understand the text (Rosenblatt, 1978). Rosenblatt's work with reader response theory is fundamental in recognizing a common type of discourse shared between language arts teachers and their students. This is even illustrated in NCTE language arts standard 7:

"Students...gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of source (e.g. print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience" (www.ncte.org/about/over/standards).

Thus, language arts teachers are encouraged through standards to have students respond and interpret texts in a multitude of ways.

The sorts of responses encouraged by language arts teachers have expanded from the traditional essay and generally allow students to explore alternative mediums such as film production, collage, theater etc. Oftentimes these dialogues depict a language arts teacher who is utilizing reader response theory, and attempting to appeal to different types of intelligences both of which are admirable goals. The dilemma that arises from such experiences is one of permanence. Most reader response activities never ensue an audience other than the teacher and perhaps other classmates which, after time, has the potential to wear upon the student's belief in the importance of his or her individual response to the text. While the experience of interpreting texts through alternative mediums, with a central focus on individuality, is beneficial to the reader, it does not necessarily benefit a greater group who ultimately could help ally self or others experience a variety of interpretations different from their own. Dasenbrock (1991) and Labercane (2002) examine this idea of the interpretative community and concur that such sharing of interpretations or responses
will, "show readers that not everyone shares their beliefs and that what we as readers must do is to learn how to adjust our views of what a text means in light of new understandings gained by sharing our viewpoints with others" (Labercane, 100, 2002). Thus, readers response theory, with an emphasis on community sharing can contribute to a critical curriculum.

Rosenblatt's (1978) reader response does not address the inclusion of diverse texts in formal learning environments. The need for diverse texts is indicated by the plethora of alternative, non-traditional texts that the average United States citizen is confronted with daily. A survey sponsored by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation found that individuals between the ages of eight and eighteen mainline electronic media for more than an average of six hours a day. Within media, there are a plexus of socio-cultural texts that can and should, in essence, be read in the same way as more traditional texts. In the same vein, our readings and engagement with popular cultural texts can inform the way we engage with more traditional texts; on the same note, the ways in which we engage with traditional texts can inform the way we treat popular cultural texts.

Rosenblatt (1978) argued that most explicit and measurable knowledge is constructed through efferent reading, rather than aesthetic. In contemporary culture, however, all of the media images that we experience daily, through mediums such as television, film, print advertisements, magazines, mp3 files, internet site visits, blogs, pod casts etc, provide much of our constructed societal knowledge. In fact, probing these alternative texts as important epistemological markers is beneficial in gaining a greater insight into self-constructs, societal relations, and individual attitudes and perceptions toward an assortment of effectual products, types, and qualities. We are obliged as language arts teachers to the tenous task of encouraging students to assess media in efferent ways. On the same note, these literacies play such a pervasive role it is important that we also learn to read our responses to them in efferent manners.

In conjunction with significant gains in digitally mediated popular cultural texts existing outside of school, the issue of weak and ineffectual uses of technology and technologically mediated texts in school must be addressed. Levin and Riffel (1997) examined how principals in five different school districts responded to, among other changes, the integration of computers. Levin and Riffel (1997) found that computers are not resulting in changes in student teacher relationships, or with significant changes in student
attitudes toward work. Levin and Riffel (1997) maintain that the most common use of technology in schools is to complete old or traditional tasks.

The notion that students should become users of digitally mediated popular cultural literacy tools is not, by any means new. However, the quality of technology used, the connection between curriculum and technology, and the level of thinking required on the part of the student are components that have fueled debates over the integration of such technologies. It is no longer sufficient to have students create only word documents and power point slides. These forms of production do not require critical thinking, a phenomena Burns contends,

"An over reliance on electronic presentation software precludes more rigorous kinds of learning. PowerPoint does not lead students to delve deeply into the writing process or wrestle with complex and conflicting conceptual information. Indeed, its very architecture demands episodic, disjointed knowledge construction. Content is restricted to a "sight bite"; the focus is on color and visual stimulation..." (Burns, 2006).

Uses of technologies that encourage media production among students that advance the simplicity and futility Burns writes about seem to be rare but have been successfully chronicled (Goodman, 2001; Wigginton, 1986).

Goodman’s work, Teaching Youth Media archives the impact of video production in economically marginalized communities for adolescents. The transformative learning that takes place as a result of the video production is the sort wistfully alluded to in early educational technology parlance (Berman and McLaughlin, 1976). Goodman noted that following production of videos, adolescent participants reported feeling “more excited and clear about what [we] can do” (Goodman, 89). The shift in participant attitudes toward work elucidated by Goodman’s study, illustrates a completed cycle of media literacy objectives. When surveying the work of Goodman (2003) it is clear that adolescents benefit deeply from certain types of media production technology by gaining insights into the complexities of media texts.

Research investigating adolescent popular cultural literacy practices (Gee, 2005; Lewis and Fabos, 2005) has initiated attempts to clarify types of, implications of, and benefits of the practices. However the realm is constantly expanding and as a result, research that investigates new practices as well as research that explores attempts to integrate these practices in language arts settings is needed (Alvermann, 1999; Gee, 2003; Green, 2001; Leu and Kinzer, 2000). Overall such research must arch towards more thorough
and critical renderings of both student and teacher experiences in order to be truly useful. This study attempts to fulfill gaps in this emerging line of research.

Since the beginning of the this study in the Fall of 2005, I became aware of other new research aimed to examine the role of podcasting in curriculum (Ogawa, 2006), but it differs in one very important regard. Ogawa's study, like most of the media surrounding podcasting, is concerned with investigating podcasting as a tool to enhance and capitalize on teacher centered talk, whereas this study focuses on podcasting as a tool to enhance and capitalize on student centered talk. In this capacity this study is significantly different in focus than the others, and in this regard distinctive themes have emerged.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the responses and productions of a high school elective language arts course based on critical theory frameworks, with an emphasis on deconstruction of popular cultural literacy texts. This methods chapter consists of two parts. The first part describes the design of the study. The second part provides a description of the curriculum, which the study hinges upon. The research questions addressed by this study are:

1) How do adolescent students describe their engagement with popular cultural texts and popular cultural literacy practices?

2) How do adolescent students respond to a critical curriculum that focuses on popular cultural texts?

3) How do adolescent students experience the use of alternative student production (podcasting) as a replacement for traditional forms of student expression?

In order to answer my research questions, I needed to engage in a methodology that would support my pedagogical as well as my research objectives. I wanted a methodology that would a) support the type of inductive and reflexive work required by critical theorists; b) allow flexibility in both the progression of curriculum and study design; and, c) allow me to explore this relatively new field of research regarding the inclusion of popular cultural literacy practices in classrooms, without trying to appropriate established notions of successful and unsuccessful student experiences.

As a result, I used constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2005) in both the curriculum design and the study design. Charmaz (2005) describes a constructivist grounded theory, which requires the researcher to be steadily reflexive, and continually draw connections between realities and interpretations. The grounded theory research must also then, adjust her methods in response to particular findings. Charmaz’s conception of grounded theory was applied, not only to the ways in which the study findings were interpreted, but also to the ways in which the curriculum was designed. Each unit was a reflexive nets step, building upon the students’ work, ideas and needs from previous units. In this way, the students were active participants in the curriculum design and implementation. Figures 1-2 illustrate how a constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2005) was appropriated for both the curriculum and study design.
Figure 1, illustrates an overview of reflexive steps taken in curriculum design. This figure presents the conceptual sequence of each unit, beginning with the initiation of pop-culture texts and traditional texts, and tracing the movements between student deconstructions, constructions and reflexive changes in curriculum design. A detailed illustration of the conceptual overview for each of the units can be found in appendix A. Within appendix A, reflexive steps within each unit are indicated with directional arrows and reflexive steps between units are indicated though formatted boxes.

Figure 2, illustrates the connections between the reflexive steps in the study and curriculum. This figure presents a connection between data and curriculum design that has not been explored elsewhere yet. In this figure, we begin with data, which is treated with both open and axial coding (Strauss and Corbin), then informs the researchers theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), and ultimately influences the next stage of data. This is a traditional grounded theory framework for research design. However, simultaneous to this process, the data also informs the curriculum design, which influences the student experiences which directly informs the next stage of data. This figure indicates a praxis, in which it is impossible to separate research from curriculum design and implementation. In the following two sections, the curriculum design and then study design are described in greater detail.

Part 1: Curriculum Design

In this part of the methods section, curriculum design is described. A brief overview of essential pedagogical decisions will be provided as well as a discussion of the traditional and popular cultural texts selected for the course.

Critical Pedagogical Decisions

The principle objective of the curriculum was to share with students some critical frameworks through which both popular culture and traditional literary texts could be interpreted. The purpose embedded within the curriculum was that both the students and instructor would begin to evaluate relationships
Popular cultural literacy practice

Student constructions using pop-culture literacy practices

Student deconstructions via a critical paradigm

Investigator/student deconstructions via a critical paradigm

Influences next steps in curriculum design
Charmaz (2005)

Traditional cultural literacy practice

Student constructions using traditional literacy practices

Figure 1. Reflexive steps in curriculum design
Figure 2. Reflexive links between curriculum and study design

- OPEN CODING (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987)
- AXIAL CODING (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987)
- THEORETICAL SAMPLING (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss 1987)
- DATA
- STUDENT EXPERIENCES
- CURRICULUM DESIGN
with popular culture literacy texts, as one of participatory gain and affect. This curriculum aimed to redirect traditional deconstruction techniques, practiced in language arts classes, to undeniably ubiquitous alternative literacies. This curriculum did not attempt to expose or treat students as hapless progenies of a noxious and monolithic popular-media; rather, it moved to encourage maturation into cognizant consumers and producers in the burgeoning realm of alternate literacies. The curriculum for this course included four units of study, each responded to one of five canonical texts previously chosen by the chair of the English department. The novels chosen for the course were:

1) Frankenstein (Shelley)
2) Of Mice and Men (Steinbeck)
3) Stranger (Camus)
4) The Great Gatsby (Fitzgerald)
5) The Scarlet Letter (Hawthorne)

While each unit differed in terms of essential questions, content, literary basis and student products, connections between the units were anticipated before implementation as well as discovered by students in the process of implementation. Continuity of thought, content, and deconstruction techniques contributed to a palpable rhythm in the course and encouraged students to practice flexibility in the scope of their analyses.

Momentum for cyclical thought and micro and macro deconstruction can be traced to several basic pedagogical choices rooted in each of the four units: literature circles (Daniel, 2001) the use of art slides as catalysts for increased metaphorical thinking, sometimes referred to in this study as image analysis (Rathyen, 2006); use of various popular culture texts including digital literacies; and alternative student media production. The techniques for deconstruction of media and alternative literacies and the construction of media and alternative literacies stayed consistent, while mediums varied.

*Literature circles and the topography of knowledge making.*

Throughout the trimester, students participated in a revision of literature circles, relying on roles elucidated in Harvey Daniel’s (2001) iconic text, *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups.* Students were encouraged to choose their own literature circle members, after being ex-
posed to descriptions of the roles in both written and oral forms. Once literature circles were chosen, students were given two reading deadlines and were then given the opportunity to assign daily reading assignments based on their own schedules. Literature circles were used for a variety of purposes other than deciphering meaning of a written text. Circles provided a consistent small community atmosphere for deconstructing and constructing throughout the semester.

**Merging pleasure and school domains: Choosing art slides.**

Visual art was introduced for two reasons: first, as a way to balance the types of texts students were engaging with and second, as forum for creating more metaphorical and abstract thinking. I believed that my students would see visual art as part of an adult domain, while they would hold on to some popular culture texts such as television, popular music, and digital literacies as a personal and adolescent domain. Many researchers (Jenson, 1992; Gee, 2005; Alderman, 2000) warn against utilizing a curriculum heavy with texts that adolescents feel belong primarily to their domain, remarking that they may misinterpret the curriculum as an attempt to devalue their alternative literacy choices and, thus, resist. By including art slides of both famous pieces, such as Chagall’s “L’anniversiere” and Magritte’s “Lovers” as well as less known contemporary art such as Irving Penn’s “Football Face” and Wangechi Mutu’s “Tumor”, a middle domain was created, in which we could share mutual attempts at viewing the pieces through critical frameworks.

**Selection and Responses to Popular culture Texts.**

Deconstruction practices were extended to various popular culture texts including a range of digital medias. Throughout the trimester, we considered numerous examples of reality television programs, celebrity magazines, celebrity personas, popular forms of dance, music videos, popular websites, as well as forms of contemporary communication such as text messaging, instant messaging, and pod casting. Students contributed the majority of popular culture texts used for class study. Scholars who have studied attempts at integrating popular culture in the curriculum warn against squelching students’ right to enjoy texts (Alverman, 2005), and it was highly important to encourage students to examine these texts through critical frameworks and still feel free to either resist, accept, or articulate any combination of resistance and
acceptance toward the text in question. The idea of being able to be critical of something, and still wanting to enjoy it was present in all popular-media discussions, though, it too, was a problematic construct.

Possibilities for student media re(constructions).  

After deconstructing various forms of media, both traditional literary texts and popular culture texts, it became vital to utilize media to express ideas and critiques of media.

In order to accomplish a complete cycle the students needed to extend their journey from consumers and critics to creators as well. Production of media and alternative literacies throughout the trimester included podcasts, drawings, collages, oral presentations, journal reflections, and i-movies. The creation of the alternative literacies replaced more traditional essay assignments and served as both illustrations of student synthesis of thought and the students' critiquing process as well as a place for continued critique and deconstruction.

Throughout the trimester, students relied on their literature circle members as partners in deconstructing literary and various popular culture texts, and worked in various combinations to develop alternative media re(constructions) in response to themes and or trends that emerged from their deconstructive practice.

Part 2: Study Design

Data was collected via a questionnaire, personal interviews, group interviews, student artifacts created within the curriculum, teacher field notes taken throughout the implementation of that curriculum, and taped classroom discussions which occurred during class meetings. Seventeen adolescents ranging from 16-18 years of age in both the 11th and 12th grades participated in this study, which lasted thirty-eight days.

Participants

Seventeen participants, in the eleventh and twelfth grade, pre-enrolled in one elective language arts course, were invited to participate in this study. All seventeen students volunteered to participate anonymously in the initial survey. Respondents were able to pull out of the study at any point for any reason with no affect to their course grade.
Throughout the thirty-eight days of instruction, all participants entered their products, writing or otherwise, as data to be coded for evidence of critical frameworks and to provide a more complete analysis of student attitudes and methods for expressing perspectives. Otherwise, the amount of student participants differed throughout the study. A total of 6 students participated in 2 separate group interviews. Seven students participated in individual interviews. One of the 7 students who were interviewed individually also participated in a group interview.

Participants were also invited to participate in two separate group interviews, one about digital literacies in general and the other about video gaming in specific. Of the seventeen participants, 4 demonstrated an interest in participating in the first group interview and 3 ended up participating. Of the seventeen participants, 6 demonstrated an interest in participating in the second group interview, concerned with video gaming, and 3 ended up participating. No student participated in both group interviews.

Individual interviews occurred with seven different participants after the thirty-eight days of instruction. Participants were selected based on availability and self-selection. All seventeen participants were invited to participate in a personal interview. A total of 4 female participants were interviewed and 3 male participants were interviewed.

*Questionnaire Development*

Items for the questionnaire were developed based directly upon comments from a group session. The questionnaire was designed to gain a clear idea of the participants' popular cultural literacy practices. Participants contributed to a group brainstorming session during which the following questions were addressed:

1) What is your definition of literacy?

2) Are there any conflicting definitions of literacy?

3) What types of literacy practices do you engage in?

Ultimately, the conversations drew upon Friere's concept of conscientization, encouraging students to perceive and focus first on a contradiction between a school definition of literacy and their own definition and follow up by delineating generative phrases, that accurately described components of their literacy definition (Freire, 1970).
Students stated that on a basic level, literacy included any form of communication and "anything that was communicating something" (Personal Communication, September, 9, 2005). Students noted a distinct difference between in school and out of school literacy. Literacy practices that students reported engaging in included: talking on cell phones, text messaging on cell phones, instant messaging, watching television programs, watching films, downloading i-tunes (music), reading magazines, making profiles on the Internet through sites such as MySpace, playing communal video games, blogging, creating songs, films, or podcasts through computers, and emailing. A questionnaire reflecting these particular popular culture literacy texts and factors contributing to literacy practices was designed and distributed to students the first week of the study. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

*Questions concerning media use: access, frequency, content.*

Questions meant to assess media use and access to literacy tools included the amount of literacy tools made available in the home, location of those tools, privacy allotted in regards to the use of these tools, and frequency of shared (family and peer) use.

Participants were asked how many televisions, desktop computers, laptop computers, video game consoles, mp3 players, radios, cell phones, dvd/vcr players, video recorders, audio recorders, and stereos were present in their homes. Participants were also asked how many of these aforementioned devices were located in their personal rooms and with whom they were expected to share access to these devices.

Access to these popular cultural literacy practices, was also assessed through questions regarding frequency of monitored use. Participants were asked questions about the amount and extent of privacy experienced while using these devices in the home.

Questions designed to explore participant preferences toward and frequency of use of popular cultural literacy practices, asked them to describe both attractive and unattractive attributes. These questions asked respondents what their preferred devices were and how often they engage in use. Frequency was also evaluated through open-ended questions regarding most recent devices used.
Questions referring to demographic characteristics.

Questions designed to understand demographic characteristics of the participants included questions about socio-economic status, race, social identity, languages spoken at home, number of people living in home, and gender.

Participants were asked to estimate their family’s socio-economic status. Because all of the participants are pupils in a private parochial school, there were base assumptions made regarding financial comfort amongst the group. Items means to address this issue were for purely descriptive reasons.

Participants were asked open-ended questions about their ethnic identity. However, answers to these questions were not included as part of the initial data analysis because a majority of respondents reported being “local” a phrase that more accurately describes attributes of their social identity.

Participants were asked about languages spoken at home in order to gain a better understanding of family literacy practices. Similarly items regarding amount of people in the home were designed to better understand the participants' home domain. All demographic characteristics were assessed as a way to better understand the participants' use of media at home and during non-school hours.

Questions referring to Social/Psychological Characteristics.

Social and psychological characteristics of adolescents' popular cultural literacy practices were assessed through questions regarding peer and other shared uses of technology. Respondents were also asked to describe social situations and contents of various shared popular cultural literacy practices. Participants were asked to describe their feelings when using peer shared (e.g. video game), or peer dominated (e.g. text messaging) literacy practices, as well as the positive and negative outcomes of engaging in such practice. Questions designed to evaluate social and psychological characteristics of shared literacy practices were meant to determine the social role of such practices in the lives of participants.

Questions referring to Attitudes toward Language Art Curriculum.

Participant attitudes and past experiences with language arts curriculum were gathered through open ended questions that inquired about strengths and weaknesses of past experienced language arts curriculums. Respondents were asked about curriculum and instruction styles. Participants were also asked a short
series of questions regarding their attitudes toward products created in previous English courses. These questions were meant to gain a clearer idea of the types of educational experiences the participants had and had not engaged with.

*Field Notes and Seminar Transcripts*

Field notes were kept throughout the 38 days, usually twice a week. Field notes were taken during class discussions as well as after instructional periods. Field notes included seating charts, participant speaking logs including information such as, who spoke, when they spoke, and what was communicated, student selection of popular cultural texts, student deconstructions in class, and connections between cannon literature and popular cultural texts observed in class.

A total of four class seminars were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Since the course curriculum was broken into four separate units, one seminar per unit was recorded for further analysis. Seminar discussions were coded for further evidence of student attitudes toward popular cultural texts and literacy practices, deconstruction practices, and reconstruction practices.

*Student artifacts*

Student artifacts, including i-movies, podcasts, journals, portfolios, reality television logs, podcasting logs and caricatures were collected throughout the semester and assessed for indications of applied critical frameworks. Documents were collected as to provide as complete a description of student thinking and methods of expression throughout the curriculum.

Reality television logs were kept by a self-selected group of participants who kept records of their reactions to reality television programs including reactions to commercials, particular figures, and use of music. The eleven respondents keeping records were asked to write reflections of these shows. Reflections were explored for participants' interest with reality programs. Reflections were also examined for evidence of critical frameworks and connections to cannon literature.

Similarly, participants kept podcasting logs as a way to track their reactions to podcasts. The logs provided a way to evaluate respondents' developing allegiances to particular shows and content. Respondents were also asked questions about what else they were doing while listening to podcasting, questions
about the length of the podcasts listened to, negative as well as positive attributes. They were then invited to write about their podcasts in progress after listening to other shows.

**Interviews**

**Individual Interviews**

Following the thirty-eight day curriculum, seven individual interviews were conducted with self-selected respondents. The semi-structured interviews lasted an average of one hour and included questions regarding popular cultural literacy practices, prior experiences with language arts courses, experiences with this critical curriculum, opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this curriculum, descriptions of podcasting, reflections on his/her podcast and podcasting process, and reflections on connections between cannon texts encountered and popular cultural texts encountered throughout curriculum.

