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HOW IS FANFICTION FRAMED FOR LITERACY EDUCATION
PRACTITIONER PERIODICAL AUDIENCES:
MEDIA FRAME ANALYSIS (2003 - 2013)

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of
Montclair State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education

by

DREW EMANUEL BERKOWITZ

Montclair State University

Upper Montclair, NJ

August 2018

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Rebecca A. Goldstein

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MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
DISSERTATION APPROVAL

We hereby approve the Dissertation
HOW IS FANFICTION FRAMED FOR LITERACY EDUCATION
PRACTITIONER PERIODICAL AUDIENCES:
MEDIA FRAME ANALYSIS (2003 - 2013)
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ABSTRACT

HOW IS FANFICTION FRAMED FOR LITERACY EDUCATION

PRACTITIONER PERIODICAL AUDIENCES:

MEDIA FRAME ANALYSIS (2003 - 2013)

By Drew Emanuel Berkowitz

This dissertation reports out the results from a socio-cultural media research study that examined how professional periodicals written for United States K-12 public school literacy educators described fanfiction-based recreational literacy practices between 2003 and 2013. In the first decade of the 21st century, many K-12 literacy scholars advocated for the adaptation of predominantly out-of-school literacy practices for use within US public school literacy instruction programs. During this period, some literacy researchers expressed concerns that teachers may have held incomplete or inaccurate conceptions of fan-based literacy practices such as fanfiction, to the detriment of their students and the literacy practices themselves. This research study investigates these concerns within the context of journal articles that describe and discuss fanfiction literacy practices.

Practitioner research journal articles were collected and analyzed using socio-cultural media frame analysis in order to determine how fanfiction was presented and evaluated for inclusion within US public school classrooms. Analysis of data uncovered three dominant frame categories -- the youth practice frame, the out-of-school practice frame and the utilitarian practice frame -- each of which reflected how discussions of fanfiction

literacy practice were aligned with particularly salient perspectives on the nature and worth of K-12 students' recreational literacy practices. The youth practice frame reflects an orientation toward the view that recreational literacy is juvenile, the out-of-school practice frame reflects the implications and connotations associated with labeling recreational literacy practices as non-academic, and the utilitarian practice frame reflects how recreational literacies are evaluated in terms of their ability to foster in-school literacy performance and assessment. By exploring how fanfiction literacy practices were framed over a decade punctuated by successive US K-12 public school literacy education reforms, this dissertation helps to illustrate the extent to which the qualities and merits of recreational literacy practices are often reoriented, reshaped, and resold to educators as solutions to classroom problems.

Keywords: fanfiction, media literacy, K-12 public schools, socio-cultural, frame analysis, teacher practitioner journals

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CHAPTER ONE

“It had to do with our sense of individualism, a do-it-yourself attitude, a philosophy and ethic that delineated right and wrong within our community, as well as best practices and high standards. It was a time when the media we dealt with were rare but common enough that we could form a community around them, and each of us could seek a meaningful role within that community” (Eng, 2012, pp. 87-88).

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS FANFICTION?

All literacy educators want their students to write -- and, furthermore, to write well. Many K-12 educators would love it if their students enjoyed writing so much that they practiced writing recreationally, or employed writing to make meaning in their own lives through self-reflective writing practices such as journaling. However, the rapid pace of telecommunications development, and the subsequent advent of social media, have led to a wave of new categories of socially-mediated literacy practice enjoyed by United States adolescents outside the context of K-12 public school classrooms. This dissertation reports on a study examining how one of these categories and its relationship to the practices of classroom literacy instruction have been described in professional periodicals written for United States K-12 public school literacy educators.

Like many animation and comic book fans growing up in the United States in the late 1990s, my ability to engage with the media works that captured my interests was fundamentally and irrevocably transformed by my family's purchase of an internet-capable computer. Throughout elementary and middle school, the bulk of my conversations about superheroes and Saturday morning cartoon characters took place within school contexts -- the school classroom, school bus, or school playground -- between myself and the few classmates I knew who shared my interests. Upon gaining home internet access, these discussions shifted toward out-of-school spaces, between myself and a wide variety of like-minded animation and comic book fans from throughout the English-speaking world. Such digitally-mediated conversations opened up my horizons of media engagement, and I soon became aware of (and deeply captivated by) animation created in other countries, and comic books written long before I was born.

As quickly as I was discovering new works of entertainment media, I was also encountering new ways my fellow fans were choosing to engage with them. For instance, my discovery of *Mobile Suit Gundam Wing*, the 1995 installment of a long-running animation franchise often referred to as the Japanese equivalent of *Star Trek*, led to my subsequent realization that many of the show's female fans were writing and reading homoerotic stories about the pilots of the franchise's eponymous giant robotic fighting machines. The show's introduction to US cable television audiences in 2000 led to the emergence of many English-language *Gundam Wing* fan sites devoted entirely to the curation and production of these homoerotic stories. The popularity of these sites

among US adolescent female *Gundam Wing* fans resulted in the formation of communities whose members considered homoerotic creative writing their favorite way of engaging with -- and in many cases, their gateway into -- the *Gundam* multimedia franchise.

Although I never engaged in the practice of reading or writing stories based on *Mobile Suit Gundam Wing*, my academic interest in these literacy practices (much like my recreational interest in *Mobile Suit Gundam Wing* itself) remains to this day. Literacy scholars refer to these practices -- and others like them -- as fanfiction: a range of creative and critical media literacy practices surrounding the production and consumption of works based on existing characters and situations from popular media. Studies into how US adolescents use digital media tools and techniques for the purposes of peer interaction and media literacy engagement have frequently turned to the online spaces within which adolescents write, share, and improve their fanfiction works. In this manner, the study of fanfiction has become tied to educational scholars' pedagogical understandings of the ways that US K-12 students incorporate elements of creative writing and critical media literacy into their recreational media literacy practices. As this study will show, these scholars' observations of K-12 students' literacy practices have often been communicated to K-12 educators through the medium of professional practitioner journals.

This dissertation reports on the findings of a qualitative research study examining what US K-12 literacy educators may know about K-12 students' recreational literacy practices through the lens of how materials written for literacy educators define, describe, and discuss fanfiction. Fanfiction, which is also referred to by its practitioners as *fan*

fiction, fanfic, or fan fic, has often been the subject of literacy researchers who identify it as a category of media practice defined by characteristic patterns of textual appropriation. Researchers have related these patterns to the adaptation and adoption of characters and situations from their original media contexts. Within research focusing on K-12 aged fanfiction practitioners, these contexts are most frequently works of fiction that appeal to adolescent audiences, such as young adult novels, science fiction films, superhero comic books, and animated television programs. The resulting media works are intertextually linked to their source texts, and generally adhere to -- but occasionally willfully break -- their source materials' established characterizations and storylines (Jenkins, 1992; Jenkins et al., 2013; Stein & Busse, 2009).

A great deal of research has been conducted on the positive pedagogical impacts of fan literacy practice on the literacy development of adolescent practitioners. Literacy scholars often attribute a strong social component to fanfiction practices, portraying fanfiction practitioners as enthusiastic popular culture aficionados who employ a wide variety of social media practices to share their works with other practitioners and enthusiasts (Jenkins, 1992; Mackey & McClay, 2008). Communities of fanfiction-related social practice have often been centered around online repositories of archived fanfiction works, and have gradually gained wider cultural awareness within the United States, as well as the increasing attentions of both journalists and scholars interested in the pedagogical qualities of fan's literacy practices (Berkowitz, 2012; Grady, 2016; Minkel, 2014).