**Group Interviews**

Two group interviews were conducted as a way to gain an understanding of participants' attitudes and perceptions of popular cultural literacy practices, with a particular interest in social components of practices. One group interview was designed to explore participants' experiences with and attitudes toward video game use. The other group interview was designed to explore participants' experiences and attitudes toward a wider range of digital literacies including text messaging, podcasting, profile websites, and instant messaging. These interviews were designed to gain insights about participants' interactions and group dynamics while discussing popular cultural literacy practices.

**Data Analysis**

All data were analyzed using a constant comparison method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, ) and the grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2005). Questionnaires were collated and coded according to emerging categories, use of communicative literacies, use of entertainment literacies, use of productive literacies, literacies integrated at a peripheral level, and fully internalized literacies. Three specific categories emerged from the questionnaire data. The three categories, which point to why the practices were used according to participants, were as follows:
1) Communicative Practices  
2) Entertainment Practices  
3) Production Practices  

All three categories were examined for commonalities and differences. A common, cross-categorical, pattern emerged regarding extent of use. Extent of use was described in two ways:

1) Peripheral  
2) Internalized  

Participant's extent of use was taken into consideration when integrating popular cultural texts and practices into the curriculum. For example, reality television was for many students an internalized practice and as a result students spent time deconstructing particular programs. In addition, participants reported that podcasting was a peripheral practice. However, because of the novelty of podcasting and its role within an internalized practice (internet), it was chosen as the primary construction activity for the course.

Table 1 is a summative display of the extent of use of any particular popular literacy by a participant. Description is based upon participants' reports regarding frequency, preference and comments from class discussions, individual interviews, group interviews and reality television logs.

Table 1. Table describing extent of use of popular cultural literacies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peripheral Use</th>
<th>Popular cultural literacies at a peripheral level are used on infrequent bases by participants and participants do not consider these practices or texts to be integral to their daily lives.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internalized Use</td>
<td>Popular cultural literacies that are internalized are used at a very frequent basis by participants and participants report that they could not manage without their availability. Internalized popular cultural literacies seemed to have affects on the participants ways of thinking, communicating and interacting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group interviews were transcribed and evaluated for information regarding purposes served by popular cultural literacy practices according to these adolescent users. Individual interviews were transcribed and coded for trends in student attitudes toward a critical theory curriculum, student descriptions of podcasting process and benefits as well as drawbacks to podcasting experiences, and finally, similarities
and differences in participants' choices of podcast topics and processes of production. The interviews were used as descriptive contexts for the analysis of the student podcasts and other artifacts.

Data from student artifacts was coded based on evidence of critical frameworks, integration of concepts from cannon texts encountered throughout the curriculum, evidence of participant awareness of intended audience, participant expression of self in relation to others and society. The final podcasts were described in terms of identity formation, and more specifically in terms of participants' feelings toward intended audience. Table 2 illustrates the three categories used for podcast analysis. Categories were, in part, coded based on examples of dialogue that characterized similarities and differences in intent. These discourse samples are located in the third column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Identifying Statements from podcasts and or follow up interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Identity</td>
<td>These casts focused on what it means to belong to a certain ethnicity, locale, and or gender. These casts often touched upon cultural matters (foods, music, traditions, religious practice). These casts were categorized by a palpable but private sense of pride.</td>
<td>“This is what I know is real”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I know what it means to be Hawaiian and I want other people to know too”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I think it important and super cool if some mainland [person] hears this and thinks about it differently”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Identity</td>
<td>These casts focused on specific social issues on a local scale. These casts often touched upon conflicts amongst peers, relationships with authorities, and parents.</td>
<td>“I think it'll be fun to have other people know what its like at our school and to know that we're not just perfect catholic school girls”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Did you see what **** was wearing this weekend”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“School is junk”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“What are parents like that”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of career hopes</td>
<td>These casts focused on cast creators career or next step plans. All but one of these casts coincided with senior project pans and or with anticipated college majors. Each of these casts followed similar formats, inspired by other podcasts, books, or secondary sources, and oftentimes involved direct quotations. In general, these casts had detectable metastructures and strongly resembled traditional expository essays.</td>
<td>“In this cast I will be discussing...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“My name is _____, and I want to talk about _____”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Some examples of _____ are”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Thanks for listening”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Tune in next time”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4, Findings: Participant Popular cultural literacy practices and responses to a critical curriculum, is divided into two parts. The first part provides an overview of participants' popular cultural literacy practices, while the second part provides an overview of student responses to the critical curriculum, which relies on popular cultural literacies.

In chapter 4, findings from the case study are presented in two parts. The first part of chapter 4 is an overview of the participants' popular cultural literacy practices. The second part of chapter 4 provides analysis of student deconstructive and re(con)structive work throughout the curriculum. In the final part of chapter 4, five final student podcasts are examined.
In this chapter the findings of this qualitative study of critical theory and popular culture literacy practices in the high school classroom are presented in two distinct sections. The first section presents findings from a questionnaire designed to investigate the popular cultural literacy practices of participants. This section provides a descriptive background and context for the second section. The second section presents findings from the curriculum implementation, including analysis of student work.

Part 1: Participants Popular Cultural Literacy Practices

Implementing a curriculum that balances popular cultural texts and canonical literary texts requires the teacher to concede that their familiarity with popular cultural texts, particularly use of digital literacies, is skeletal in comparison with their students. In this regard, teachers must be willing to depend upon their students to supply relevant materials and to articulate the role of specific practices within the greater domain of popular cultural texts. Because popular culture, by nature, is continually shifting, it is essential that the teachers attempt to understand how a particular student experiences this textual domain, before moving forward with a critical and inclusive curriculum.

The following section addresses the following research question and four relational sub questions:

1) How do adolescent students describe their engagement with popular cultural texts and popular cultural literacy practices?
   a) What type of popular cultural literacies do adolescent students engage in regularly?
   b) What factors contribute to these students’ literacy practices?
   c) How do adolescent students explain their opinions regarding these practices?
   d) Why do they use particular literacies over others?

This base of questions functioned as a support for the teacher’s reconstructed, and sometimes awkward, position as the least knowledgeable person in the classroom. These questions begin to describe “real”
popular cultural texts for this set of students, the texts' attractive and problematic attributes according to regular users, and the purposes they serve.

Questionnaire data suggests that participants engage in various popular cultural literacies and further, that these literacies can be categorized in two distinct ways. These literacies can be understood in terms of their intended purpose. That is, why does the user engage with this particular literacy practice? And what does the user intend on accomplishing by engaging with this particular literacy practice? Respondents reported using various literacies in response to three intended purposes, communication, entertainment, and as a way to produce a lasting product.

The second way that questionnaire responses can be understood is in terms of the extent that the participant is enmeshed in the particular literacy. That is, how frequently and to what extent does the user engage in this literacy practice? Respondents reported that some popular cultural literacy practices and texts remain on the periphery, meaning that they are aware of certain practices and may engage in them sporadically but do not believe these practices or texts to be a mainstay in their literate lives. Respondents also reported having fully internalized popular cultural literacy practices and texts. In this trend, participants reported that particular texts and practices were fully part of their thinking, communicating, and entertainment lives.

Based on the participants' responses, popular cultural literacies can be categorized as communicative, entertaining, and productive. Communicative, productive and entertainment based alternative literacies commonly employed by adolescents have notable commonalities. An important similarity, shared between alternative and technologically mediated literacies, is their role in the formation of social identities.

*Contextual Factors*

Of the environmental factors noted to contribute to literacy practices, gender, economic status, and occupation made the greatest contribution to this groups' literacy preferences.

Data gathered from initial close-ended surveys show that the majority of students enrolled in this study are of the middle and upper middle economic classes, while a small percentage (the equivalent of 1 student) belong to lower middle economic class and a slightly larger percentage (the equivalent of 2 stu-
dents) belong to the upper class. One participant received financial aid, but the overwhelming majority of the students paid full tuition fees of $10,567 per school year (www.maryknollschool.org).

Financial comfort of this group is illustrated in various ways, mainly in terms of ownership and comfort levels regarding use of technology. Every single student in the group owned at least one computer and had consistent access to the Internet and printing capabilities. All but 4 participants had a computer located in their own bedrooms and were not expected to share with another family member. This high level of ownership, coupled with high rates of computer privacy, exceed national averages and reveal this group to be rather privileged when it comes to technological access.

Data provided by closed-ended surveys indicated differences in literacy practices based on gender. There were 8 female participants, and 11 male participants. In general, none of the popular cultural literacy practices or texts mentioned by students in the brainstorming sessions seem to be gender exclusive; however, some appear to be more inclusive and accessible depending upon gender. Largest disparities in literacy practices included use of text messaging, video game playing and television preferences. Otherwise, the types of popular cultural literacy practices engaged by students were consistent across gender lines.

Despite this consistency, there were notable differences in reported uses, based upon method of eliciting information from students. For example, during initial brainstorming session several girls remarked that they watched sports television regularly. This is a trend not present in questionnaire results. Similarly, during the brainstorming session only 2 males reported watching reality television programming, but the survey results indicated that 8 males engaged in this practice. While it is impossible to generalize based on these findings, such discrepancies might suggest that particular literacy practices and particular popular cultural texts have been constructed and are perceived as gender specific by this particular group of adolescents. Gender differences surfaced when looking at cell phone use. All but one of the participants owned a cell phone and used it regularly. There was no difference in terms of gender when looking at traditional use of cell phones (to talk with others). Of those males owning a cell phone 10:11 reported using the phone more than 3 times during the school day, while of female participants owning a phone 6:8 report the same. Text messaging, a system of visual, largely imaginative and phonemic based communication passed through cell phones was used in a much higher frequency by female participants than male participants. Of the males who reported using text messaging, 7:11 noted that they only used it when responding to a fe-
male's text message. Again, while it is impossible to generalize based on these findings, these numbers might suggest that text messaging, in this group of participants was constructed as a largely feminine activity.

In a similar vein, there was also a discrepancy in how girls responded to the question "Who among you watches sport television regularly?" When asked as a co-ed group, 2/3 of females responded to watching sports, which contradicts the data gathered from their technology logs and closed-ended surveys. This behavior suggests that the viewing of sports has been constructed as not only a male behavior, but also one that is attractive among females. While these discrepancies were not explicitly revealed to the participants, the notion of gender based technology use was addressed at several points throughout the course of the study.

Despite gender differences regarding types of television programming watched and use of text messaging, it is apparent that all of these popular cultural texts contribute to the literacy realm of these students and deserve implementation into language arts curriculum.

*Popular cultural literacy types*

For the purpose of this study, data has been coded into the following categories: communicative literacy practices, entertainment literacy practices, and productive literacy practices. The term communicative technology describes technology that assists in keeping in touch with others and does not leave a lasting record. In other words, all communicative technology utilized is temporal and non-lasting. The term entertainment technology characterizes technology that assists in having fun, competing, or relaxing. Entertainment technology requires various levels of interaction but generally does not leave any lasting record. Productive technology refers to technology that assists in the production or expression of the user's beliefs, attitudes or goals. Productive technology also included participants' use of song production software, creation of web sites, participation in online blogs, and development of gaming software. In general, productive technology requires a lengthier commitment than the other two forms, and results in a product of some sort. The types of cultural literacy practices offered here are, in no way, exclusive; rather, they often overlap with one another. For the purpose of this study, practices have been coded based on participants' reported
intent for use. Table 3 outlines technology utilized by the participants in this study, sorted by type as reported by participants.

Table 3. Types of popular cultural literacy with student reported examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Communicative Literacy practices</th>
<th>Types of Entertainment Literacy practices</th>
<th>Types of Productive Literacy practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cell Phone</td>
<td>Internet Gaming</td>
<td>i-movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogging</td>
<td>Mp3 players</td>
<td>Garageband (music software)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Messaging</td>
<td>Video Console Gaming</td>
<td>Adobe digital photography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My-space</td>
<td>Portable video console gaming</td>
<td>Dreamweaver (song software)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIM (instant messaging)</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Web site builders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rationale for sorting student data into these three categories was in part a way to address traditional school attitudes toward alternative literacy practices. While schools have made attempts to include various forms of productive literacy practices in the classroom, very few have moved towards all inclusive literacy curriculums. These categories point to an imbalance in curriculum design.

The majority of technology used by the students in this group was communicative, followed by entertainment technology. Productive technology used by this group of participants included creating word documents and power points for school requirements, but also included a handful of students who create web sites, manage blogs (on-line discussion sites), produce their own songs and films. Initial attempts to gather data regarding technology use to create things were ambiguous because every student creates word documents etc. Follow up efforts were made with clarified questions and focus group interviews. Students reported what type of technology they used as well as times used and duration of use. Afterwards the data was coded in terms of technology type. The participants were not made aware of the investigator’s differentiation of types of technologically mediated communication, to ensure that they did not perceive a sense of priority in terms of which technology is “better” etc.

In the following subsections, entertainment literacy practices, communicative literacy practices, and productive literacy practices among these students are described. Within each subsection, student experiences and attitudes toward particular popular cultural texts are discussed.
Entertainment Literacy Practices

Ironically, one of the most common types of popular cultural literacy practices used by these students seem to be the least likely to be utilized in formal learning situations. Within the category of entertainment technology, forms of technology most commonly listed were television, gaming devices and use of Mp3 players. Student descriptions regarding the purpose of these literacy practices suggest that each serves as a place for identity formation, relating socially to peers, and developing empathy.

Both male and females reported watching a great deal of television (Males=6.2 hrs/week; Females=8.0 hrs/week). As discussed previously, there were some gender differences regarding types of television watched but all but one participant watched television daily. When asked to describe reality television, participants responded in various ways revealing a mixture of attitudes toward the phenomenon. 17:18 participants noted that reality television has offended them at times, and 12:18 participants noted that they recognize racist or sexist schemas in reality television. Despite the participants' acknowledgement of these qualities, 6:18 participants reported that they would like to be in a reality television show. Of the 6 participants willing to be in a reality television program, 0 were male participants.

In a group interview with all female participants, the appeal of reality television programming was described in the following ways:

Nonani

"It's funny watching people fight on television with my friends."
"I think its funny all the drama. And also it makes me feel better about myself and how I am and how I act."

Ana

"I sort of feel like I know them. Like I know their personalities and can think about what they might do in certain situations that I'm dealing with."
"I like to see how they act together, like the boyfriends and girlfriends. How all the boys are the same no matter where it is."

Lei

"Sometimes it breaks the ice with my friends like if we all watch Laguna Beach and then it just takes the pressure off."

For these female participants, reality television was a fully internalized literacy practice that affected their peer relationships and served as a conduit through which they were able to communicate to others.

The greatest discrepancy in entertainment technology use surfaced in regards to gaming. Participants noted using Internet gaming devices, as well as video console gaming devices and portable video
gaming devises. One hundred percent of male participants reported owning and regularly using a gaming device at home. Eighty percent of females report having a gaming device in the home but not using it, and 20% of females report not having a gaming device in the home. Male participants, in a focus-group interview, explained the appeal of Internet gaming:

Ben “You can compete with other people like on the Internet you can sign in and play against your friends”

Thomas “You can get really good at a game and beat your friends”
“it’s just something to do when you’re bored and it gets addictive after a while”

Devon “All different options like you can look like all different characters and have different talents”
“I get into my character and have like da kine moves that are like my moves no ones el-ses”

While females preferred watching reality television, and males preferred gaming, both literacy practices served a very important function: the formation of social identities. Both male and female participants describe the social functions of these forms of technologically mediated popular cultural texts as support tools satiating adolescent developmental needs, namely identity formation (Brownlee, 1999). Just as reality television was an internalized literacy practice for the female respondents in the focus group, gaming (both Internet and video console) was fully internalized for these males. The interviewees commented on both the social benefits to playing, “can compete with other people on the Internet...you can sign in and play against your friends...”, as well as options afforded to users, “all different options like you can look like different characters and have different talents.” Users were as interested in the ability for identity play as they were in the peer sharing aspects of video gaming.

Like gaming and watching reality television, use of Mp3 players immediately serves to strengthen social identities, despite their appearance as solitary tools. The constant use of Mp3 players amongst this group revealed conflicting desires some of which included not wanting to talk to others, not wanting to appear alone, and not having to listen to others. Students also reported that having an Mp3 player was a conversation starter, a way to learn about someone else, and a way to assert identity.

Participants noted they notice who does and who does not have Mp3 players, who has the most songs, the better songs, and who has the “coolest play lists”. Mp3 players represent the form of entertainment technology most commonly used by these students. Within the group, 8:11 male students report using
their mp3 players every break between classes, while 6:11 report regularly using Mp3 players during class without the teacher’s knowledge. Six out of eight female students report using their mp3 players every break between classes and 3:8 report using their Mp3 players during class without the teacher’s knowledge. The volume of mp3 players amongst this group is significant and higher than national averages. While mp3 players constitute entertainment-based technology, they also serve as a potential forum for communication via pod casting technology. The amount of mp3 users, the frequency of their use, in addition to the contrasting reasons for using, in part, inspired the integration of podcasting technology in this study.

Examining this group’s self-reported use of entertainment technology supports the findings of Gee (2004) and Lewis (2005) who noted the importance of social components in alternative literacy practices. The desire for adolescents to engage in activities that involve other adolescents in one way or another is important pedagogical information. Even though I have differentiated between entertainment technology and communicative technology in this group, both involve levels of social communication. It has become exceedingly clear that literacy practices preferred by adolescents in some way serve the formation, validation, or review of their social identity.

**Communicative Literacy Practices**

Communicative practices were the most common type of popular cultural literacy practices among this group of students. Forms of communicative technology used by participants included talking on cell phones, text messaging, blogging (on-line discussion sites threaded by topic), AIM (instant messaging), and e-mailing. The least common form of communication amongst peers in this group was e-mailing, and the two most frequent were cell phone use and instant messaging. Again this points to a significant division between the popular cultural literacy practices of adolescents and those commonly sanctioned by formal educational situations. Teachers and students frequently use e-mail (these student’s least favorite form of communication), but shy away from instant messaging and attempt to forbid cell phone use all together during class time.

A total of 17:18 participants reported regularly instant messaging. In focus group interviews, females and boys noted similar reasons and appeals for AIM.
Ana  
“Just like I can talk to everyone all night and its not really all rushed like you can stop talking for a little while then come back and also its fun”

Ben  
“Kind of like a way to flirt or check out see if someone likes you”

Devon  
“Mostly just to keep tabs on people”

Lei  
“Sometimes to study, but not really”

Jackie  
“I grew up doing this so its just a really comfortable way to talk to people”

Jonathan  
“I feel so left out if I miss a night. Like the next day want to know who was on.”

A common thread in all focus group interviews, and surveys were the topics of conversations throughout the various forms of technological mediums. Topics that appeared for AIM, Blogging, text messaging, and use of cell phones included talking about school, talking about friends, talking about teachers, and making plans. In many ways the data suggests that these forms of communicative technology allow adolescent users to summarize their days and receive validation from peers. Lewis and Fabos (2004) note that the female participants in their study regarding IM use, most commonly engaged in what Luke (2003) characterized as lateral rather than penetrating discourse. While this same trend emerged from the participants in this study, it is important to recognize the social, personal and developmental benefits to such conversations for the adolescent.

Another popular communicative literacy practice is profile websites. A large majority of participants noted that they have Myspace accounts on the Internet. Myspace, the fourth most popular site on the Internet is an online community where members can create cyber-skins and communicate with others (White, 2005). The site allows users to upload photographs, songs, and videos that describe the user. When asked as a whole group what the appeal of Myspace is the most frequent comment was collecting friends. Myspace allows users to collect friends (other members) and depicts the amount of friends through small thumbnail photographs listed beneath the member’s profile. A total of 17:18 of study participants have a my-space account and 15:18 check it regularly (more than five times/week). This form of technologically mediated literacy practice can be categorized as both a communicative and a productive exercise. While it is most commonly used by this group to bog or post shout-outs, more than a handful of the users noted that the process of creating their profiles was their favorite part. Similarly a majority of users reported that the
regularly edit or change their profile. Myspace offers students a chance to assert their social status through the continued maintenance of their profiles, allay otherwise intimidating or awkward interactions via emoticons and monitor others around them.

Adult perception of Myspace resembles those frantic adults depicted in Moyle’s 1980’s film *Pump Up the Volume*. Numerous articles in adult frequented periodicals have surfaced recently linking Myspace to rebellious and detrimental adolescent behavior such as drug use, sexual promiscuity, and “inappropriate” language. There have also been claims that Myspace can be linked to more serious illegal activities including a recent double murder in Pennsylvania believed to have been committed by two teenagers who communicated via Myspace (Pace, 2005). Recently, an entire school district in California has banned the website from school computers in response to increased concern regarding teen users inability to protect themselves from “potential predators”. As adults continue to express concerns about Myspace and attempt to eradicate opportunities for its use, the message that teenage users are inept at participatory responsibilities is clear. This shared and very popular literacy practice is being dismissed as entirely detrimental, and as a result, adolescent users are left to navigate discursive critical issues on their own.

*Productive literacy practices*

In comparison with the other two categories of popular cultural literacy practices, productive exercises were rare for this group, though most commonly integrated into formal learning environments. Categorized by a lasting product used for viewing, reading, or listening to by an audience of either friends or strangers, productive technology was only used regularly, and outside of school, by 3:18 of the participants. Overall, these literacy practices were on a peripheral level for participants.

Four primary uses were listed in an open ended survey: creating video games, creating music videos, making own beats/songs, and creating websites. In follow up interviews, it became clear that those participants using one type of productive technology were more likely to try others on their own. Students did not note any relationship between heightened use of productive technology and less use of other forms. The use of productive technology did not seem to interfere with the other more common technology uses. When asked in informal interviews about this sort of technology use participants replied:
Jonathan

“I have a lot of friends who watch my videos and give me feedback like they think it’s really good what I do and I think also it’s just something to do when I get bored and cool to see how much better I’ve gotten since freshman year.”

Ben

“I started making beats with other friends from another school and then I got my own software and just took off with it. It’s a quiet space I can go to my own bedroom and record what songs are in my head.”

Devon

“I make websites for my parents and their friends and also sometimes my friends. It’s a skill I have that helps people.

The content of products created by productive technology users in the class differs from users of communicative and entertainment based technology users, but ultimately, productive technology serves the very same social, personal, and developmental function. A majority of the productive users responded to the question, “What do you like about using technology to create things?” with answers involving “friends”, “others”, “parents” and other phrases that imply attention to either perceived or real audiences.

All of the popular cultural literacy practices utilized by these adolescent students contribute to identity formation. Their general exclusion from formal language arts courses cheapens not only the mediums but also the content expressed and those who choose to engage with them. Opportunities for expanding our conceptions of literacy practices appropriate for formal language arts learning settings are abundant, but shifts in curriculum require shifts in our approaches and epistemologies. Critical theory is an effective approach to balancing popular cultural texts and literacy practices and traditional literary texts in conventional language arts classrooms.

Part 2: Curriculum Findings

Findings from student work during the curriculum is presented in the following section. This section answers the second primary research question of the study:

3) How do adolescent students respond to a critical language arts curriculum that focuses on popular cultural texts?

Students participated in a series of four units, which are presented in the sequence in which they were taught. A series of concept maps (located in Appendix A) and previously discussed in Chapter 3: Methods, illustrate the conceptual development of each unit and are presented in the sequence in which they were taught. Rectangles denote the ideas, concepts, or summaries of student responses. Hexagons represent
processes or tasks that either result in thoughts (rectangles) or occur in response to ideas (rectangles).

Each figure provides an overview of the various deconstructive and re(constructive) acts for each unit, in addition to both popular cultural and traditional literacies used. The concept maps provide a detailed illustration of the unit progressions, and also illustrate the reflexive nature of the assignments, a quality which has roots in both critical theory (Shor, 1996) and grounded theory (Charmaz, 2005).

The four units that students engaged in were:

1) *Contemporary Monsters*
2) *What's justice got to do with it?*
3) *Diamond encrusted Burberry socks and other 21st century decadence*
4) *Hester, you don't have to turn out your red light*

Table 4 presents an overview of all the traditional and popular cultural texts integrated into the entire curriculum. In the following subsections, details regarding rationale for texts used and basic timelines for each unit precede findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contemporary Monsters</th>
<th>TRADITIONAL TEXTS</th>
<th>POPULAR CULTURAL TEXTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRINT TEXTS</strong> (VERBAL AND ART BASED)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Frankenstein (Shelley)</td>
<td>• Cartoon images of Frankenstein’s Monster</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Vindication of the Rights of Women (Wollstonecraft)</td>
<td>• Eminem</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• The Great War (Magritte)</td>
<td>• Howard Stern</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Mike Tyson</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Terrorists</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Michael Jackson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• People Magazine</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tumor (Wangechi Mutu)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Football Face (Irving Penn)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FILM AND AURAL TEXTS</strong></td>
<td>• James Whales’ Frankenstein</td>
<td>• The Real World (reality television program on MTV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What's Justice got to do with it?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRINT TEXTS</strong></td>
<td>• The Stranger (Camus)</td>
<td>• Photographs of Lady Justice Tattoos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Of Mice and Men (Steinbeck)</td>
<td>• Cartoons of Lady Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Photographs of Lady Justice Sculptures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FILM AND AURAL TEXTS</strong></td>
<td>• Of Mice and Men</td>
<td>• COPS (reality television program FOX)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Unit 1: Contemporary Monsters

The nascent intention behind this lesson was to have students examine the symbiotic relationships between “monster”, the “creator” and others, creating a space where students would be able to position themselves as active participants within society. Essential questions that evolved during our class work were: What does it mean to be a monster? How are monsters constructed in contemporary society? How are monsters represented in literature and art? Who benefits from monsters? Queries originating from students concerned historical, cultural and gender factors in the construction and reception of Shelley’s monster.

Our opening unit of study, Contemporary Monsters, responded to the pre-chosen cannon text Frankenstein written by Mary Shelley. This novel was selected as a beginning text because of its fantastical qualities. There was little chance that students would intuit evident connections between their reality and
the fantasy presented in the novel. As a result the examination of qualities, attributes, and behaviors of
Shelley's monster was a safe and effective introduction to self and popular culture analysis. Because ado-
lescents oftentimes resist lessons that they feel demand a predetermined self-revelation, it was imperative to
have students first conduct close analysis on a figure or text with seemingly nil similarities.

This text is accessible for those adolescents able to read at this level, because it illustrates the com-
plicated nature of society with only two key characters. Within this distilled formula, adolescent readers
can, perhaps in part because of the Barnum effect, simultaneously read both characters as projections of
themselves. They can, at times, identify with Victor's (the constructor) pressures and poor decisions, and at
other times empathize with the monster's (the constructed) isolation and response to society without feeling
as if applied empathy was a necessary contingent for successful reading of the text. In the process of applying
critical theory to the monster, the students began to see a nexus of societal attributes that affect and re-
tard change in individuals.

The primary pieces of art that were examined during this unit were Magritte's *The Great War*,
Irving Penn's *Present Concerns*, and Wangeci Mutu's untitled piece from the collection *Tumor*. While
reading the novel, students analyzed two very different depictions of Shelley's monster selected for their
polar tones. Both images were cartoons, one from the cover of a comic book and the other a caricature.

*Student Deconstructions*

The variety of depictions compelled students to consider the power of perspective as well as ma-
 nipulative qualities of media representations. Students seemed most interested in the discrepancy between
two comic depictions of the monster, one of which shows the monster coming to life with a staunch grim-
ace on his face, loose bandages hanging from his muscular frame, towering over a clearly surprised Victor
while the other image depicts only the virescent face of an opulent, smiling yet apparently vacant monster.
Student responses to these images revealed both a heightened awareness and resentment towards misappro-
priations of the attributes of Shelley's monster.

Looking at the images without having engaged with the original text would have been a mistake.
The students relied on the text as reality, and understood the images as other people's interpretations of that
reality. In the process of the image analyses, students began questioning the complex process of social con-
struction and discursively drew connections to popular medias such as People magazine, MTV's The Real World, and report cards.

**Summer**

"In *People* magazine the famous people are shown as one way one time and then totally the opposite the next. Like for example, Lindsay Lohan was shown as really big at first and kind of was treated like a little kid actress. Then when she got super skinny she is being shown on the cover as skin and bones with the words skin and bones in yellow right over her. This is like the two images we looked at of the monster from *Frankenstein*. The person creating the images has more control then the person being shown in the image."

**Thomas**

"Reality television programs like MTV's famous the Real World shows them in one specific light the whole season and then when the season is over and that person joins another reality show like the Gauntlet, the person could be shown in a different way. For example, on the Real World Hawaii Ruthie was a raging drunk and was hard to live with. I didn't see this show with her because it was on before I was alive I think but my sister told me about her. Now on the gauntlet she is shown as really a fun person and good team leader. These are two extremes that make me wonder who is filming her and also who is editing her. It is like that quote from the book when the monster asks, "did I request thee to mold me from my clay". She didn't really want to be shown probably either way. She is also from Hawaii so I think it could be racist in a way if they only show her in the bad, drunk kind of way."

**Ana**

"I am drawing the connection between progress reports and these two pictures of Frankenstein. I might be learning a lot in class, but the teacher doesn't think so or doesn't like me or what my work is like and then I get a bad grade. Sometimes the comments teachers write on the grades are not true. [They] are exaggerations of the truth and make my parents freak out and think I'm this totally awful kid. Making report cards is important but it is also not necessarily a true thing, just like these two drawings of the monster. Neither picture is really right but they aren't exactly wrong either."

When asked to think about lessons learned while analyzing and comparing the two very different monster images with popular culture texts, the great majority of students directed their analysis to magazines and television. When commenting on social construction via magazines, some students made specific observations regarding diction such as, "the words skin and bones right over her". Commenting on television as a medium for social construction, students did not refer to any specific diction choices, such as titles or dialogue construction, but instead zoned in on the idea of editing and framing of characters: "These are two extremes...she didn't want to be shown either way probably". A handful of students (3) connected their image analysis experience with popular culture texts holding more personal meanings such as report
cards, family portraits, web pages made by individuals, and CWCs (a collection of work required from each course taken during high school that must be collated and presented as a graduation requirement). Students who commented on more personal and immediate popular culture texts were exhibiting flexible thinking as well as being able to position themselves within society in a more symbiotic manner, rather than as mere witnesses to social construction. While the types of analyses differed, every student noted power in relation to social construction, though generally following a simple deductive formula: e.g. Because of this (poverty, gender construction, race), _____ is a monster. All newly constructed knowledge was enforced by literature circle projects in which each group chose and analyzed a contemporary monster.

_Student Re(con)struction_

The objective of the contemporary monster project was described to the students while specific details of the project were left for the class to define. The project was meant to be presented in seminar format, and include a portfolio of sorts and would count as a test grade. The class was to come up with portfolio ingredients with teacher feedback. Not surprisingly, many of the ingredients followed previous class assignments including image analysis and connections to previous pieces of artwork and literary texts. The only initial guideline given by the teacher was to choose a contemporary “monster” figure as a group that could be compared to Shelley’s monster. After a forty minute brainstorming session, the group came up with the following portfolio ingredients, which were then honed into more concrete expectations.

1. Something about who the monster is and where he or she comes from
2. Something about how people see the monsters with art or photographs of monster
3. Something about how people treat the monster

While working on these projects, the notion of social construction within the framework of feminist theory as it relates to Mary Shelley’s _Frankenstein_ was introduced. For several sessions, the groups spent one hour per session working as groups on their portfolios and the other hour as a whole class examining Mary Wollstonecraft’s (Shelley’s mother) feminist ideology as it relates to both the female, male, and non human characters of the novel, _Frankenstein_. This process was interesting because it validated the students’ personal knowledge involving relationships between parents and offspring. While Wollstonecraft died during childbirth, the students conjectured that her text, _A Vindication of the Rights of Women_ still affected
Mary Shelley and they were able to trace connections between her founding points and the characters in the text. Many of the students argued that Shelley advanced her mother's critical theory by including a male gendered non-human figure that struggled with the three founding points. Explicit connections between this practice of critical thought and their group portfolios were not drawn in class, but did emerge organically in the class seminar.

The groups chose the following contemporary monsters to focus on: Eminem (this group wanted to choose the Pope but after a discussion with the department of the school I had to relay the news that this would not be an appropriate decision on their part), President Bush, Howard Stern, Michael Jackson, Middle-Eastern terrorists, and I modeled Mike Tyson. Each group presented their portfolio to the entire group and initiated a discussion after leading us through several image analyses and biographical information. As the presentations progressed more and more connections were drawn between “monsters”, their “creators” and the participatory role that others play in the monster’s outcomes. The portfolios were both concrete and metaphorical and illustrated a synthesis of information and a tendency to think critically.

Sample student comments during the seminar discussion that reveal a level of comfort with critical theory include:

**Lei**
“I used to watch him [Mike Tyson] all the time. So like in one way my money or whatever my cable bill or however that works supported him and all that time was when he’d just gotten out of jail for rape and also he didn’t want to be doing that anymore [fight] so even though I’m not Victor really I am”

**Mike**
“Before we started we all pretty much agreed that Bush was a monster like on purpose but now, even though I really don’t agree with anything he is doing I can see some of the factors that are affecting his choices like his dad and also his fear”

**Kanoni**
“Howard Stern is really just fiction that’s what we see so he is really a smart business man who knows that people want monsters and he’s profiting from all that resistance to having to be political correct and all.”

**Summer**
“I think it’s weird how we saw those paintings with the faces covered [Magritte’s The Great War, Penn’s Present Concerns] and he [Michael Jackson] always covers his face and his kid’s faces with these masks”.

**Jonathan**
“We all thought pretty much that the terrorists were by nature someone’s terror and someone else’s hero, but this made it seem a lot more complicated and sad.”

**Devon**
“Eminem struggled with money as a kid and was left with only some options as to how to survive and maybe made choices other people wouldn’t like that much and just like the monster who had to steal and spy on the family to get
close to people, he [Eminem] was just trying to deal with what he had to deal with”

The comments offered here represent various degrees of critical thought. Overall, students seemed to have adopted the notion that identities; namely, “monster” identities, can be socially constructed and provided, within the seminar examples supporting that rudimentary critical formula. The last comment, regarding Eminem, reveals one student’s awareness regarding fiscal hegemony, while another student remarking on Mike Tyson’s career advances the foundation with comments on consumer responsibility. Both consumer responsibility and fiscal hegemony arose later in the trimester but had not yet been covered. The all-female group presenting Howard Stern initially brought forth a traditional feminist perspective, but later dismissed it by citing Stern’s innovative identity manipulation skills. Their shift in thought, and willingness to resist not only the cultural message but also accepted methods of ‘reading’ that message reflected a greater comfort with critical thought and expression. Several of the comments illustrate a growth in empathy and a move away from polar thinking. For example, the comment on President Bush reveals a shift from extreme interpretation, “Bush was a monster like on purpose”, towards more flexible thinking, “I can see some of the factors affecting his decisions.” The move to more relativistic thought indicated in the student’s comments on Bush is similar to thinking present in comments shared during the seminar regarding terrorists. However, many comments shared during the seminar regarding terrorism strongly resembled United States publicized post 9-11 political statements. It is quite possible that the emotional connotations of terrorism for this group of students impeded with their ability to engage in a critical analysis.

After seminar discussions, I asked students to organize their group portfolios into one class binder in an order that made sense. I was intentionally vague when it came to my expectations here, but did ask for one student volunteer to take notes on the group brainstorming and then type up a paragraph rationale describing the sequential choices made. This debriefing process encouraged all members to continue their participatory role in the discussion, as well as providing an assignment with no predetermined outcomes or expectations. The students came up with four potential orders for the portfolios and the group debated the most logical. Despite the fact that no grade was attached to this task, the students took care in determining
the final order most likely because the work in the portfolio represented collective, critical thought within a promisingly relevant content (pop-culture).

The following is the volunteer student's write up of the class discussion and is located before the table of contents in the class monster portfolio.

"The portfolio of contemporary "monsters" begins with Mike Tyson. Mike Tyson was picked to be first because he brings the most fear to people. Mike Tyson then connects to Michael Jackson. They both had similar childhoods and because of how they express themselves through their music. Eminem and Howard Stern are similar because they both express their opinions publicly and they both had divorces, which sparked their behavior in their careers. Howard Stern and George Bush are similar because they both had good childhoods, they are both liked and not liked by many, and they both stick to what they think is right. To conclude the "monster" portfolio, the class decided to save the terrorists for last, to be our big ending. Each monster is a terrorist in their own way because they all create a fear for someone and they are all reacting to something in their lives" (Devon, September 15, 2005).

The choices students made in terms of organizing their portfolios illustrated in part by phrases such as "our big finish" and "then connects to", points to meta-literary knowledge and is ultimately an illustration of valuable organizing and structuring practice for literary work. Often times, adolescent learners see revisions of essay organization or structure as an unwelcome obstacle but in this case it was viewed in an alternately more positive manner. At the same time this practice mirrored an elementary sort of social coding that critical theorists engage in. The students sorted through their micro observations of particular monsters and then made connections to the macro (greater organization of monsters).

The unit became, without any intention on my part, a bouncing board for all subsequent lessons. Students persistently brought shared discussions later in the trimester back to the monster theme in a conceptual manner. The phrases social construction, made monster, social isolation, and environmental factors became frequent markers during course discussions and in individual student written work. The knowledge made and shared during this unit remained valuable throughout the semester and was acknowledged in written assessments numerous times.

In addition to the production of portfolios, students worked in pairs to create podcasts that expressed their opinions on the role and power of physical beauty in society. The notion of beauty as an antithesis to monstrosity had come up several times in class discussions (particularly as students deconstructed Wagechi Mutu's untitled piece and noted the juxtaposition of shapely feminine legs to other noxious ele-
ments). Since it became a theme in our discussions, we used it as a basis for our media production. This served as an opportune time for students to become more apt with the development and publication of podcasts since they would need polished skills later in the trimester for their final projects.

The students chose partners and were given one session to prepare for their podcasts, which were recorded in front of the class using a microphone, the free downloadable software Audacity, and a laptop computer. To supplement their attempts at successful podcasting productions, I provided some guidelines regarding podcasting techniques from the book, *Podcasting: The Do-It-Yourself Guide* (Cochrane, 2005).

While the students had rich past experiences with portfolio work directly impacting their level of expectations for the monster portfolio, they had virtually no experience with either listening to podcasts, or producing audio texts of any sort. Lack of experience categorically contributed to the level of excitement surrounding the assignment. During our first recording sessions, students were littered around the room, some of them sitting on top of their desks for a better view, some guarding the door for unexpected interruptions, and others hovering by the recording station. Two student volunteers were asked to record observations of the recording session and then present their notes to the class later on. Among the notes taken during our first session, the two writers noted that their classmates were “nervous, excited, laughing, reading their crib sheets, lots of people had their mouths open” (Leilani, personal communication). After recording through a microphone and using of Audacity software, podcasts were exported as MP3 files onto libsync website. Students were asked to listen to their classmates’ podcasts at home and write brief responses in their podcasting logs. Table 5 illustrates a summative breakdown of content developed by several students in response to the assignment, as well as their own responses to hearing the published podcasts and some of their classmates’ responses.

Table 5. Student podcast topics, personal responses, and peer responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Topic</th>
<th>Creators process for cast preparation</th>
<th>Creator response to cast</th>
<th>Peer response to cast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using physical beauty as a way to escape speeding tickets</td>
<td>Made an outline, which they called a crib sheet, and practiced voice personas.</td>
<td>Was not really realistic. The story about going 90 miles an hour was not true at all.</td>
<td>It sounded really professionally, especially Moses but it didn’t really make so much sense and it seemed like she might have been exaggerating the truth in the example part.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each team was provided time to prepare for the podcast production, but given no production requirements. In their reading, students were introduced to effective techniques used by other podcasters such as crib sheets, pacing schedules and voice warm ups (Cochrane, 2005). The selection of student products illustrated in the figure, show a typical representation of student integration of these techniques. In addition to guidelines suggested through their reading, students chose compositional techniques practiced in other language arts classes to apply to their podcasting productions.

Self reflections written after podcast production and debuts, show attention to both style of delivery (characterized by statements such as, “it sounded”; “smart sounding” and content (characterized by statements such as, “was not really realistic”; “it was all opinion and didn’t have anything to do with the books”; “it explained too much about the plot and not enough about beauty parts”. These self-reflections point to an important trend in students’ tendencies in self-assessments of literary products. These self-reflections point to students’ preferences towards focusing primarily on content or style of delivery and suggest that it would be unnatural for students to address both factors in subsequent products. In this sense, it is beneficial to ask students to consider one specific factor in revisions at a time. Student reflections regarding the work of others show a more balanced assessment and generally included comments on both style of delivery and content. In every reflection turned in, students commented first on style of delivery rather than content. This trend advances the notion that aesthetics are commonly of utmost importance to adolescences followed by content, and that the appeal of aesthetics for adolescents is a valuable and potentially scholarly attribute.
Our preliminary unit of study served as a foundation of deconstructive practices. Students gained skills in analyzing, critiquing and drawing connections between independent texts.

**Unit 2: What's Justice Got to Do With It**

The preliminary unit of study built upon the accepted paradigm in critical theory, that there are power structures coupled with physical attributes. The second unit, entitled *What's Justice Got to Do with It?*, consisted of stimuli that encouraged thinking about justice and power plays within justice systems. While our contemporary monster unit was primarily concerned with social engineering and symbiotic relationships between the construction and treatment of the "other", this unit, centered around two separate texts that both presented murders, invited students to examine roles, implications, and interpretations of justice. Essential questions that arose during our class work were: How do we develop our beliefs regarding justice and punishment? What role does justice play in our lives? When justice fails, what options do we have? How is justice served or not served in literature? Queries originating from student work and discussions centered on whether or not social monsters receive different forms of justice than do non-monsters.

**Texts used**

Students were given the opportunity to choose between two pre-chosen cannon texts: Camus' *The Stranger* and Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Their choice resulted in the reorganization of literature circles. The groups continued to rely on Daniel's literature circle roles, though in a less structured manner. Group reading assessments were given twice during this unit, during which each group received a different question and was asked to respond as a group in writing. The questions required a synthesis of thought, and were not recall questions. During the assessments, the groups were encouraged to use all group literature circle notes, their novels, and to draw connections between Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and all other medias engaged with during that unit of study.