As discussions of fanfiction have become increasingly more common among non-practitioners, the frequency of these discussions has necessitated that scholars adopt a consistent definition of what constitutes the nature and scope of fanfiction practice. The range of literacy practices that educational scholars currently categorize as fanfiction emerged from the practices of 1960s science fiction and fantasy media fan communities and publications, before evolving over time into a number of distinct, socially-mediated literacy production and consumption practices. One of the central concerns of early fanfiction practitioner researchers had been the accuracy and completeness of academic accounts of the diversity of fanfiction practices. As scholars such as Louisa Ellen Stein and Kristina Busse (2009) have noted, fanfiction's products encompass a much wider range of multimedia literacy practices, and the failure to recognize these variations has threatened to "flatten the diversity of fandoms and fannish authorship into a monolithic entity" within academic discourse (Stein & Busse, 2009, p. 194).

In spite of these and other concerns about the accuracy of scholars' conceptions of fanfiction literacy practice, there has been a shocking dearth of research into how these benefits have been presented to practicing US K-12 public school literacy educators, let alone what they've been told about what fanfiction is. As this dissertation demonstrates, fanfiction literacy practices have often been positioned by literacy education researchers as possible points of intersection between US K-12 public school literacy objectives and the youth media franchises that US K-12 students already enjoy. However, due to the considerable breadth and variety of media enjoyed by US adolescents within the 21st

century, many of these franchises, and the ways that adolescents choose to engage with them, may be relatively unknown to their teachers.

In an effort to better understand the nature of their students' patterns of recreational media engagement, educators may turn to professional development materials such as literacy practitioner journals. Although many of these materials propose that K-12 teachers tailor their methods of literacy instruction to their students' existing recreational literacy practices such as fanfiction, the manner in which those materials define, discuss, and describe fanfiction practices constitutes a crucially unexplored focus of socio-cultural educational research. It is this research gap that I endeavored to address via the study reported upon within this dissertation.

PERSPECTIVES ON FANFICTION

Prior to designing and implementing the study described within this dissertation, I conducted and published an analysis of US news media depictions of fanfiction literacy practices (Berkowitz, 2012). My analysis indicated that, by the second decade of the 21st century, recognition and discussion of fanfiction practices had expanded far beyond the confines of fanfiction communities. They had begun to attract the interests of not only literacy scholars, but also the creators and publishers of the media upon which the fanfiction works of US adolescents are most commonly based.

Part of the reason for this increased awareness and attention may have been due to the tremendous growth that online fanfiction communities were experiencing at the time.

For example, in 2002, the fanfiction community website FanFiction.net reported a user base of 118,000 registered members (Buechner, 2002). By 2007, the site's traffic massively increased to the point where it accounted for over thirty-four percent of online traffic related to recreational reading and writing, including "author websites and writing and literary review sites" (Tancer, 2007).

The increased visibility of online fanfiction communities led non-practitioners to begin to associate distinct media preferences with fanfiction audiences. Several publishers tested the waters of literature specifically produced for fanfiction readers, and the resulting blockbuster successes of E. L. James' *Fifty Shades of Grey* -- a trilogy of novels adapted from the author's own BDSM-themed *Twilight* fanfiction works (Day, 2014) -- and Reine Hibiki's *Maria Watches Over Us* -- a thirty-nine volume young adult novel series focusing on the same-sex romantic friendships of a newly-inducted Catholic girls' school's student council member (Friedman, 2017) -- proved that textual elements traditionally associated with fan literacy practices could be adapted into multimedia franchises. As a result, many readers outside of the fanfiction communities were exposed to these elements for the first time. For example, the characteristic elements of slash fanfiction -- stories depicting romantic male relationships that were originally the purview of straight female audiences -- began to gain a greater foothold within the discourse of US LGBT communities (Peele, 2007; Pullen & Cooper, 2010).