While reading the chosen texts, students examined images of Lady Justice. Images included editorial cartoons and tattoos. Students examined the pieces, drawing from methods developed as a class during our art views, as well as our image analysis of monsters. While the act of tattooing and creating visual sat-
ire are not generation specific, the images for this unit were created within the last decade and, as a result, did serve as our primary popular culture texts for the unit.

The other popular culture text incised in this unit was the television show “COPS”, which chronicles the real lives of police officers in various cities chasing down offenders of crime, most often making arrests. The quality of crime illustrated on this show generally falls between drug offenses, domestic assaults, and prostitution. This show was chosen as a popular culture text, not for its popularity amongst this age group, but for its portrayal of real-life, real-time power struggles within the notion of justice. The naturalistic power structures illustrated by this show include relationships between the police officers who are meant to personify and uphold justice, and the offenders who have slighted the notion of justice. Production details, pointed out by students during discussions, included the narrative power of the police versus the offenders. Students observed that the audience is inducted to the experience through the eyes of the police rather than through the eyes of an objective party or the offender. Several students noted that the police most often commented on the nature of their jobs, the nature of justice, and the difficulties of enacting justice. This rhetorical quality runs parallel with the opening of Shelley’s Frankenstein, during which the reader is initially exposed to Victor’s monologues regarding the nature of being a scientist, the nature of life, and the difficulties of enacting life. More often than not the offenders, after some frantic and unilaterally unsuccessful runaway attempts, succumb to woeful laments once arrested. In terms of rhetorical decisions, the producers of the show successfully enforce the notion that justice and the enforcement of justice are constructive acts for both those with power and those without. Students throughout class discussions and their personal media productions challenged this notion of purely constructive justice.

**Student Deconstruction**

While reading the novels, literature circles focused on specific literary characteristics of each novel through daily letters (delivered in envelopes) from the teacher with suggested questions and queries. They also participated in whole class discussions during which the students described the books they were reading and demonstrated critical theory frameworks within their text. The whole group discussions were geared toward finding important commonalities in the two texts as well as important differences. While in our first unit of study, students considered Shelley’s novel the reality, this time around students were much
more aware of the process of delivering a story and spent a great deal of energy probing the author's rhetorical and contextual decisions.

While examining the various images of Lady Justice, students questioned the relationship between the artist, the created Lady Justice image, and possible environmental and societal factors contributing to both the image and their reception of the image. Within the second day of examinations, students noted in class discussions connections with feminist ideologies and the historical portrayal of justice as a female, but were unable to make specific claims as to rationale.

**Student Re(constructions)**

Students worked individually to create Lady Justice caricatures depicting the role of justice in their lives and the elusive nature of justice in general. The medium of caricatures was initially introduced as a simplistic way of describing Wollstonecraft's resistance to imbalanced perceptions of women, as well as pointing out the polar visual representations of Shelley's monster that we had encountered. Students demonstrated a variety of responses to caricatures, and only a handful felt that they could serve as methods of social construction. The majority of students felt that they were, in general, light-hearted comics harboring inoffensive intentions.

For this media production project, students relied on the medium of caricatures to advance their critical thinking about justice within their lives and supported their visual representations with paragraph explications. The caricatures included illustrations of teachers and administrators in addition to a few more abstract personifications of justice. The overwhelming majority of caricatures showed a specific person or issue. Three caricatures exposed a more global worldview. In describing the student work, the terms localized and globalized are used to describe the creator's proximity to justice. Localized portrayals use first person pronouns (I, we, us) to describe the justice caricature while globalized portrayals used third person pronouns (she, they, and it). While both variety of caricatures present critical thinking, they are distinctly different and by examining trends within each variety carefully, shared preferences for critical theory emerged. Five student caricatures were chosen for close analysis based on the diversity they represented. All five caricatures can be found on page 66.
The frequent use of the phrase “usual suspects” (a total of 9 out of 17 students who turned in the assignment used this phrase), points to the application of self-analysis within the greater context of popular culture analysis. These students were synthesizing personal experiences, literature experiences and group discussions.

Devon’s caricature of lady justice (Figure 3), one of the more abstract and globalized re(constructions), depicts an expressionless, handless female figure, half gray and half white situated just behind a bloody sword. Basic art therapy texts teach us that figures drawn without hands connotes a feeling of helplessness, a sentiment echoed in his accompanying written narrative, “[d]ropping her things represents how justice has given up on itself”. It should also be noted that the figure has no feet and further, there seems to be no ground that she stands on.

Devon goes on to write about the symbolism of the color as a representation of justices’ “good side...along with bad side”. Within this seemingly simple portrayal of Lady Justice, Devon locates his perspective as an uncensored analysis. While he argued that, “Justice has given up on itself”, he moves beyond a simple assessment of condemnation resting upon an abstract, critical, and messy look at the complicated nature of Justice. His analysis of Justice suggests that while there is an inherent goodness and badness, a tension resulting in such a finite dichotomy posed too many difficulties Devon explores this perceived dichotomy through a bloody sword and other symbols which signify a loss of purpose, “Taking all these symbols together shows how justice no longer stands for the rights of people”.

Devon’s caricature was not alone in its depiction of an entirely ineffective Lady Justice, though it was the only one that suggested an inherent problem with the notion of Justice. Another student re(construction) of Lady Justice, revealed an external source of Justice’s ruin. Summer presented a feminist critique of Lady Justice (Figure 4), reminiscent of previous Wollstonecraft discussions, arguing that by using a male figure rather than a female allowed a more statistically accurate representation of the actual justice system.

Summer also refuted that traditional image of justice as a lady through the use of yellow rays, which she described as a, “shine of bright light around this picture to portray that “lady justice” is just an act and is looked upon way to highly”. These two rhetorical decisions suggest that Summer understood the male-heavy topography of law making and law enforcement as a source of contamination. Her written cri-
tique was advanced through several other symbols, most notably the figures' disproportionate head which she used, "because, stereotypically, males of higher classes are very full of themselves". At this point in the re(construction) Summer is expanding her feminist framework into one of financial hegemony as well, by observing economic barriers in place in the justice system. In the process of presenting her caricature to the class, another student noted that the scales looked more like a brassiere. While Summer reported that this was an unintended outcome, she did theorize about how this could advance her critique further. Like Devon's caricature, Summer's was a more global critique of Justice.

As mentioned previously, the majority of student re(constructions) presented a more localized examination of justice. Within this majority, students took big ideas such as injustice and located their own experiences within that construct, generally focusing on the school domain. The following three caricatures explore a similar perspective, on which can be characterized by a disappointment with school administration's handling of student affairs. Nonani's caricature (figure 5), depicting a young lady justice being held by a leash, locates the source of contamination outside of the immediate administrator's hands.

Nonani writes, "her blindfold is dirty. This symbolizes that justice at Cathedral High School is not all that clean and pure....Lady Justice is on a leash being held by the "people at the top," which symbolizes that the people at the top control all of justice at Cathedral high school, whether it is following rules or giving out punishments". Nonani's caricature is interesting because it shows a justice that is being controlled by other humans. In this sense, her perspective can be located within a classic critical theory framework as she implies the ruin of justice within a hierarchical system. Nonani's caricature also suggests a sense of disappointment with the ruined justice. This is suggested through the crossed out school insignia located on the bosom of the justice figure. While seemingly minute, this detail resonates with the notion that students expect democratic and just places of learning and that they notice and are affected by unbalanced systems. Nonani's was one of the nine caricatures illustrating the concept of "usual suspects". In this drawing the usual suspects are located in the locked jail cell that is tipping the scales. Nonani asserts that the size of the cell is significant as there is no room for these suspects, "that always get blamed for trouble caused even when they had nothing to do with it", to move or change.

The phrase "usual suspects" appears in both Jackie's and Milo's caricatures (figures 6 and 7). Similar to Nonani's caricature, Jackie depicts a female figure meant to represent an actual person within the
The following figures (3-7) are student caricatures of Lady Justice.

Figure 3. Devon's caricature

Figure 4. Summer's caricature

Figure 5. Nonani's caricature

Figure 6. Jackie's caricature

Figure 7. Milo's caricature
administration. Jackie writes, "The woman in the picture with her arms crossed represents our principle and the scissors signify some of the unfair cutbacks she has made towards us as a school. Her crossed arms show that when she makes decisions good or bad, she sticks with them." In addition to critiquing a localized carrier of justice as being obstinate, Jackie also asserts that the principal purposely misrepresents herself. This critique is illustrated through the nametags, which say both "victim" and "slave". There are several layers of analysis represented by these nametags. Jackie argues that the principle claims to be a slave to inflexible rules and at times a victim to her superiors. On a different note, Jackie argues that the nametags also signify that "a lot of friends of mine are victimized by some of the faculty. They are targeted because they are dubbed as "usual suspects" when things go wrong. Some of the rules that were enforced are dubbed as "usual suspects" when things go wrong. Some of the rules that are unreasonable and I feel that we are slaves because we can't really argue with administration and we have to accept the rules or face the punishment". In this dualistic explication Jackie presents a description of a cyclically oppressive system of justice in which no ne particular person is really responsible and more importantly, no one person or party enjoys an untainted justice.

Milo hones in on the concept of usual suspects in his localized caricature of Lady Justice, by presenting a staunch juxtaposition of two "usual suspects" and one "friend". It can be assumed that the figure wearing the friend tee-shirt, is a friend of justice and is, as a result, getting away with smoking a cigarette and wearing a hat, two activities not allowed in this school. The usual suspects both have their hands in the air and undeniably frightened looks on their faces. The justice figure, which looks remarkably like the statue of liberty, is wielding what looks like a large AK-47 assault rifle with one hand and balancing a scale with the other. The scale is labeled "control versus judgment." This critique suggests that justice has gotten out of control and is more obsessed with the act of controlling others than with the act of judging. In his written narrative, Milo writes that the usual suspect figures and the friend figure were drawn to, "be little kids because little kids don't have any control just like we don't either against the administration who is supposed to be fair." The usual suspect figures and the friend figure are constructed without bodies, in comparison with the justice figure that has both bulging muscles and very rigid bone structure. While Milo did not remark on the lack of feet for the justice figure, several other students remarked that this could
mean that justice in "not really grounded in anything at all". These remarks advanced Milo's localized critique of justice into a global, epistemological argument similar to the ones presented in Devon's critique.

During discussions, cursory relationships regarding power of perspective were drawn between the reality program "COPS", and the act of creating justice caricatures. Within these discussions students were making connections from small pieces to larger ideas and back again. Several students noted that the framing of criminals in the show "COPS" could be interpreted as the antitheses of Mersault from Camus' *The Stranger*. Role-play was initiated as a way to further connections between our popular cultural deconstructions and re(constructions) and our traditionally literary texts.

The court room enactments began as near perfect mimeographs of the popular television program "Law and Order" but softened into philosophical affairs during which students mulled over the nature of the choice, the environmental and social factors associated with the offender, the implications of murder, and the act of reasoning. Students felt unequivocally that Mersault, Camus' existentialist character who commits murder and points to the sun as a catalyst of poor decision making, should be excused from punishment because the act of murder, "didn't mean the same thing to him as it did to the people in the room" (Taped Seminar, October 3, 2005). Components of his personality that students harped on included his inability to appropriately attach to his girlfriend, and his blasé reaction to his mother's death. On the other hand students felt that Lennie had been constructed as a social monster from the beginning of his life span, and that Curly's wife, his victim, deserved to die based on her thoughtless perpetuation of the unbalanced woman. Within this argument, students were using Wollstonecraft's feminist ideology as a framework for making sense of characters. Producing oral defenses provided students with the opportunity to move away from the more simplistic critical framework they had relied on. Instead of forming and sticking to the altruistic comments that so characterized the contemporary monster portfolios, such as "because of ____ , ____ is a monster", students exhibited higher order thinking and were able to verbally navigate multiple potential factors. This flexibility could be, in part, a result of the medium used for expression. Speaking, juxtaposed with the act of writing, felt less restrictive for the students and resulted in greater shifts in thinking.

While the court room enactments were our final re(constructions for this unit, the students exhibited a propensity for synthesis in the final assessment. Each student received a different query for the final task
associated with this unit. The queries responded to the books chosen by their literature circles, as well as some of the individual work turned in. Students who seemed particularly interested in the notion of existentialism were given queries that asked them to apply existential philosophical pinnings to art slides previously examined and or themselves. Students who had shown interest in the idea of social engineering were asked to project relationships between justice and “social monsters” in their personal experiences and in literature. Students who demonstrated a propensity for arguing on the nature of justice were asked to delineate errors in our contemporary portrayals and perceptions of justice by using examples form popular culture. The final assessments were riddled with examples from contemporary monster portfolios, art slides, and advanced various critical frameworks encountered so far in class. Many students presented changes in their own thinking and were able to locate reasons for shifts in their perception. This sort of cognitive reflection, supported by both popular cultural texts and traditionally literary texts, served as a significant finale for this unit.

Unit 3: Diamond encrusted Burberry socks and other 21st century decadence

Frankenstein was chosen as a “safe” initial text for critical theory because there was little chance that students would immediately draw connections between themselves and the fantastical characters of the text. Without drawing immediate connections, the students were less likely to resist the nature of critical thought on developmental principles. Our third unit of study advanced a keystone belief of critical theory, that affluence contributes to and regulates power. In general this unit explored the use of affluence to consume, perpetuate, or deny identities. The title, Diamond encrusted Burberry socks and other 21st century decadence, provided students, very familiar with the luxurious powerhouse company Burberry, with a visual satire of decadence.

This unit, concerned with the qualities and treatment of wealth in texts, presented limitations for this group of participants, because of their financial position in society acknowledging their own oppression as a result of ideological controls of upper classes, it can be argued that those of privilege are least willing to explore issues of hegemony in which they sense imminent feelings of personal culpability. This was, particularly of issue for this unit with this group of private school students. While Frankenstein felt safe for the
students, who could relate on a subjective but not definite level, this unit required students to critically examine their own spheres of influences.

It was important to include self-analysis in this unit without alienating the students based on aspects of their lives that they have no control over (parent’s wealth). I wanted to frame our studies in a way that encouraged open and uninhibited critical analysis of popular culture texts as well as create opportunities for examining how we position ourselves, i.e. accept or resist, texts portraying affluence.

Essential questions that emerged during our work included: How is wealth treated in popular cultural texts? How are our beliefs regarding wealth and poverty influenced, supported, or contradicted by popular culture texts? How is wealth treated in traditional literary texts? How does the presence of wealth or lack of wealth affect allocation of justice? Queries originating from student work and discussions centered on whether or not social monster construction is affected by wealth.

Texts Used

In order to evoke a shared discourse on affluence, I initiated the discussion of wealth through analysis of “crunk” culture, a relatively new and constantly evolving branch of hip-hop. The rationale for using the word ‘crunk’ in the curriculum stemmed from the shared geographical isolation amongst the students—I assumed they had no personal rich experiences with mainland hip-hop culture, but also knew they had constant and almost ritualistic access to images of the culture. Their isolation from but accumulated shared knowledge about made it a "safe" place to initiate a critical conversation about power structures in society as they relate to affluence and consumption of identities. While perceptions of and presentations of crunk have changed in the past ten years, the popularized consumption of the culture has steadily increased. While many of the students involved with this curriculum claim to enjoy hip-hop culture, social attributes of what they categorized as crunk culture are restricted to their social lives. The inaccessibility of crunk culture is compounded by the school’s conservative uniform and their shared geographical isolation (island living). Because of media, students are highly aware of social attributes of crunk decadence, but do not have family based experiences with them resulting in a ideal opening forum for a discussion on exaggerated wealth that would eventually lead to self analysis. They do not, as a whole, see their appropriation of
various components of the culture as acts of consumption made possible by affluence. They also do not see the impacts of their use of the culture as forms of hegemony.

While the choice to use crunk culture as a means of evoking dialogue was effective in gaining student's interest and focus, it was also problematic. On some level, I had, within the curriculum design connected Frankenstein's monster with participants of crunk culture. While using the separation between realms as a basis helping students locate themselves in response to texts, I was also perpetuating divides between cultural identities, disassociations, misappropriations, and contributing to the sense that it is alright to see "others" and entirely separate, and monaural and monstrous entities.

Later our work led to examining the mass appropriation and consumption of crunk, hip-hop or alternatively gangsta identities. Since its origins in the early 1970s, Rap and hip-hop have been of interest for Marxist scholars who note its role as a resistant text within society (Blair, 1993; Hanna, 1992; McLeod, 1999; Peterson & Berger, 1975; Sallach, 1974; Wicke, 1990). McLeod (1999) explored the concept of authenticity in regards to significant cultural symbols in hip-hop culture, noting dangers of assimilation as a response to mass production and commodification, or what Marx called alienation. Juxtaposing claims of authenticity and inauthenticity amongst members of the hip-hop community with the commercialization of hip-hop fashion, language, and symbols McLeod contends that identity dilemmas played out in the production of hip-hop (mainly resistance to dominant culture) sharply contrast with the identity dilemmas of mainstream listeners (mainly rebellion issues). Blair (1993) advances McLeod's framework for understanding authenticity claims within hip-hop, by connecting Gramsci's notion of hegemony, Marx's notion of alienation, and Gottdiener's model of mass culture with the development and commodification of hip-hop culture. Blair's work is significant in noting relationships between the production, commodification, and consumption of crunk identities, but does not explore the experiences of those appropriating hip-hop identities. Past work illuminating hip-hop as an important cultural text of resistance, supported the conceptual integration of hip-hop in this critical curriculum.

Initially we discussed images of wealth, decadence and extravagance through still images of contemporary music videos, advertisements for luxury products such as Burberry, Louis Vuitton, and Cadillacs. We stuck with our shared and practiced processes for image analysis and deconstructed the images in terms of maker, message, and receiver of message. This process most closely resembled the work with jus-
tice images in the unit *What's justice got to do with it?*

Later, popular culture texts were introduced through student preference and included a range of reality television programs depicting adolescent lives. These shows included “Laguna Beach” (MTV), “The Real World” (MTV), “Meet the Barkers” (MTV), “Newlyweds” (MTV), “The Bachelor” (ABC), “Junkyard Wars” (Discovery Channel), and “Real Life” (MTV).

A recent wave of reality television programming featuring the private lives of adolescents has the potential to affect how adolescents are perceived by adults, how adolescents understand their roles, and how current adolescents grapple with Elkind’s traditionally accepted theory of Imaginary Audience. These types of shows generally depict the day-to-day activities of adolescents outside of school environments including their friendships, romantic relationships, fights, and emotional breakdowns. Set to popular music and shot with catchy cinematography, these shows have captured the attention of adolescent viewers across the country, who tune in to watch a more glamorized version of their own lives. As a relatively new and widely used popular cultural text, with immeasurable impacts, ‘reading’ reality television programs, particularly the ones depicting adolescents, ought to be included in language arts curriculums.

*Student Deconstructions*

Seeing seemingly unrelated products as a manufactured nexus of wealth based epistemologies was a surprisingly expeditious process for these students who, even at first glance of the unit’s title, were eager to list examples of decadence. While they were able to easily locate biases within still images depicting wealth, they were reluctant to theorize about reasons behind, effects of images, and potential alternative readings of images.

Many students resisted advancing their observations, and appeared defensive. During a conversation about a print ad depicting the new line of Louis Vuitton handbags Jess remarked, “I could just say it’s bad but really I would wear it. Yeah I would buy it and so would my mom and it’s not bad because it’s cute”. Jess’ comment was not, in any way, out of the ordinary during our class discussions, though it is not characteristic of all perspectives shared. Several students shared that the images were exclusive and contributed to unreasonable goals. Nonani, for example, commented on the financial sacrifices indicated by such ownership.
"When you see it this ad like you want it even if you don't want to really admit you want it and most people if you think about it most of the world can't ever have this and really afford it unless I mean I could buy it if like I didn't eat out for a month or something but I mean most of us really can't be thinking about buying these things so I think they (the print ads) add to this race for nice things that never ends." (Personal Communication, Nonani).

In Nonani's exploration of the ad's impact she begins to locate herself in regard to both the implicit messages embedded in the ad as well as the world outside of her personal affluent sphere. Even though Nonani remarks that she, herself, could not afford to think about buying a bag like that, she conditions her assertion by stating, "I could buy it if like I didn't eat out for a month or something".

Students' written deconstructions of the still images were fascinating when compared with previous deconstructions of popular-media texts and art slides. In general, student deconstructions had begun with general observations or a listing of components and then moved on to discussions of the effects of these components. Particularly in the last unit, student deconstructions were more theoretical than detail oriented. In these deconstructions, however, many students avoided advancing their observations. One student who had previously engaged in a feminist framework was able to take observations to a different level. Summer noted in a homework assignment that she thought the cherries in the new Louis Vuitton ads might symbolize virginity. "The pattern is all letters, the L and the V, and then there are these pairs of cherries all over the bags. The L and the V are everywhere. Then there are the cherries in between. The cherries made me think about virginity and how people say that when a girl loses her virginity then her cherry was popped. I think in some ways they are using the cherries to show sex and how money can buy sex". I found Summer's inquiry interesting, but when asked if she wanted to bring forth her idea in a class discussion she declined remarking that everyone would think she was being too serious and uptight.

The clearest examples of critical thought were in response to images highlighting "bling". Bling-bling, a phrase initially coined by rapper Cash Money in the late 1990s has recently been added to the online 20th edition of the Oxford Dictionary. The following image, added by an anonymous contributor to www.urbandictionary.com, depicts a man wearing "bling" a word characterizing loads of expensive, diamond encrusted jewelry.
In response to these images, students explored the man's accessories as an extreme illustration of his wealth. Students uniformly interpreted his attire as a "statement on who he is and how much power and money he has". Unlike responses to the Louis Vuitton advertisements, students deconstructing this still image did not locate themselves in response to the product at all. No students commented on whether or not they would engage in this type of luxury, or any sort of conflict presented by this sort of product. Two students drew comparisons between the luxury presented through this image and Gatsby's extravagant yellow car, a significant insight. Ben wrote, "bling at first was cool but now it's to the extreme and it's like a joke to people not wearing it so at first it was a way for some people of that culture to show that they have money too and can buy nice things but now it's almost in a way turned against them and they are turned into "social monsters"" (Personal communication, Ben).

Student re(constructions)

Once these images were considered, we redirected our analysis to reality television, with a distinct emphasis on reality television programs that portray adolescents with wealth and power. Even though students were responsible for choosing their own shows, the deconstruction process became more tenuous for students and much more personal, a phenomenon that contributed to more resistance.
It became clear that requiring students to watch reality programming in an analytical manner was an encroachment on student personal space, time and personal domain. Of the students in the class only 89% completed the assignment in totality. Student noted the following reasons for not completing the assignment: “not having time to watch television for school purposes”, “not understanding how to analyze reality television”, and “not wanting to ruin a favorite experience” (Teacher Field Notes, October 4, 2005).

Student comments from the end of the trimester, open ended survey implied that they experienced critical pedagogies concerned with “pleasure” literacies, in this case reality television focused on adolescents, as either intrusions or attacks on their fandom. One student commented in class, “I like watching it [Laguna Beach] and I don’t think it’s fair to have to watch it for class and pick it apart”.

The students who did complete the assignments watched an average of three hours of reality television and completed deconstruction logs. The logs asked students to explore rhetorical decisions on the part of the narrators, producers, advertisers and actants.

Mary: The disposable celebrities are put into situations and from there, make up the show. It’s not really reality because the producers right the shows. The producers tape the lives of these people for a whole day and end up showing only 20 minutes of their day. Making it as interesting as possible...For some reason, society is so interested in other peoples’ lives, but not our own. People like to know and hear about other peoples dramas, but not their own. If it’s someone else’s problem, they have less to worry about for themselves. You don’t have to worry about their dramas, but you just like to know them. (Mary, Reality Television Logs, 10/24/2005).

Students working with logs attempted to apply the same forms of image analysis and deconstruction practiced throughout the semester to reality programming. Results were discussed in a seminar format. During the seminar, students noted that adolescents seemed like constructed social monsters, that there were unbalanced images of justice in the shows, and that the editors and producers had the majority of control over what the viewers know and see. Editing powers became a generative theme contributed to discussions led by queries into the nature of reality, epistemology, and ontology.

Students also drew explicit connections between Nick Carroway, the narrator of The Great Gatsby and narrators of reality television programs. Student work indicates that this exercise served as a forum in which students treated the popular cultural texts and traditional texts in similarly critical ways. For instance, Mailee wrote about similarities and differences between Nick Carroway and Kirstin from the show Laguna Beach on MTV:
Even though Nick is the narrator he should not be completely trusted. On the first page he boasts about how he doesn’t judge people yet he contradicts himself throughout the story which reveals his subjective point of view... Nick admires Gatsby, and at the same time criticizes Gatsby’s love of wealth and luxury throughout the book. Nick contradicts himself because he fails to admit his desire for the same lifestyle... In the beginning of each episode of Laguna Beach, Kristin opens up the show by recapping what important events happened in the previous episode and what is going to happen. The editors/producers of Laguna Beach are hidden narrators and “guide” Kristin to address what they feel are important...Kirsten is used to address dramatic events that will definitely catch a viewer’s attention and even exaggerate the situation...She is used just like Nick is used in the Great Gatsby. If another character were to tell the story then the story line could be complexly altered.

Mailoo, argues that Kirstin and Nick Carroway are both “used” to “address dramatic events that will catch a viewer’s attention”. Within Mailoo’s written response, she explores the construction of narration and the rhetorical similarities between two very different mediums (television and fiction).

Initially, the student (re)construction project for this unit was to have students use the popular profile website Myspace to create profiles for characters in Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby. This task promised to provide an opportunity for students to truly reflect on rhetorical decisions they have made on their own profiles in addition to synthesizing and navigating knowledge made and shared during their deconstructions of framing choices present in reality television. The initial objective was for students to work in teams of two to create two profiles, including a photograph, a list of hobbies, affiliations, dislikes (all regular features on the site) for one character. One profile would need to illustrate the character from Fitzgerald’s frame including historical context. The other profile would illustrate a time shift. How would this particular character be during 2005? After creating profiles students would have the opportunity to collect ‘friends’ just as they normally would on Myspace and post “shout-outs” in character on the various profiles. Upon introduction of the assignment, students were already expressing flexible thinking by noting limitations to the project. With student feedback, outlines for the project expanded to include a profile for both Fitzgerald the author and Fitzgerald a hypothetical reality television casting agent.

Within two days of introducing the potential project, the Technology department sent out a school-wide email, endorsed by the administration, noting that anyone visiting Myspace on school computers would lose computer privileges for a period of time. The decision was based in part on teacher concerns regarding lap top based classes for the freshmen. As a result, we had to pass on the opportunity to engage in
this activity. Instead, I decided to push back our exercise in re(construction) for the next unit and aim for a synthesis of generative themes present in the two units.

Unit 4 Hester, You don't have to turn out that red light

The foundation of this unit was investigating how all individuals are subject to being defined by their situation in regard to others, on both physical and unseen levels. The intentions in terms of thought within this unit hold a great similarity with that harnessed in the primary unit, Contemporary Monster. The greatest exception is that for this unit of study, we omitted the uniqueness of the "other's" manifestation and revealed its widespread and most ordinary human forms.

We began the unit by drawing a connection between our recent conversations regarding the 'framing' of reality through popular cultural texts such as reality television and Hawthorne's presentation of Hester's reality in the iconic American novel, The Scarlet Letter. Our essential questions included: How does Hawthorne frame or present Hester's situatedness in regard to others? How is Hester's role within the community advanced by Hawthorne's rhetorical devices? What impact does Hawthorne's rhetorical devices have on the reader's understanding of Hester's role? Queries that originated from students were concerned with the relationship between depictions of romantic love in popular cultural texts and the situatedness of the constructed "other".

Texts Used

Teaching The Scarlet Letter is often a laborious act, not for lack of rich content but rather as a result of emotive and social distances between the text and the students. While the storyline's classic references to gender roles, nature of punishment, and, of course, an emblematic favorite of adolescent audiences: sex, the language is categorically heavy and Hawthorne's framing and other rhetorical choices frequently alienates the average adolescent reader. As the final unit for this course, it was important to integrate popular culture texts that the students had become accustomed to, provide opportunities to create alternate medias, as well as reinforce traditional literary deconstruction practices as a way of balancing the approaches used throughout the course. Since some students interpreted the previous unit regarding affluence, adolescents and reality television as an infringement on their personal domains I attempted to reposition myself in a
more traditional manner for this final unit in hopes that students' sensibilities and desire for familiarity could be honored while still advancing a reflexive critical curriculum.

In other words, the previous three units had a central essence grounded in critical theory, but this unit was presented to students without a predetermined critical framework for interpretation. This scaffolding served to honor the students’ growth as critical theorists, and provide room for alternative perspectives that had not yet been discovered. Because of this new layout, media creation immediately followed initial literary analysis rather than coming later in the course work.

In addition to reading Hawthorne’s, The Scarlet Letter students also engaged with a series of advertisements that depicted women in various physical positions. Students were asked to collect a couple of print ads or photographs that illustrated a female figure in relation to others (either literally present in the advertisement or having an implied presence). These popular cultural texts included advertisements for specific clothing brands, television shows, films, cigarettes, alcohol, shoes, food items, and accessories. Texts that students provided were selected from a variety of magazines and journals, which can be categorized as having either celebrity content, teen issue content, sports content, technology content, and world content. The majority of texts provided by students were from magazines having celebrity, teen issue, and sport content.

**Student Deconstruction**

A group reading of the first two chapters, during which I modeled strategies for reading comprehension, supported our preliminary inquiry regarding rhetorical choices. Students seemed most interested in the concept of framing and perspective after our reading, particularly ways in which Hester, the protagonist, was introduced to the reader in juxtaposition with the gaggle of condemning onlookers.

Within our first group conversation students drew connections between the physical separation between Hester and the crowd and an implied ideological and moral separation swelling between them. Students were quick to detect Hawthorne’s rhetorical choices here and noted juxtapositions with symbolism (e.g. the rose and the prison door).

These observations resonated with several student comments from reality television deconstruction packets. Ten students noted the use of first person narrative in the introductions to reality programs featur-
ing adolescent life. These students noted that the most popular shows feature one teenager in the begin-
ning of each episode talking about all the other people in the show. Ben advanced these basic observations
by tracing the effects of such a framing technique in his deconstruction packet, “Kristen is shown in the
beginning as being the sort of ruler of the pack because the camera shows how hot she is by focusing in on
her best features and then we just hear her voice while she talks about the other people in the show. Her lips
aren’t moving, which makes it almost like a “god” voice and those listening take whatever she says as the
utmost truth” (Ben). Students were locating patterns in social organization through the analysis of reality
television and *The Scarlet Letter*. Students observed that isolation of individuals happen on a school level
through gossip, and in popular cultural texts through framing techniques.

*Student re(construction)*

In response to this located generative them, an i-movie project was initiated as the media production
portion for the unit so that students could reconstruct their interpretations of social isolation into a new me-
dia. The primary objective of the i-movie was for students to work together across literature circle bounda-
ries, to create a brief film interpretation of Hawthorne’s framing choices in the opening two chapters. I-
movie, is software that allows users to make high quality, edited and polished films with great ease.

There were unexpected production choices made by each group. Group A created a silent modern
movement film that focused primarily on the symbolism of “the rose in the midst of a dark, gloomy group
of people” (Summer, personal communication). The group felt that the rose represented Hester’s isolation
from the group, but also her powerful position as a result of the isolation. The black and white film depicted
a group of students wearing darker clothes huddled together with gloomy faces. As the students singularly
filed away from the eye of their huddle, the film shifted to a color palate and a makeshift rose, constructed
from colorful sweatshirts left on student desks, was revealed. The film’s brevity, simplicity, and lack of
sound contributed to the impact of their final production.

Group A created a reclamation of “other” through semiotic film production. They presented the rose
as a hopeful symbol of the other. In their construction, they acknowledged a duality of truth. First, they
acknowledge that individuals are in part constructed through the way others position them and project their
perception on to them. This concept was illustrated in the film in the first few frames, when students in dark
garb were huddled together blocking in the rose. The rose was, in this point in the film, being defined and limited by the others. However, this group also noted an exception to this concept. Group A present the idea that individuals can exist in a framework, in which they are defined by community’s visions but at the same time individuals can become cognizant of this subjugation and reclaim a meaning of themselves apart from others. Hester, symbolized in the film through the rose, reaches her transformative truth in the last frame. At this point the black and white rose emerges, full of color.

Group B’s production was a transposition of the novel’s initial framing into contemporary language. The group chose one actress to portray Hester and the remaining members acted as the gaggle with one narrator in the background. The group replaced Hawthorne’s word “hussy” with “slut” and also added expletives. The film depicted a young confused Hester pacing back and forth through the school hallways gripping a baby-doll while the remaining students followed her around calling out “dead slut walking”. At the summation of the film, the Hester character kneeled down while two male students stood in front of her. As she was on her knees with the young men’s backs to the cameras, this portion could be interpreted in at least two manners: either she was pretending to perform oral sex as a way to emphasize the gaggle’s perception of her as a promiscuous woman, or the young men were pretending to urinate on her to emphasize their perception.

Group B re-erected the context in which Hester had been positioned and therefore defined in relation to others. In contrast to group A, group B sustained the idea that a persons’ worth and identity are upheld by their position within a community. While group B attempted to produce a critical media based response, they instead maintained the very phenomenon that Hawthorne himself was commenting on.

Though aesthetically insulted by their media production, I could at some level understand the students’ rationalizations regarding their production choices. Students responded that they felt as if after our in-depth looks at unbalanced portrayals of females in the media and more recent examination of the editing powers of reality programming, I would be able to “handle” their extreme interpretation. Other students noted that they simply got carried away with the equipment and did not expect an audience for the film before editing would take place. The majority of students belonging to Group B felt angry about my disappointment.
Later interviews with a young woman acting in the film illustrates that it was a transformational
experience for her,

"I thought at first it was funny and okay I mean there are so many worse awful
things that we see all the time on TV and in movies, this was nothing but then af­
ter everything calmed down and I knew we weren’t going to get in lots of trouble
I could think about it differently and think that I wouldn’t want to do that again
and be in that position again and also that it was not a real portrayal of what Hes­
ter was like at all. So it’s kind of embarrassing but also interesting how I agreed
to that just because they were my friends and because I guess I thought it was
normal because we see those kinds of things all the time so that changed what I
thought was normal but when I stop to see um to think about it I can change what
I think". (Personal Communication, Leliani, November 3, 2005)

This project posed a great deal of limitations, but not of the sort expected. I anticipated resistance to
Hawthorne’s text, as I had previously experienced as a teacher. I had not, however, anticipated such a rift
between teacher and students. In Ira Shor’s text, When Students Have Power: Negotiating Authority in a
Critical Pedagogy, he describes a pivotal moment with his community college students during which they
work together to remove attendance policies. Shor describes the dilemma of wanting to continue on with
his critical pedagogy without abandoning his acquired sense of what works in education and without relin­
quishing all control. All trimester we worked to renegotiate dialogical power structures associated with
knowledge making and knowledge sharing, and here just at the summation of our work we were knitted
into a quintessential power struggle steeped in questions about modesty, media ethics, and freedom of ex­
pression. The irony was astounding.

While the filming project was thorny, and created moments of tension in a previously unified group,
it also opened the opportunity for us to examine how sex and illustrations of ‘sexiness’ are used as tools of
positioning individuals within communities. This was a valuable heuristic and allowed us to spend the re­
main ing few days of class drawing connections with both the popular cultural texts and traditional literary
texts that we had engaged with during prior units. Students examined previous texts for examples of indi­
viduals affected, positioned or otherwise constructed by a monolithic ideal of genders, specifically socie­
ties’ confusion of gender and sex. In this regard students quickly weaned in Wollstonecraft’s argument re­
garding sexual freedom of women. Students examine images of sexual piety in juxtaposition with images
of demonized promiscuity. As students in a parochial school, this train of thought lead many to apply criti­
cal frameworks to their own faith via a close examination of appropriations of Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene in various traditional and popular cultural texts, an unexpected outcome.

Analysis of student work from each of the four units shows similarities in the ways participants localized critical theory within familiar contexts (school life, home life, social life). There was also evidence of an increase in critical thinking present in many of the student re(constructions). Student response to a critical curriculum based on popular cultural texts were varied; evidence of student resistance and student engagement are significant to this study. In addition, shifts in teacher and student dynamics are telling implications of both a critical curriculum and a curriculum of popular cultural texts and practices. Overall, the student work indicates that using critical theory as a way to "read" popular cultural texts, resulted in significant changes in student epistemologies.

The final media construction project of the curriculum, podcasting, was completed during the last week of the curriculum and served as a final forum for student response to texts. Five student podcasts, chosen for the diversity of topics are discussed in the following chapter. Chapter 5, a discussion about Podcasting with adolescent learners is offered and includes explorations into the students' experiences with the process as well as interpretations of their final podcasts.
CHAPTER 5: PODCASTING WITH ADOLESCENT LEARNERS

Up to this point, I have argued for an accepted continua literacy perspective rather than a dichotomous one within language arts settings. Rather than positioning various literacy practices on a hierarchical spectrum, in which some practices are deemed safe, productive and school worthy, while others are treated as detrimental or, perhaps at a less extreme degree, as superficial entertainment pursuits, I have asserted that by examining literacy practices for their emotive, psychological, developmental, social, and cultural values, their position within learning situations is solidified. From this perspective, all literacy practices, whether traditional or popular cultural, offer something of value. For the adolescent user, the opportunity to explore, examine, commit or resist alternative identities is most commonly presented in burgeoning popular cultural literacy practices and texts. Identity has real consequences and trying to develop one's identity through both fixed and fluid practices is an apposite response to edifying opportunities presented through technologically mediated popular cultural literacies. However beneficial there were pitfalls to this work, which included momentary tensions between students and teacher and occasional student resistance to particular texts and practices. This chapter provides an description and analysis of student podcasts and responds to the third primary research question of this study:

4) How do adolescent students experience the use of alternative student production (podcasting) as a replacement for traditional forms of student expression?

The personal narrative has been, in general, commonly used in language arts courses as a way to encourage students to use literacy as a tool for identity play in terms of the empathetic reading of various traditional literary texts, as well through the construction of personal memoirs. Within formal educational settings, the personal narrative has been a literacy practice historically entrenched in the visual realm of communicative practices. The personal narrative approach has a distilled role in the course. Students generally are asked to read cannon texts in search of humanistic qualities. In this sense, students are expected and trained to read with an empathetic eye. On the other hand, students are frequently asked to construct per-
sonal memoirs or narratives as writing assignments. These assignments allow students to communicate experiences while practicing creative and naturalistic writing. Both integrations of the personal narrative allow students to dabble in identity work. While reading with an empathetic eye, students are able to form or resist alliances with particular characters or settings, while simultaneously focusing on the self as a relational being to others. Similarly, writing the personal narrative allows the student to construct the self creatively with an intended audience.

Various technological advancements and ensuing collective shifts in contemporary literacy practices have been catalysts to augmented pedagogical potentials for the personal narrative. These new potentials have not yet been fully capitalized upon in formal learning environments. As discussed previously, popular cultural literacy practices are extensive and inclusive of visual, aural, video and combinations of the aforementioned texts. The present opportunity to grow our standard use of the personal narrative in formal language arts settings is ripe, but we must also ask ourselves, before diving head first into shiny waters, if the various new communicative technologies are simply equivalent linguistic methods for serving old purposes (Burns, 2006). If for example, podcasting, blogging, and other technologically mediated popular cultural literacy practices, are simply new ways of doing something old than their integration into the traditional curriculum would be a lateral and relatively simple move. If, however, these popular cultural literacy practices have affected collective senses of what it means to be the creator and the receiver, then more intense research needs to be conducted.

The work here, in which students were asked to create podcasts, of subjects of their choosing, as a synthesizing literacy assignment, rather than a traditional essay response, suggests that podcasting is not merely a reincarnation of the writing process. While requiring similar steps for construction as writing a narrative might, podcasting also required students to examine the intended audience in a more ingenious manner. Unlike the traditional use of personal narrative in classroom settings, podcasting provides opportunity for literally a limitless audience in comparison with one teacher and grader.

Narratives in general, and podcasting in specific, are conduits by which the creator's private self is made public. In sharing their constructed podcasts, semiotic extensions of their selves, adolescent creators were investing in imminent peer feedback (both anonymous and known). This anticipated feedback became for many creators the reason of investment, not just for the nature of feedback as a constructive force but
also for the immediacy, and great extent of the feedback. While I predicted the audience factor to affect student attitudes regarding the opportunity to create podcasts, the extent of it present in their choices was not anticipated.

Final student podcasts can be described in two ways. First, podcasts can be categorized in terms of the creator’s attitude toward intended audience. The majority of students were enthralled with the idea of having an audience. Entries in podcasting logs reveal that students spent a great deal of time predicting future listeners’ responses to their casts. These entries included comments as general as demographics and as specific as physical appeal of listeners. Eight students noted in their logs that someone listening to their podcast might email them and want to start a friendship or romantic relationship. Students, who made more than three comments about their future audience, in either logs or during class discussions, were categorized as audience seekers. Audience seekers shared similar attitudes regarding their intended audience, but their actual content varied. Audience seekers made decisions based on what they thought others wanted to hear. Their decisions were based a great deal on other podcasts that they had encountered.

Apart from audience seekers, some students, called audience resisters, reported feeling nervous and resistant to intended audiences. While audience seekers spent time in their logs and during discussions imagining positive outcomes in response to the consumption of their casts, these students spent a similar amount of time and energy worrying about negative audience reactions. Unlike the audience seekers, these students were not concerned with the Internet audience. Instead, they were primarily concerned with listeners known to them. In other words, these students were more concerned with the immediate audience, their school peers and teachers, than the future limitless audience. In the following log (figure 9), one student comments on her fear regarding known audience reactions to her cast.
This student entry is interesting in several ways. The student has scratched out two words on the eighth line, just before the word “play”. While the first word is entirely illegible, the second scratched out word seems to be “show”. In grappling for an accurate verb to use in describing the act of sharing her podcast, this writer revealed a particular connection between her work and her physical self. Even though podcasts are primarily aural texts, this writer felt that her physical self would be shared. Secondly, this entry is interesting because it shows that the writer feels more comfortable receiving feedback from strangers via the Internet than familiar peers in the classroom. This attitudinal trend was shared by most of the students resisting intended audiences, and is certainly indicative of the internalized nature of the Internet.

A great deal can be learned about composition construction by examining similarities and differences between the audience seekers and audience resisters. Constructing podcasts for this group became an activity mostly about audience. The students expressed both positive and negative beliefs regarding the reception of their final products, a trend that seems to be missing from traditional composition assignments, during which students are worried primarily about pleasing one audience member’s (teacher) explicit expectations. Both audience seekers and audience resisters were spending a great deal of time and energy thinking about the ways in which their final product would be received. Ultimately, this attraction to audience contributed to a sense of ownership among the students.

Aside from looking at student casts in terms of intended audience, they can also be describe in regards to the role they play in identity formation. Student podcasts were extensions of either the individual creator’s identity or, in the case of group casts, a shared identity. While cast contents differed a great deal,
they can all be understood in relation to a tacit purpose served. Podcasts served three primary identity tasks: social, cultural, and work/career identity. Table 6 previews student casts in terms of these three categories.

Table 6. Student final podcasts sorted by topic and identity code.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student(s)</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>CODE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lelian, Jackie, Maelee</td>
<td>School happenings, gossip, and critique of school policy</td>
<td>SOCIAL IDENTITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan</td>
<td>Critique of high school reading curriculum</td>
<td>SOCIAL IDENTITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devon, Thomas</td>
<td>Exploration into Chairman Moa, what it means to have Chinese descent in Hawaii.</td>
<td>CULTURAL IDENTITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milo</td>
<td>What the ukulele stands for, including remarks about social and cultural significance.</td>
<td>CULTURAL/SOCIAL IDENTITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elleen</td>
<td>Photography: Follows her initial steps into this art—her first borrowed “film camera”, her first developed pictures, and her personal responses to photographs.</td>
<td>SOCIAL INDENTITY/CAREER HOPES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following sections explore five student final podcasts, chosen because they represent a diversity of topics among all participants. Each section includes discussions about the work they did in order to prepare, comments regarding their topic choice, and the student’s reflections regarding their own podcast and the process of creation, as well as their relationship with the intended audience. Transcripts of each of the five podcasts discussed here can be found in Appendix C.

Milo

**Interviewer:** What are you? I mean what's the purpose of your cast? What do you want to say?

*Milo:* I guess basically just what I'm trying to say is like basically talk about the ukulele and you know teaching a few chords or whatever and analyzing different songs and that's all I guess like talk about what I know about the ukulele like about Troy Fernandez who I love like he's a god to me and to talk to all the Ukulele lovers out there because I totally love the ukulele and just for fun everything is so fun. I want to grow up being a master at playing it like Troy.

**Interviewer:** Why is what you're doing important? Like why do you talk about the Ukulele? What does it mean to you?
Enrolled in this course not out of a love for literature but because simply it was the only class that fit his schedule, Milo struggled throughout the trimester when it came to completing traditional writing tasks. He completed most, if not all reading tasks, participated readily in class discussions, seemed to enjoy deconstructing popular cultural literacy texts, and was a reliable literature circle participant, but when it came to writing a response, whether formal or spontaneous, Milo preferred to take a zero for the assignment. An entirely affable young man, never seen without an i-pod and a grin, Milo did what he had to do in order to pass particular courses, but was not, by any stretch of the word, rooted within the academic landscape.

His final podcast was a statement of cultural identity. It allowed him to be an expert on the ukulele and more importantly, to be a voice of his culture. He described his vision in two parts. First, creating a podcast about the ukulele allowed him to connect to his cultural roots. Milo described the ukulele as an emblem of his Hawaiian ancestry, stating several times that a love for the instrument is in his “blood”. The opportunity to engage in a culturally significant activity with a global audience contributed to Milo’s feelings of success. He reveled in the idea that imminent listeners would identify him as an informed ukulele player and a true Hawaiian.

Secondly, creating a podcast about the ukulele allowed Milo to work towards the dismantling of misconceptions of Hawaiian culture. In speaking about his podcast, Milo mentioned that individuals who are unfamiliar with the ukulele think of it as a pseudo-instrument or a toy. As a response to this misconception, Milo wanted to introduce the ukulele as a viable instrument to listeners.

Initially, Milo resisted the known audience. He wanted his cast to be published on the Internet prior to screening it among his peers. This could be because he did not think his classmates would receive him as an “expert” or an informed speaker on the subject of ukulele. In resisting the known audience, Milo was demonstrating a desire for a completely different discourse, one built solely on the content of the cast and void of other intimate details. Another reason he may have resisted this known audience is that one of his peers had more experience with the subject matter. Milo felt uncomfortable pursuing a voice of authority
when a member of his known audience had extensive knowledge of the ukulele. Milo’s resistance, based in part on questions over content authority, is indicative of tensions over teacher taught knowledge versus self constructed knowledge. In an interview, Milo frequently clarified his ukulele playing by claiming that he was self-taught and relied heavily on the radio as a tool for learning and practicing strum patterns. From Milo’s perspective, this self-constructed knowledge was more vulnerable to the teacher-shared knowledge that his peer had acquired. Ultimately, in creating a podcast about the Ukulele based solely on a desire to connect to his cultural roots, dismantle misconceptions of the ukulele, and pursue validation for self constructed and acquired knowledge, Milo advanced our critical theory curriculum by actualizing himself as a creator of knowledge through a popular cultural literacy practice.

Jonathan

“I have always loved to read, ever since I read Maniac Magee back in he sixth grade but lately I haven’t had the urge to read at all. I believe it’s because most books read in high school today seem so depressing. It may be just me who feels this way, but I doubt it. Teenagers are very emotional people and the events of everyday society directly affects their emotions so they don’t necessarily need more depressing books when they go to school”. (excerpt from Jonathan’s podcast)

Jonathan had a history with productive popular cultural literacy practices prior to this course, including the creation of websites and anime music videos. As a result, he had a sense of being worthy of a large unknown audience, which informed his attitude regarding the opportunity to create a podcast. He was, from the very beginning, an audience seeker. His cast, meant to critique high school reading curriculums, was both a statement of cultural identity in that he critiqued the greater culture of formal education, as well as an inquiry into career identity in that he was further exploring his understanding of education a field which he, “sometimes thinks about as a possibility, if acting doesn’t work out” (Jonathan, Personal Communication, 12/19/05).

This podcast allowed him to be an expert within the framework of his own experience. On a more abstract level, Jonathan critiqued teachers’ reluctance to include pleasure texts and domains in traditional learning settings. Ultimately, he was concerned with what he understood as an overwhelming presence of sullen novels in high school English classes and cited the typical adolescent’s vulnerability to emotions as a noteworthy reason to reconsider other, less morose, texts. Jonathan localized his own personal emotive
reactions to specific required texts, such as *When the Rainbow Goddess Weeps* (Cecilia Manguerra Brainard), and *Things Fall Apart* (Chinua Achebe), as evidence of reading curriculums that cause harm.

In order to prepare for his podcast, Jonathan read a collection of essays written by high school students on the topic of teacher student relationships and initiated dialogues with teachers both known and unknown to him via e-mail regarding reading curriculums. In his final product, Jonathan fused together previous class discussions regarding power structures, the collection of student essays, and his own personal experiences with previously required readings as a means to construct an explication of his language arts experiences.

"Since teachers get to make their reading curriculum for students, I want to make a curriculum for them. I've got the perfect book that all teachers should read and it's called *Talking Back what Students Know About Teaching* by some students in California. I'll give you one guess as to what this book is critiquing. Did you say teaching? Well, then you're right. And guess what? It's written by high school students. I'm bringing this up because this book is one of the things that inspired me to critique curriculum and my experiences." (Closing of Jonathan's Podcast).

Jonathan's podcast exemplifies critical theory in the sense that he explores, "how and to what extent...[he] constructs and enacts power, privilege and inequality" (Charmaz, 512, 2005). Jonathan used the podcast assignment to examine his world through a critical framework. Specifically, he located power inequalities in language arts curriculum design and pedagogy.

*Devon and Thomas*

Devon and Thomas were interested in exploring their Chinese heritage in several ways, primarily linguistically and politically. They also explored Chairman Mao's influence on Chinese culture and politics. They were not speaking from expert standpoints, rather exploratory ones, as they engaged openly with aspects of Chinese culture as they became interested in them. Devon and Thomas used available resources including peers, personally constructed knowledge, and texts, and then progressed hermeneutically.

This podcast is significant because it reinforces the notion that some students construct knowledge in hermeneutic ways rather than in sequential ways. This pair constructed knowledge by locating themselves within a global framework. They engaged in a dialogical praxis during which they constructed knowledge not only about power structures but also about differing perspectives regarding these power
structures. For example, in one interview with a Chinese peer visiting Hawaii, Thomas inquires about
the interviewee's feelings regarding Chairman Mao. Before the interviewee can respond, Devon interrupts
while laughing, "um. Yeah well you (laughs) probably don't feel comfortable answering that right? I mean
you probably don’t want to answer that it's okay (laughs)". Following Devon’s interruption, Thomas asks
"Why? Why doesn't he want to answer it?". Following a second or two of silence, all three males begin to
laugh and Brian states, “Oh yeah right (laughs) you don’t feel comfortable talking about whether or not
Mao was a positive or negative force. Duh”.

The podcast gave Thomas and Devon the opportunity to examine their political, social, and cultural
locations in a public, but semi-private manner. Unlike other audience resisters, Thomas and Devon were
not worried about negative reactions from their known audience, nor were they worried about negative
comments left on the website by anonymous audience members. They were primarily worried about shifts
and contradictions in their own paradigms. For example, they articulated questions about whether or not
one could be both a Catholic and a Maoist. Also, unlike their peers, these podcasters did not seem to be
consumed with the idea of an audiences’ reaction, rather they were invested in their own dialectical identity
work.

Eileen

Within the first couple of weeks of our class meetings, Eileen expressed an interest in a photograph
that we looked at as popular cultural literacy text. She stayed after class to ask about the photographer, and
whether or not the picture had been taken by a digital or film camera. She had limited prior experiences
with photography. In fact, from her perspective, film photography was an old and rarely used technology,
but still one that was alluring. When I lent Eileen a 35 mm camera, briefly showed her how to use a light
meter, and encouraged her to explore photography, she peered through the viewfinder and looked up at me
with confusion.

Eileen: “Is there black and white film in here?”

Teacher: “Yeah”

Eileen: “Oh, when I look through the hole everything is in color so I thought it
must be color film in there.” (Teacher Field Notes)
Eventually, Eileen decided to use photography as subject matter for her podcast.

In her first podcast, Eileen examined various photographs and tried to gain a clearer understanding of her own preferences. While recording her immediate reactions to published photographs, Eileen was able to articulate aesthetic qualities as well as theoretical and contextual perspectives illustrated in photographs that appealed to her. She was not ever intending to speak from the perspective of an “expert”, rather to explore and be able to identify aspects of this art that were appealing to her. In this regard, she was working within a similar exploratory paradigm as Thomas and Devon. Just like Thomas and Devon, Eileen came across contradictions in her own paradigms. During a particular podcast session, Eileen deconstructed a series of photographs, which depicted a nude woman sitting at the edge of an unmade bed. Eileen described this photograph in the following way, “This one is about (pause) sex. But not in a bad way. Really it is just about the (pause) girl the um. woman and how she is feeling when looking at her own body afterwards” (Eileen, Podcast, 2005).

One interpretation of Eileen’s statement could be that by asserting that this photograph was about sex, and further that it was a positive, or as Eileen stated a “not bad way”, to see sex, she was supplementing her views of body, carnality, and nudity that had been imparted by her Catholic faith and education. Eileen expounds on her initial deconstruction,

“All you can see of her body is part of her jaw and the bottom of her ear and the side of her breast. The way you can only see one side of her jaw you can tell that her head is turn slightly to the right. You can’t see any facial expression but there is obvious body expression. She’s standing in a central sort of way where her arms are above her and the slight turn of her head. What I really like about her is that you can’t tell what kind of girl she is. Is she standing in that sort of way for sexual tension or as untouched and natural? I look at this picture as saying that naked woman doesn’t automatically mean sex. That a naked woman can possibly mean respect in that she knows her body and that it’s precious and umh that she has a hidden beauty and grace” (Eileen podcast).

In her second podcast, Eileen recorded her first experiences using a 35 mm camera. She spoke openly about what she was photographing, why she was photographing particular subjects and later she commented on the disappointment she felt while opening the packet of her first developed photographs and finding a series of unfocused, not as planned for, images. Her willingness to make her learning process public is fascinating. She was, in all senses of the word, an audience seeker but unlike many of her peers was comfortable being exposed as a uninformed person in her cast. In remarking on this, Eileen stated that
the process of learning about photography might be as interesting to listeners as the content of photography.

Maelee, Leliani, and Jackie

Maelee, Leliani and Jackie immediately became loyal, if not uncompromising, listeners to a reality based podcast produced by a girl their own age living over two thousand miles away. This podcast, called Pod Princess, detailed the speaker’s life and included her comments, reactions to, and critiques of her school, friends, family and other life experiences. In many ways, this podcast was similar to the very popular reality based television programs that we had deconstructed during previous classes, with the exception that listeners had no idea what the speaker looked like. Maelee, Leliani and Jackie reported feeling that the speaker was similar to them and thus, that her life resembled their lives. In an early log entry, Maelee wrote, “YOU HAVE TO LISTEN TO THIS...I want our podcast to start off interesting like this too because it catches the attention of the listener. I like the way she has music between different topics because it keeps me on track. I like the way she talks as if she’s speaking to a friend” (September 17, 2005). Pod princess was an inspiration for the girls, in terms of both rhetorical decisions such as tone of voice and use of music, and content.

Their dedication to Pod Princess was obvious in most class meetings, and podcasting logs. Eventually the girls began to critique other podcasts in comparison with pod princess. After listening to a podcast about cyber bullying, Jackie wrote “This podcast was interesting because it is a torture that is ongoing throughout the world. I enjoyed the man’s accent and I liked how he had phone interviews but it sounded a lot like a depressed newscast...I tried to picture someone else like pod princess but I don’t think the monster like nature of these people would have really set in with her light, upbeat attitude” (Jackie, September 21, 2005). This excerpt is significant in two ways. First, it shows that Jackie has become so familiar with pod princess, that she is able to apply her knowledge and understanding of Pod Princess to unfamiliar texts. Jackie has, in this sense, become an expert on the pod princess style, including an awareness of her content norms and limitations. Secondly, this expert reveals that while Jackie acknowledges that there are “torturous” events happening in the world, and that she feels badly because of those, she feels excluded by a serious tone. When Jackie shared this entry in class, her podcasting members all concurred that a detached and
upbeat tone is preferable. In other words, Maelee, Leliani and Jackie prefer casts in which the speaker creates a buffer between herself and the content. As a result, the girls planned on enacting the same sort of detached, upbeat tone in their own cast.

This excerpt characterizes significant epistemological attributes of many adolescent podcasters participating in this study. On one level, Maelee, Leliani and Jackie wanted to investigate their world through a critical framework. On this level they intended on discussing issues such as bullying, and reveal, "how Hawaii...it's not all paradise and just because we go to a catholic school we are not all "perfect" school girls" (Maelee, September 28, 2005). However, the goal of exploring through a critical lens was replaced with a more urgent need to locate themselves within a context of popularity and social status.

This podcast provided an opportunity for Maelee, Leliani and Jackie to participate in the experience of reality programming. Reality programming is, for these particular students, a fully internalized popular cultural literacy practice and the opportunity to create a podcast on any subject provided the chance to change roles from voyeurs of reality based programs to the subjects of viewing. In this transformation, these students sought to create and validate a self-image of upbeat, unaffected and therefore socially privileged women.

Summary

The podcasts analyzed for the purpose of this study were chosen because they represent a variety of audience seekers and resisters and a variety of content. Above all else, these podcasts demonstrate that these adolescents appreciated the opportunity to create a literacy text for a wide audience and further, that the promise of that audience had a great effect on their production choices. In addition, these podcasts indicate that these participants were reflective, critical and creative thinkers. As an English teacher who has not always been able to provide opportunities for students to be viewed as important and authentic creators, this outcome was substantial. Lastly, these podcasts indicate that students become interested in rhetorical decisions (diction, syntax, and formatting) when the content is of personal value to them.

In the following chapter, study conclusions and recommendations are offered. Within this chapter, a summative description of student engagement with popular cultural literacy practices, student responses
to a critical curriculum, and student productions of podcasts is offered. Also, links are drawn between each of the three primary research questions through descriptions of discourse implications, Reader Response implications, pedagogical implications, and learner and teacher dynamics. In addition to conclusions and recommendations, limitations of the study are described.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to explore the popular cultural literacy practices of adolescents, and their responses to a critical language arts curriculum that integrated popular cultural literacy texts and practices with traditional texts. The three primary research questions addressed by this study were:

1) How do adolescents describe their engagement with popular cultural texts and popular cultural practices?
2) How do adolescents respond to a critical curriculum that focuses on popular cultural texts?
3) How do adolescent students experience the use of alternative student production (podcasting) as a replacement for traditional forms of student expression in a language arts course?

Throughout the study, unanticipated trends began to emerge. For instance, participants described their engagement with popular cultural literacies in such a way that there appeared to be connections between engagements, epistemologies, and even their ontologies. While exploring these adolescents responses to a critical curriculum which hinges upon their popular literacy practices, students reported changes in their cognitive process, feelings of ownership over their responses to texts, and relationship with texts. And, while looking closely at the students' experiences with podcasting, topics such as teacher and student dynamics kept emerging. These emergent categories, garnered from student interviews, observations and podcast analyses, are summarized in the first part of this chapter and accompanied with recommendations for future research and curricular changes. In the second part of the chapter, limitations of the study are discussed.

Discourse Implications

This study offers an overview of the types of literacies that these adolescents engage with as well as a cursory glance into the ways in which the literacies have affected their epistemologies. These participants have integrated various popular cultural literacy practices, to radical degrees into their lives. The practices used by these participants were largely digitally mediated, and whether or not they were enter-
tainment based, communicative based, or productive based, they each contributed to the participant’s various discourses. For the majority of participants, literacy practices such as watching reality based television programming, using profile websites such as MySpace, and text messaging, were fully internalized literacy practices. These practices were so widely used by participants that they became integral parts of their lives and shaped, to an undetermined but palpable degree, the users’ discourse. That is, the internalized digitally mediated popular cultural literacy practices not only impacted how they communicated but also what they communicated. These practices and texts are not only modes of entertainment, communication, and production but have also become the subject matter of their discourses. Future discourse analyses aimed to investigate the ways users of such literacies refer to them and through them are needed to better understand this new phenomenon fully.

Not only were many of the popular cultural literacy practices fully internalized phenomenon in the users lives, but the study also shows that the participants were sophisticated users. For example, the participants reported being able to negotiate several different literacy practices simultaneously as well as adjust their diction, tone, and content depending upon the specific medium and audience. These skills are traditionally practiced in Language Arts courses.

These findings point to a plexus of new and fascinating queries into the role of popular cultural literacies as epistemological shapers. We have moved beyond rudimentary questions regarding whether or not a particular literacy practice requires thought, and is therefore a potentially pedagogically effective medium (Gee, 2005). And are now faced with questions about how the extensive use of popular cultural literacies affects users thinking, feeling, expressions, and actions?

Reader Response Implications

From these findings we can also see that participants’ experiences with a critical curriculum, using popular cultural literacy texts and practices, have impacted the way in which they engage with texts. Ultimately, the participants began to treat, “read”, deconstruct, and interpret both popular cultural literacies and traditional print literacies in similar ways. Unexpectedly, students reported responding to their own work with the same critical eye. In her own words, Summer describes her reactions to the critical curriculum and its impact on her podcast:
Summer: “I actually really really really like it but I like to analyze things and this was the first class that I actually got a feel for analyzing things and the podcast things we had to deconstruct like listening to the podcast and we had to deconstruct the reality tv and we had to deconstruct everything we did even if it wasn’t just a novel…Before I would just pay attention to little things like the plot of the story but now I think its like looking at art or anything like I want to try and deconstruct…so its actually helped so much with reading novels…I think everything is a part of it. But also I think the way we think about things like the reality television and the novels and the art we saw makes me think about my podcast differently like a thing that’s separate from me but came from me.” (Summer, Personal Communication, 2005)

Summer explains how the critical curriculum during which she “had to deconstruct everything even if it wasn’t just a novel”, directly influenced her attitude, sense of ownership, and treatment of both they way she reads and her own work: the podcast. Later in the same interview, Summer goes on to describe how listening to her podcast was just part of her deconstructive process, and that she also thought about,

“[h]ow people who are listening to my podcast are going to listen to it. Like how people um every person will have a different way of hearing it and how some people will think I’m an expert and some people will think something else. I also have been thinking about the whole identity thing like how some of my friends like how I’ve lost some friends because of this because I am Catholic but also a healer and you can’t be both they think. So its like I said that the podcast is its own thing separate from me and others are going to have to deal with it and choose what to do just like we deconstructed in class.” (Summer, Personal Communication, 2005).

Summer, in addition to other students, reported seeing their final podcasts as finished products, and reflexively treated and responded to those texts in a similar way as they had practiced treating and responding to both popular cultural literacies and traditional literacies within the curriculum. This has significant implications for the language arts teacher, because it provides a potential way to transcend age-old frustrations with student opposition to revising work. It also informs our understanding of readers’ response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978). The critical curriculum, which used a diverse variety of literacy texts, expanded the types of texts that students responded to. This seems like a simple formula, but it is has greater implications that a wider repertoire. The expansion of students “read” repertoire contributes to a greater understanding of their own worlds. In this sense, the curriculum in general and the expansion of texts in specific, encouraged students to see themselves as constructions in the same way that texts are constructed by authors. In this regard the findings suggest that language arts work can contribute to self-hood work. However, more research into the relationship between reader’s response to text and reader’s response to self is needed to better understand this phenomenon.
Implications of using podcasting as a pedagogical tool

Using podcasts, as tools for student expression, impacted students in significant ways. Based on interviews, the podcasts impacted students affectively, cognitively, and socially. Examining student final podcasts revealed that podcasts gave students the opportunity to synthesize traditional language arts skills through a popular cultural literacy practice, without losing sight of identity formation needs. In other words, when participants were given the chance to create podcasts on any subject, they used the medium as a forum for identity exploration. In the process, they employed and practiced skills typically taught in language Arts courses. Each podcaster evoked a future self in the present podcast. Each podcaster converged on one very important point: identity work. While some podcasters used the opportunity to explore a social identity and others a cultural or potential career identity the shared trend leads us to the idea that Language Arts work can contribute to self-hood. In this regard, the podcasts impacted students on a social and affective level.

As discussed previously, the podcast assignment changed the way the participants thought about their intended audience. Whether or not the students were audience seekers or audience resisters, each podcaster recognized the intended audience and considered the ways in which the final podcast might be received. As a result, the podcasters treated the assignment differently than a traditional writing assignment in that they were balancing fulfilling their own needs with the ambiguous needs of a limitless audience, whereas during a traditional writing assignment a student might only consider the explicit expectations of the teacher. In this regard the podcasting task impacted students cognitively.

Throughout the podcasting experience students reported feeling, “professional”, “important”, “more articulate”, and “smart” (Teacher Field Notes, November 3, 2005). The benefits for including podcasting as an alternative means of student expression are clear, at least in terms of student attitude and engagement. However there were limitations in integrating podcasting. Namely, because podcasting is a new technology it was difficult to anticipate technical and other logistical difficulties that arose. Teaching a group of adolescents to adequately use the recording software, editing software and to transfer their files from Mp3 to RSS feed was laborious and despite the fact that they were a highly technologically literate group, it did detract from class time that might have been better spent looking at texts. In this sense more
work needs to be done in terms of how best to implement such technology, which software is most effective and how much time needs to be spent instructing students.

Lastly, podcasting mitigated students' traditional reluctance to consider rhetorical decisions such as formatting, grammar, diction and syntax. In fact, students seemed to pay the most attention to these details when reviewing podcasts made by others. This sort of meticulous attention and interest in style over content helps balance out typical responses from adolescent learners who generally pay an unbalanced amount of attention to content and plot.

Adolescents are, generally, adept at exposing inequities (Brownlee, 1999). This is a quality that adults commonly misinterpret as combativeness. However, it is a quality essential in a critical theorist. Initially, I thought that implementing a critical theory curriculum would allow participants to apply critical frameworks to both traditional and popular cultural texts. This did happen, but to a lesser degree than anticipated. In a greater sense, participants applied critical frameworks to their personal experiences, by situating themselves in comparison with both traditional and popular cultural texts. Yet again, the participants of this study turned “literacy work” into identity work. Critical theory curriculum allowed students to reassess and redefine their identity in a different context. Students felt comfortable seeing themselves as independent authorities separate from a traditional student role. In addition, many students perceived their final products as separate entities and experienced the process of creation as an extension of self-exploration. Ultimately, students reported reading their podcasts in an efferent manner, as defined by Rosenblatt (1978).

Learner and Teacher Dynamics

Because a critical curriculum warrants changes in the power dynamics between teacher and students as a means towards more shared knowledge making, I had to be careful not to appear as a false liberator (Friere 1970; Delpit, 1998; Shor, 1996). As a way of negotiating this challenge I participated fully in all popular-media deconstruction activities and readily spoke about texts that I enjoyed and saw through critical frameworks. As a result, a great deal of students reported during end of the course evaluations that they felt knowledge was treated differently in the course. In other words, these students seemed to be referencing to what Bourdieu (1982) termed knowledge/power sharing. In summary, student work throughout the curriculum in addition to their comments about that work, demonstrated a sense of ownership not only over
the final products but also over the authenticity and value of the ideas grounded in the work. As traditional thinking and school tasks were revised in this curriculum so to were traditional teacher and student roles. Changes in these dynamics, as well as the positive and negative implications of such dynamics deserve future research attention.

Limitations

This qualitative case study was designed to discover how adolescent students respond to the integration of popular cultural texts and practices in a critical language arts curriculum. There are limitations to this study. Because of the size of the study, it is impossible to draw generalizations about the pedagogical effectiveness of using such texts and practices in curriculums. Further, just because the great majority of these students reported enjoying the curriculum and exhibited critical thinking throughout the curriculum, it cannot be said for certain that other students would have similarly positive experiences. The participants in this study attended a private parochial school and have a certain amount of wealth. This in turn impacted their popular cultural literacy practices and well as the types of texts they chose to deconstruct in class.

It is also important to note that as the primary investigator, developer of the curriculum, and a person with a serious interest in imparting critical theory to adolescents there are certain biases that must be taken into consideration when considering these findings. For example, while I noted instances of critical thinking in all of the student reconstruction and student deconstruction subsections found in chapter 4, another language arts teacher might be appalled at how little the products reflect the traditional print text in question. It can be assumed that my enthusiasm for such thinking encouraged the participants to follow that line where as if they had been working with another teacher they might have responded differently.

No generalizations can be drawn from this study, however it was not my objective to do so. Rather, I wanted to develop a study that advanced a relatively new field of research regarding the inclusion of popular cultural literacy texts into curriculums and initiates a dialogue regarding the use of popular cultural literacy practices, in this case podcasting, as a means to intensify readers’ responses to texts. Future research, interested in the emergent implications of this study, could serve as a way to progress this discourse.
APPENDIX A.

Unit 1: "Monsters" are constructed by individuals and systems of individuals

Traditional Literacy Practice

Deconstructed Frankenstein (Shelley), Vindication of the Rights of Women (Wollstonecraft).

In this case, there is one creator-victor and one monster. Victor makes the monster and is then afraid of him. His fear causes the monster to be more monstrous. Otherwise, the monster seems more human than his creator.

Pop-Cultural Literacy Practice

Deconstructed construction of individuals in selected pop-cultural texts and practices. Some examples include "The Real World", People Magazine, and Report Cards.

In these examples of identity construction, students noted that there was generally more than one single creator. Generally there was an unseen creator or a system of creators supporting the "monster". Examples included teachers' dictation choices in report cards, and producers of reality television programs.

Preliminary Deconstruction Outcomes

Alternative Media Construction: Contemporary Monster Portfolio Collage

President Bush

Howard Stern

Michael Jackson

Emine

Terrorists

Two separate groups of students studied President Bush and Middle Eastern Terrorists as examples of contemporary "monsters". Both groups noted environmental factors leading to the "monsters" identity, conflicts in society's perception of this "monster(s)", and a cycle associated with the continued making and acting of this "monster(s)". Students noted connection between these two monsters.

Groups noted environmental factors that contributed to the development and perception of these individuals as "monsters". These groups were surprised to locate financial benefits for these monsters. Students noted that these "monsters' benefit in terms of finances, power and notoriety because of their "monster" identity.
Unit 2: Justice is an ideal, not immune to individual and systematic spoils, ultimately ensnared by issues of power.

Traditional Literacy Practice

Of Mice and Men (Steinbeck), The Stranger (Camus).

Justice is more of a personal issue that is sometimes enacted or dealt with through legal channels. It is impossible to know someone's full truth, and impossible to know if there is even such a thing as truth. "Monsters" are more often than not negatively affected by justice systems.

Alternative Media Construction: Justice Caricatures

Justice systems sometimes contribute to the construction and treatment of monster.

Localized Caricatures

Localized Images: localized within their personal and immediate domains, school administration, and teachers.

Globalized Caricatures

Globalized Images: epistemological queries, feminist critiques, and race critiques.

Pop-Cultural Literacy Practice

Reality television program "COPS" and a series of Lady Justice images including tattoos and cartoons.

Justice is an idea that people are obsessed with obtaining. "Cops" shows a romantic idea of police officers as carriers of the ideal. Justice is a constructed idea, in the same way that individuals are sometimes constructed as monsters.

Preliminary Deconstruction Outcomes
Unit 3: Reality, identity, and affluence are interdependent and are independently constructed by individuals and systems of individuals. They constitute a cycle of power relations.

Traditional Literacy Practice

Students deconstructed The Great Gatsby (Fitzgerald)

Affluence definitely leads to power. The characters in the novel that have the most money are able to consume items and ideas that affect their identity and how others see them. This is a cycle similar to the cycle affecting monsters.

Pop-cultural Literacy Practice

Students deconstructed a series of still images depicting crank culture.

Manifestations of affluence can seem ridiculous and can contribute to monster states. "Bling" is sometimes depicted as a "monstrous" or absurd practice, while wearing diamonds in more traditional settings is not.

Preliminary Deconstruction Outcomes

Alternative Media Construction: Reality Television Logs

In reality television programs teens with money are shown as non-monstrous entities while teens with out financial resources are shown as monsters. This happens no matter what qualities the person displays. Reality television is not really real, and people recognize this when they watch it. Still, watching it affects the viewer's idea of reality and perceptions of people or ideas, in this case, affluence, are then constructed.
Deconstructed first two chapters of *Scarlet Letter*, Hester versus Community

Hester is being defined as a promiscuous and unworthy woman, through the scarlet letter A and through her position in relation to others.

Deconstructed Advertisements, which depicted females, situated in regard to others.

Female figures are sometimes defined as Hesters, a phenomenon recreated in many pop-cultural texts. This can be positive or negative.

Preliminary Deconstruction Outcomes

Many people benefit (financially) and others are hurt when they are located on the sex spectrum as either virginal or Hester.

Alternative Media Constructions: i-Movies

Group A: Reclamation of constructed self through semiotic film production

Group B: Re-erection of individuals being positioned in relation to others.

Subsequent deconstruction outcomes

How sex misappropriated as gender norms, is a permeating force in the situatedness of the female constructed in relation to "other".

The Virgin Mary versus Mary Magdalene

Art slides depicting romantic or sexual relationships between individuals

Subsequent Literacy Practice

Students search for epistemological markers of romantic love, or sex in all encountered texts
APPENDIX B. 

Opinion Survey  
Research: Pop Culture, Critical Theory and Pod Casting: pedagogical implications in a secondary language arts course

Note: This is an anonymous survey. Your results will not be used to identify you in anyway, and will not, in any way affect your grade or your teacher's attitude towards you. Literacies mentioned on this questionnaire (text messaging, AIMing etc) came from our conversation yesterday. In answering this questionnaire, you are helping to provide a better idea of what sorts of literacies you like to use and why you use them. Thanks.

Circle the best answer. If more than one answer is true for you, then please circle all that apply. Please use the extra paper, scattered near your desks to write anything down that you think of when you are answering these questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>11th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Estimated GPA throughout high school</td>
<td>&lt;1.5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;4.0</td>
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| In school, I generally prefer this(ese) class(es) when I have a choice | Math |
| | Science |
| | English |
| | Visual Art |
| | Foreign Language |
| | Politics |
| | Drama |
| | Ethics |
| | Religion |

| How would you describe your feelings towards english curriculum? | 1: strongly dislike it |
| | 2. Dislike it |
| | 3. Indifferent (don't care) |
| | 4. Usually like it |
| | 5. Strongly like it |

| How relevant have your previous English courses (not considering Novels) to your personal goals. | 1. No relevance |
| | 2. Very little relevance |
| | 3. Some relevance |
| | 4. Very relevant |

| In general what is your general attitude toward English classes (try not to include Novels course) | 1. Usually strongly dislike them |
| | 2. Dislike them |
| | 3. Indifferent |
| | 4. Usually like them |
| | 5. Strongly like them |

<p>| In English courses what do you generally find most challenging (circle all that apply) | 1. Reading comprehension |
| | 2. Amount of reading |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>After graduating high school so you plan to:</th>
<th>Attend a junior or community college</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attend a four year college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attend a trade college</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Join the work force</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take time off to travel or relax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Join the military</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No plan yet</td>
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</table>

In thinking about your plans after graduation, what factors have guided your decision(s)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other extracurricular activities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How well prepared do you feel for life after high school?

| 1. Not prepared at all |
| 2. Pretty prepared |
| 3. Don't know yet |
| 4. Prepared |
| 5. Very prepared |

Currently, do you work in addition to going to school?

| 1. Yes |
| 2. No |
| 3. Yes, but only in the summers or on school breaks |

How many hours, on average do you work?

| 1. 5-10 hours per week |
| 2. 10-15 hours per week |
| 3. More than 15 hours a week |

Your main purpose for working while also attending school is: circle all that apply

| 1. To help support family |
| 2. To earn spending money |
| 3. To save up for a larger expense (car or college or travel etc) |
| 4. To earn work experience |
| 5. To explore career opportunities |

How do you think your family's earnings would be classified in terms of socio-economic status?

| 1. Working |
| 2. Lower middle class |
| 3. Middle class |
| 4. Upper middle class |
| 5. Upper class |
| 6. Not sure |

How many adolescents live in the same house with you?

<p>| 1. I am the only one |
| 2. Two |
| 3. Three |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| How would you describe your relationship with your guardian/parent?    | 1. Not close at all  
2. Sometimes close  
3. Pretty close  
4. Very close |
| Do you feel comfortable talking with your guardian/parent about personal issues? | 1. Yes  
2. No  
3. Sometimes, it depends |
| You signed up for Novels course because:                                 | 1. You were signed up by someone else  
2. You wanted to read novels  
3. You needed the credits  
4. It fit your time slots available  
5. Signed up with friends  
6. You like English classes  
7. Don’t know |
| At home how many televisions are there?                                  | 1. None  
2. One  
3. Two  
4. Three  
5. More than three |
| At home, how many computers are there?                                   | 1. None  
2. One  
3. Two  
4. Three  
5. More than three |
| At home, do you have your own television (located in your room)?         | 1. Yes  
2. No |
| At home, do you have your own computer? (Located in your room)           | 1. Yes  
2. No |
| At home, are their gaming devices? (Example: PS2, Nintendo or computer software for games like Halo etc) | 1. Yes and I use it  
2. No  
3. Yes but it is someone else’s |
| Yesterday how much television did you watch?                             | 1. None  
2. About 30 minutes  
3. Around an hour  
4. More than an hour |
| When watching television, the type of show I most commonly prefer are    | 1. Sitcoms  
2. Documentaries  
3. Reality television shows about people my own age  
4. Reality television shows about people in structured situations (survivor, true stories from the ER etc)  
5. Korean dramas  
6. Soap opera  
7. Music videos  
8. Live sports  
9. Sports talk (casting example ESPN2)  
10. Mysteries  
11. Other: |
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
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| How many shows do you regularly follow? (Try to watch regularly)       | 1. None  
2. One  
3. Two  
4. Three  
5. More than three |
| Please list the shows that you try (or would like to watch regularly)   |                                                                       |
| What channel(s) do you most frequently watch? Please put the name, rather than the numerical value if you know it. For example BET versus 23. | 1. last night  
2. last week  
3. don't remember when |
| When was the last time you watched a television program with a parent/guardian/family member? | 1. Definitely not  
2. Maybe  
3. Don’t know  
4. Probably  
5. Yes, I know for sure |
| Do you think that your parents/guardians would enjoy the same type of shows that you watch? | 1. No, they trust me because I am an adult  
2. No they don’t care  
3. Yes, but they don’t really know what’s on  
4. Yes and they try to talk about it |
| Do you think your parents care about the content of the programs you watch on television. | 1. No, they trust me because I am an adult  
2. No they don’t care  
3. Yes, but they don’t really know what’s on  
4. Yes and they try to talk about it |
| Do you recognize any racial schemas in reality television programs?    | 1. No  
2. Yes |
| If you answered yes for the question above, please explain what you mean. |                                                                       |
| Do you ever disagree with what you see on television?                  | 1. Never  
2. Sometimes but rarely  
3. Once in a while  
4. Often |
| Are you ever offended by what you see in reality television?           | 1. Yes  
2. No |
| Most often, what aspects in television offend you?                     | 1. Foul language  
2. Inappropriate casting choices  
3. Character’s attitudes/behaviors  
4. Treatment of female characters  
5. Portrayal of teenagers  
6. Portrayal of men  
7. Portrayal of minorities  
8. Violent acts  
9. Treatment of physical beauty |
| Would you ever consider trying out for a reality television program?    | 1. Yes  
2. No |
<p>| If you answered no previously, could you please explain why?           |                                                                       |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
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</table>
| How often do you listen to music during the school day?                 | 1. Never  
2. Once  
3. Every break between classes  
4. Most breaks between classes  
5. Sometimes in class |
| Do you own a cell phone?                                                | 1. Yes  
2. No |
| Do you text message?                                                    | 1. Yes  
2. No |
| How frequently do you use email to communicate with peers?              | 1. Daily  
2. Weekly  
3. Monthly  
4. Less than once a month  
5. Never |
| How often do you use your cell phone?                                   | 1. Only for emergencies  
2. Maybe once a day  
3. Twice a day  
4. Three times a day  
5. More than three times a day |
| How often do you use your cell phone during school hours?               | 1. Only for emergencies  
2. Maybe once a day  
3. Twice a day  
4. Three times a day  
5. More than three times a day |
| I use the internet for these purposes:                                  | 1. To read news  
2. To communicate with people I already know  
3. To communicate with people I have not met in person  
4. For research purposes  
5. To prepare for classes (study guides/spark notes etc)  
6. To create things (art, music videos, podcasts, web sites, blogs)  
7. To role play  
8. To spread my ideas  
9. To get an idea of what other people think about events  
10. For entertainment  
11. For my space or fraudster or black planet sites |
| Do you have a my space account?                                         | 1. Yes  
2. No |
| How frequently do you check your my space account?                      | 1. Once a day  
2. Twice a day  
3. More than twice a day  
4. Once week  
5. Maybe once a month  
6. Every time I get near a computer |
| Do you feel like people pay attention to what you do?                    | 1. never  
2. sometimes  
3. often  
4. always |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel like the adults in your life watch what you are doing?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel like strangers notice you and what you are doing?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel like other people judge you and what you do?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you enjoy having people watch you, listen to you etc?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How often do you read magazines?</td>
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<tr>
<td>The types of magazines you most commonly read are:</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Circle all that apply)</td>
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| Would you please list the magazines you enjoy reading or looking at?      |          |              |          |           |
| Could you please describe how you prefer to communicate with peers?      |          |              |          |           |
| (when not face to face)                                                  |          |              |          |           |
| Is there anything you would like to say about our discussion yesterday   |          |              |          |           |
| about pop-cultural literacies? Any of your opinions, beliefs, and        |          |              |          |           |
| experiences would be helpful.                                            |          |              |          |           |
APPENDIX C.

MILO'S PODCAST

Aloha hows it going? this is Milo G. And I’m here on the beautiful island of Oahu in Hawaii and I want to talk about the (strum) Ukulele. The ukulele it actually didn’t originate from Hawaii it came from the Portuguese when they came over in the 1900s and we just picked it up and put it where it is in our culture today. All over the islands there are plenty ukulele players who just love playing new songs, (strumming) composing new songs, and just playing songs and you know they make it into their own beat. Even some of the reggae players use the ukulele in their songs. The ukulele is probably one of the top products from Hawaii that everyone in the world knows about. If someone from the mainland saw someone from here like the visitors in Waikiki the first thing they might say is “Can you play a little song for us fellow” (laughs). (Strums) You know what I mean. Well I love the uke personally I just you know just play it when I get the chance when I see someone carrying it around I say can I play it. I’m not very good. I try to teach myself new songs. I think out there possible one of the best uke players out there is Troy Fernandez who is like my ukulele here he’s like a god to me his technique is like one of a kind he’s like a one of a kind his technique must have taken such a long time so well I just love that (laughs) well back to the uke. The uke consist of four strings. C (strum) G A E Another way is to pick it and sing My Dog Has Flees. The most basic song that anyone should learn is Surf by the Kaouko Crater Brothers. It consists of C, A minor F, and G7 and it goes like this (Plays song four times) throughout the whole song. Of course you hear one of Troy Fernandez trademark. The chord C you put your finger on the third fret and it sounds like this (*Plays). For A minor it’s pretty much you put your finger in the middle fret so it sounds like this. If I’m not explaining in the right way just listen this is how it should sound. (Strum) And then for the F chord, you leave your finger on the a minor chord and then bring your index finger down to the first finger on the middle fret which will be the E string so it’s sound like this. The g7 you bring your little finger to the middle string of the c string so it sounds like this. (Laughs) oh man. Well I’ll teach more songs along the way. But right now I pretty much know the basics and some techniques I just teach myself what I can learn from like the radio. But my favorite is from the radio like the reggae like this (strums uke to a reggae beat) Well that’s all the time I have for now check me later for more Ukulele.

JONATHAN’S PODCAST

My name is J. D and I’m a senior. I have always loved to read ever since I read Maniac Magee back in the sixth grade but lately I haven’t had the urge to read at all. I believe its because most books read in high school today seem so depressing. It may be just me who feels this way but I doubt it. Teenagers are very emotional people and the events of everyday society directly affects their emotions so they don’t necessarily need more depressing books when they go to school.

Now, let’s take a depressing book. Maybe (pause) When the Rainbow Goddess Wept, It takes place in the Filipinos when the Japanese invaded. Its very graphic in its depictions of the violence. I myself was unable to handle the depressing feeling that this book instilled in me. I just want to know what happened to the happy endings, the inspiring stories and the happily ever afters. When did sad and depressing stories come to mean good literature?

Depressing literature. How do you define this? For me it’s a book that swallows me up. I get wrapped up in its sadness and not just when I’m reading it but every time I think about the book. I get worked up about it at times saying why does the world suck so much? Sometimes I even experience anxiety. I’m not sure if I’m the only one who feels this way, but I’m pretty sure I’m not. I want to know why it is that the only kind of reading I’ve had to deal with in high school is depressing. I know that most of the reading has had to deal with real life events like When the Rainbow Goddess wept and Things Fall Apart or even Night but why is that all real life stories have to be depressing? Are we trying to show future generations that there is no possibility of a happily ever after? Having teenagers read happy stories can change things. We should have a balance of fiction and non-fiction because life is about dreaming for better times and if you ask me you can have both.
Now, I have interviewed a professor at the university of Hawaii. Helen Slaughter. Now I have very straightforward opinions on the reading curriculum in high schools. I mean we are already messed up enough as it is. But I didn't know what kind of changes could happen. She responded by saying, “I think too many kids are turned off by recreational reading. I think anime (Japanese graphic novels) are more popular then regular novels for some students. There are some students who enjoy reading but when it comes to death and dying some kids have a really hard time dealing with this and they deserve choices and alternatives, some books are better saved for adult years.

I couldn’t have said it better myself. I think some of the books I’ve read in high school might have had an entirely different affect if I’d read them as an adult. You could say I’m done but I’m not. Since teachers get to make their reading curriculum for students, I want to make a curriculum for them. I’ve got the perfect book that all teachers should read and it’s called Talking Back what Students Know about teaching by students in California. I’ll give you one guess as to what this book is critiquing. Did you say teaching? Well, then you’re right. And guess what? It’s written by high school students. I’m bringing this up because this book is one of the things that inspired me to think about high school reading curriculum. Here are two quotes that stuck out the most: the first in the last paragraph “Never judge a young mind by appearance and never limit a student. Students are capable of anything as long as someone encourages them. Try to adjust to your students learning styles and make it fun to learn. If you succeed in this then you are doing more than your job. You have literally accomplished your mission in your life.” I would love to see my teachers be more flexible like this quote describes.

Pretty deep stuff for a teenager yes? Well, what did you expect? Take a few minutes to look at your students today. Each one is limitless and affected by what you give them to read. So I may have something here about depressing books.

I’m going to leave you with one last quote from the same book. “Sometimes we need to look at our own reflection to see what needs to change. No one is perfect and there is probably something that can change. So go home and look in your mirror and ask yourself, “why am I a teacher? what am I doing well and what can I be doing differently?”

Thank you for taking time to listen to this podcast. Goodbye.

DEVON AND THOMAS’ PODCAST

Hello it is October 2005. Welcome to Chairman Mao and the Chinese language. So we’re talking about how Mao well how Mao was the leader of the ccp and came into power in mainland china and he had several laws that many people especially in mainland china thought were detrimental he also reformed the traditional Chinese characters to the simpler characters. Which brings us the second purpose and today we’re going to learn about the two main different types of dialects the mandarin and Cantonese. We’ll talk about the tones and teach some simple phrases so stick around.

This is Al and this is Hoi and Hoi, I have some questions. Hoi was born in Hong Kong.

What are the two main differences in the two?

Mandarin is more formal language while the Cantonese is more informal.

Um are there certain regions where one is more common?

Well, in Canton the Cantonese is more um common.

Is that were came from?
Well actually um people spoke it everywhere in most places in china in history like even the king?

So where did mandarin come from?

I don’t know maybe smaller tribes. In Hong Kong we speak Cantonese.

Whets the official dialect?

Mandarin.

So that’s kind of backwards.

Well, no it depends on who you’re talking to I don’t want to say that.

Hoi at home what dialect do you speak?

Cantonese.

Yes. If one person knows the one can the automatically understand the tone?

No, um I cannot I only understood 10%. It’s kind of like two different languages except in the writing.

Only in the speaking and listening part are the differences. They speak with different tones. Mandarin and Cantonese have different tones. Mandarin has four and Cantonese has eight. (Goes through all tones)

So when Chinese is being spoken are the tones always used?

Yes because the tone represents the definition of the word. For example ma ma ma ma means all different things. One means mother one means horse.

Do you find it hard? If you are trying to speak fast?

No. Um so um the characters are they the same? Um they are the same but most mandarin people use the simplified version were the Cantonese use the traditional but they can recognize both.

Simplified and traditional is that connected to Mao?

Yes. So do you want to talk about Mao?

NO.

Why.

Um. Oh. Okay.

So people traveling to china should they use mandarin?

Um for foreigners mandarin is much easier to learn and you can actually spell the words an in Cantonese some words you cannot spell out using letters.

Um okay can you tell us some simple Chinese phrases?

Um what? Okay. I will try to translate.

Lets try some simple phrases. Hi how are you
IlS
(Translates in Cantonese’s and then in mandarin)

How about excuse me where is the bathroom (translates into Cantonese and then in mandarin).

So that’s an example of how some people can be used to one dialect over the other. Yes. All right thanks Hoi for letting me talk to you.

You’re welcome.

This is Devon and China Man and today we have the monk who we’ll interview today about Mao. If he’ll talk. He came to power in 1940 and he gained power over the national party leader because he was involved with opium and was heavily influenced by western powers which Chinese people resents.

Oh I thought it was because of the mole on his chin. (Laughs)

Yeah it brought a human charm to him.

So can you tell us how you learned about him?

He was simple, born from peasants he wasn’t born that important but rose to prominence but became one of the most important man in the world.

Lets go on to talk about some of his policies.

Well chairman Mao is best known for the great leap forward. He once said that during the great leap forward half of china would die. It was an attempt to rapidly industrialize and modernize the antiquated Chinese culture. So he was trying to purge millions of Chinese into a society that only accepted communist dogma that was distributed by the state. Lets talk about the famine. During the great leap forward Mao grouped people into these groups.

Yes communes. What were they making?

Um. They were tasked to make steel and this follows closely with the communism under Stalin in his first five-year plan when he was focused on with agriculture or industry either way it was disastrous like this. (Laughs).

But I thought Mao was more successful.

Yes but a lot of people died it was brutal. There are stories about Chinese were forced to melt down their farming equipment to make steel but then their crops went to waste. See that’s very characteristic of a communist society during which they micromanage everything and look at heavy industry because they want to catch up with the other countries. And rapid industrialization isn’t prudent and it leaves other industries like agriculture to waste.

I heard that when he did this he wanted to eliminate old ties that he thought was restricting Chinese.

Yes many intellectuals, the thinkers, teachers, doctors were imprisoned and reeducated and many actually died this was all because they all did not fit into the mold of China that Mao envisioned. During this time we saw the traditional poetry and education getting changed a lot because it all had to match the communist doctrine.

In theory communism is great but in practice but because it takes humans to run a government it becomes corrupt which happened there and would happen again. It came down to power and taking away things like traditional poetry was a way to have control over others.
Later in life chairman Mao whole style of dress became popular.

Oh yes the whole olive drab tunic thing became popular.

The whole mole thing too?

No. No. not really. We've even seen chairman Mao on a watch as the watch ticks. But as he grew older the people who ruled after him he seemed to undergo a change in how he led. How as still respected but people didn't ask his opinion or consider. He was so controlling and he needed to do things his way so those leaders after him so those leaders after him realized that China could never survive on the will of one person. But perhaps if it were more loosely based on western frameworks. So you had Mao who was totally controlling and then you have a more realistic way of how things should be run and its interesting that chairman later described himself who described himself as a dead ancestor who was respected but irrelevant. And once he lost his power he felt dead he had no control but he was still respected. Okay that was why he was called the great leader and the great helmsman because he steered china.

Thank you very much, Monk. You are very intellectual thank you for your time.

(Music)

EILEEN'S PODCAST

Hi my name is ***** during this show I am going to talk to about a couple of photographers and my overall view on photography like the things I like about it. The first thing is that it isn't so much about what other people see in your pictures but what you see in them. However it can be really of interesting hearing other peoples view and thought about your pictures. A lot of the time they'll get a completely different feeling from them then you do. I just think its important to find the types of things your personally see beauty in or whatever appeals to you rather than just trying to impress other people. For me this changes frequently because depending on the mood I'm in it will change what I see as beautiful or appealing or eye catching. And lately I've been liking to look at trees. Like the patterns in the bark and like how the branches twist and the leaves and all the different shapes and colors. When I look at trees I can just clear my mind and think about things that I don't know or things that make me happy or sad so I try to find out what ever it is about the trees that makes me feel about all these things and how it can really change the perspective completely. I really like Bill Owens photographs. He made an exhibition titled suburbia the photographs in this collection are of his suburban community. Pictures of his neighbors' parties family friends things he likes and people doing things. I especially like the picture of the people because they all look like they have so much thoughts in their minds they also look very happy and comfortable where they work. I like how he uses everything in his surroundings to create a type of story through pictures about his community

Another photographer I like is Henry Kallahan. With the characteristic sharpness and a strong sense of Design. Kallahan is known for his ability to transform his objects into a resting composition of simplicity of grace. I think it's so neat how he does this. He did a photograph called Elanore this picture of a nude lady with her hands crossed over her head. All you can see of her jaw the bottom of her ear and the side of her breast. The way you can only see one side of her jaw you can tell that her head is turned slightly to the right. You can't see any facial expression but there is obvious body expression. She's standing in a central sort of way where her arms are above her and the slight turn of her head. What I
I really like about her is that you can't tell what kind of girl she is. Is she standing in that sort of way for sexual tension or as untouched and natural? I look at this picture as saying that naked woman doesn't automatically mean sex. That a naked woman can possibly mean respect in that she knows her body and that it's precious and um that she has a hidden beauty and grace.

I really like these two photographs for their ability to take pictures in such creative ways as to give the viewers individual insights.

So a couple days ago my teacher let me borrow her camera. I've only taken pictures with a digital camera so I was very excited to take pictures with a film camera, but I had no idea how much more difficult it would be. Digital cameras you basically just point and shoot the pictures, but with a film camera you have to turn the lens to focus the shot how you want it. Even though this way takes a little more time and thought it is a whole lot more fun to use. I think once I get more comfortable with it I'll be able to be more creative and take much better pictures.

I've always enjoyed looking at pictures but it was just this past summer that I started taking my own. So I'm still really new at it and it's really neat to look at pictures from when I first started to the more recent ones. There is so much to learn about it and many things to photograph. When I take pictures I try to capture my emotions at the time. I'm not very good at explaining how I feel and its so more fun to stroll around outside and find things that sort of match my feelings.

PODCAST 2
(Guitar music)

Hi its me today is November 9th so its been about month since I last recorded Not much has happened since then but I've learned a lot more. I’ve continued to take pictures with my teacher's 35 mm camera that was really fun but getting them back was kind of disappointing. It was my first time using a 35 mm camera so I didn't really know how to use all the features and other things and a lot of the pictures ended up not coming out the reason for them not coming out is because of bad lighting and its funny because there is a light meter in the camera but I didn't know what those little green numbers on the side of the camera. Actually I think I might need glasses because I thought those numbers were just little green lights not numbers. Anyway hopefully soon I'll figure out how to use the light meter and things will come out better.

So up to this point I've been talking to a friend in Australia who is a professional photographer about cameras and which ones I should start with. He's been helpful when I was getting really discouraged like when um I felt like I was getting nowhere. I would see a shot in my mind and then when I would get the picture back it would look nothing like that. I've learned that photography is a process and it takes time to be good at it and I wont always get pictures back that I like. Its just frustrating because it costs 7-10 dollars to get one roll of film developed. I could probably get it developed for 4 dollars but then I would have to wait a week and it's hard to wait a week when you are excited. I should be more patient.

Through all this I learned that my dad used to be all big into photographer. He ended up showing me an old Nikon camera he used. That's how I learned about the light meter stuff. It's a lot easier knowing that he knows some stuff about cameras because I can go and ask him things he was also helpful when I looked on e-bay to buy my own camera. This is when it got annoying because there are so many cameras and so many people want them. I did get out bided one day because I was at work but that was okay I got a basic Olympus which is a camera made in the 1970s. It's coming soon so I'm super excited about that. My dad also told is that we have a Kodak carousel slide projector, which is something you use to show the picture on a wall. I can't wait for that. It's going to be like paintings on the wall. Anyone who is interested in photography should just go for it and it doesn't matter how good you are to start off. And if you don't have a camera then just buy a disposable one and sometimes those look neat because the low quality ones look grainy which might match your feelings when you took the picture. So just experiment with it and you'll have a lot of fun. It also helps to talk to a lot of friends who are interested in photography. That's what I did. I can be lazy and procrastinate so much so this helped. My teacher who lent me her camera was the biggest help because instead of reading I could do it. My friend in Australia told me all these technical things that I don't really understand yet but will have to understand at some point. My dad also helped a lot in finding
my own camera and I already know he has a lot of things I'm going to want to use later on. I also have some friends like Paul and Katherine who are really fun to talk to and they're just as excited about photography as I am and they create another perspective of a picture, which is cool. Photography is something right now I love more than anything so thanks for listening to it.

**MAELEE, JACKIE and LEILANI's PODCAST**

This is Maelee, Jackie, and Leilani and we are three girls who go to a private school in downtown Honolulu and our school doesn't have any parking and the things that are available to us are nothing like other schools. We are getting Jipped. YES. (LAUGHS)

I have to come every morning at 6:30 and sometimes I don't get into the building until school starts but how can we get to class without parking. Mainly because there are so many apartments and the people don't leave until 8 or 8:30 so I think that we should find a system to let us rent out other peoples spaces while they are there.

Yeah. So that's that. On the other things.

(Singing DUH DUH DUH)

Just want to tell people that just because we go to catholic school and live in Hawaii then we are not just perfect schoolgirls playing on the beach everyday. It's the same as where ever you are probably.

Unless you're own the mainland because here we don't shoot each other (Laughs)

They don't always shoot

Uhhuh they do they fight

Yeah, if its true. I want to know because Ben went to New York for military school and said that kids he went to school with there when they were at other schools all the kids sat separate like all the Asians on one side and all the blacks on the other.

Dumbass there aren't any Asians/

Really?

Not enough to fit a cafeteria?

Why how big are the cafeterias.

Big. They have so many people there

And cute boys

Laughs

So lets talk about cute boys here.

Maelee, who do you like?

Unclear
(Laughs) no I’m not saying but if he asks me to winter ball then I’ll say on the next show.

What are you going to wear to winter ball?
Don’t know,

Don’t know.

You know what’s funny? Have you heard how Mrs. says “ga:ll”.

What?
Like today she said “Ga’ll get in here”
No she’s saying “Ya’ll”
What’s that?
Don’t know but she sounds famous. Like that movie.

Oh my god, who is farting?

(Laughs)
Oww. Maelee just hit me with a pillow and it hurt.
Pillow fight! Screaming and laughing
Maelee’s boob popped out.
Shutup I don’t want that on there.
Yes you do.
Okay.

Let’s talk about the annoying freshman who don’t give us the respect they should.

Yeah what’s wrong with them anyway always bumping us and taking our lockers?

Oh watch out (laughs) Jackie you sounded all moke when you said that why you talk pidgen all sudden? Try talk normal kay?

(laughs)

All we’re saying for you freshman girls who want to be cool you need to start showing respect to us seniors because we are your elders and we know what’s up.

So anyways next time we’ll tell you more news. Next time we’ll talk about how Spencer took Maelee to winter ball.

(Laughs) Yeah right not ever not over my dead body. Yuck.

(Singing)
ENDNOTES

1 In the debate over using Re(construction) versus construction, I settled on using the prefix re in conjunction with parenthesis to acknowledge that many student creations are reenactments of media previously deconstructed. Many of the creations do not exhibit separate thinking, but rather are reflections of, or slight appropriations of, the original texts. I do not mean to argue that these are less valid that student constructions at all, just different. If anything, this re-erecting of other texts in new mediums demonstrates just how embedded within our various discourses we are.

2 Because of their age (16-18 years old) their access to this sort of information may be limited, and connections between literacy practices and economic status cannot be inferred from this study.

3 Long-term residents of Hawaii acknowledge the local culture as a predominant force in their identities. Local culture here is fascinating. It does not excuse particular functions of ones ethnic identity, but presents a shared identity between many different ethnic groups. Being local arises from living on a small island with people from so many different backgrounds as is sometimes characterized by certain traditions, foods and discourses such as baby’s first birthday, bento lunches and speaking pidgin. There is a palpable sense of pride in being local.

4 While religious preferences in the group were varied, the religious orientation of the school meant that students shared a daily Catholic discourse and frequently encountered in classes and during masses religious texts. These texts extended from traditional straight readings of the Bible to biblical messages set to popular island style reggae tunes. Students however, did not note these experiences as literacy practices in the initial brainstorming session so they were not utilized as survey items. Religious impacts on literacy practices as well as geographic impacts were later realized. Throughout the curriculum students became more aware in general about their literacy practices and the possible roots, implications and value of these practices.

5 The Barnum effect describes the meaning a person makes after encountering a personal statement that could apply to anyone. While this phrase is almost exclusively used when describing personality assessments, it also contributes to our understanding of the ways adolescent readers resist and engage in fictional texts.

6 These students are extremely familiar with portfolio work, as it is a keystone for all curricular at their school. It can be expected that their choices in what to include and require of themselves for this project reflected what they know, from personal experience, to receive validation from teachers. Examples of student inclusion that were surprising included stipulations about work being typed, all groups using the same font, using plastic sheet covers, appropriate amount of work for size of group, and inclusion of title pages. Groups without this extent of portfolio work might have struggled with delivering specific expectations for selves.

7 Students distilled three primary points after reading the introduction in: “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman”. The points are: 1) women should not be treated as or referred to as mere adornments or accessories; 2) women are entitled to healthy sexual practices; 3) women should resist being breed into domestic brutes.

8 This parallel was not discovered until the end of the semester when one student wrote on the topic on the final exam.
Crunk, a word that can be traced first to the hip-hop duo Outkast’s 1995 album Atlants, has dubious meanings. Some authors contend that the word is a mixture of drunk and crazy, while others observe that the word has more to do with energy than drug use. The phrase, specific to southern rap and hip-hop intonates a viable energy and is frequently used in popular-media today. One physical characteristic commonly associated with “crunk” culture and hip-hop culture is bling, a colloquial term for exquisite and expensive jewelry commonly diamond based. The blatant display of wealth characterized as bling as come to be a sign of hip-hop and more specifically, crunk culture.

Student differentia drawn between these categories: crunk, hip-hop, and gangsta’ seemed to be, for this group, largely semiotic and arose initially in a class discussion on hip-hop identities. Students in this group saw major differences between gangsta and crunk, and understood hip-hop to be a greater umbrella under which the latter two fell. Specific differences between the two were not articulated, though there was a general disdain for what the group called ‘gangsta’ identities. Frequent comments about the Hawaiian lifestyle in relation to ‘gangsta’ were made in which students noted a cultural clash between aloha lifestyles and their perceptions of ‘gangsta’. Students felt that hip-hop culture; fashion and identities were purchasable and not exclusive.

Students articulated a difference in what they called legal justice and personal justice. In this argument students were discussing treatment of adolescent females in a reality television program (Laguna Beach: MTV) by her once friends. Students agreed that Casey deserved to be treated poorly by Alex H. because she gossiped which was an offence to their shared trust. Some students argued that Casey may have gossiped because of the unbalanced treatment of women in their circle of friendships and as a result deserved forgiveness by her friends. Students did not discuss legal justice in regard to the reality shows.

Ironically, the “ban” on Myspace turned out to be an empty threat; within two days students discovered that there was no surveillance method in place and that they could effectively visit the site on school computers with no consequences. The administration’s choice to omit Myspace as an issue, rather than develop methods for preparing students to use it appropriately, is emblematic of the common responses. Many critics argue that Myspace and other new literacies are haunting haustellums to be evaded rather than faced.

Within formal education, the personal narrative has been most commonly rooted in the visual realm. Historically however, the personal narrative belongs first to the aural domain.
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