Perhaps the most important consequence of the increased visibility of online fanfiction practice was that literacy scholars began to take a much closer look at fanfiction communities -- not just as they existed within broader conceptual theoretical

categories of digitally-mediated media literacy practice, but also in terms of the potential that fanfiction literacy practices had for use within US K-12 public school classrooms. This interest was driven by the escalation of policymakers' efforts to reshape US K-12 public school literacy instruction into a form they considered better suited toward the current generation of school children's development (Schechter & Denmon, 2012; Shamburg, 2012; Zhao & Lei, 2009). In response to the resulting series of public school policy shifts and changes, US literacy educators began to look much more closely at literacy researchers' ongoing attempts to uncover why particular informal fan literacy practices appealed to US students, how they differed from the ways reading and writing were traditionally taught in US K-12 public schools, and whether they might prove to be appropriate for inclusion in existing literacy curricula. Implicit to these inquiries were concerns about whether fan literacy practices such as fanfiction bore too close a resemblance to other recreational media practices that schools -- and society in general -- had a tendency to discourage or even marginalize as frivolous or non-academic (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Alvermann et al., 2004; Gutiérrez, 2013; Harris, 2009; Jenkins et al., 2006; Stein & Busse, 2009).

Such concerns were consistent with the findings of late 20th century fan media scholars, such as Henry Jenkins, who considered popular and news media accounts of fans and their literacy practices to be overwhelmingly negative and dismissive (Ang, 1985; Jenkins, 1992). However, my own prior research on media depictions of fan fiction literacy practices has led me to suspect that this interpretation is outdated. In 2012, I conducted a study of news articles published within *The New York Times* between

1969 and 2011. I employed “frame and critical discourse analysis in order to examine how the news media’s portrayal of fanfiction shapes and reflects the beliefs of teachers, students, and parents” (Berkowitz, 2012, p. 198). Analysis revealed that articles oriented toward parents and educators within *The New York Times* positioned digitally-mediated fanfiction not as a frivolous practice, but rather as a preferable alternative to more passive forms of adolescent media engagement such as mindlessly staring all day at a television screen (e.g., “I’m just pleased she reads something anymore” [Rich, 2009, p. C1]) or playing video games.

Similarly, articles oriented toward businesses referred to fanfiction’s potential ability to stimulate adolescent interest in children’s multimedia franchises. Entertainment media industry experts cited within these articles suggested that fanfiction offered “a whiff of counterculture coolness, the sort of grass-roots street cred that major companies desperately crave but can never manufacture” (Thompson, 2005, p. 21). The apparent contradiction between my findings and the prevalent beliefs of scholars about fanfiction’s depiction within news media led me to wonder how media specifically produced for US K-12 public school teachers -- the most immediate authorities and arbiters of what constituted literacy within their students’ lives -- presented fan literacies.

Did the ways in which journal publications present fanfiction literacy practices to teachers convey the same cautious optimism that I had observed within my study of *The New York Times*? Or, were they more in line with literacy researcher Angela Thomas’ description of “the ways people (including teachers) have traditionally dismissed fan fiction” (Thomas, 2006, p. 229)? More importantly, how were these positive or negative

depictions of fanfiction employed within discussions of the implications of fanfiction literacy practice for K-12 public school classroom literacy instruction?

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Encouraging students to become personally interested in extracurricular writing is a key literacy instruction strategy, and literacy educators are especially interested in any recreational practices with the potential to instill in their students a lifelong passion for writing (Hidi & McLaren, 1991; National Writing Project, 2014; Nolen, 2007). The ultimate goal of bringing fanfiction into the classroom is for schools to better reflect how public school students engage with reading and writing practices in recreational settings (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007; Ivey, 1999; McKool, 2007; Pitcher et al., 2007; Schultz, 2002). Research into how fanfiction literacy practices are employed by adolescents within recreational contexts has indicated that fanfiction promotes the critical examination of popular culture texts, the development of interpersonal, literacy-mediated relationships with peers from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds, and the exploration of adolescent participants' own developing adolescent identities (Black, 2009a, 2009c; Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003a, 2003b). These findings have led some scholars to suggest that fanfiction literacy practices be included in literacy educators' attempts to align their literacy education programs with contemporary adolescent extracurricular literacy activities (Grimes & Shade, 2005; Sekeres, 2009; Vasquez & Smith, 2003).

Beginning in 2003, fanfiction communities such as FanFiction.net had begun to become an increasingly prevalent context for US adolescents' extracurricular digital literacy activities (Tancer, 2007). This growth coincided with a marked increase in news media attention toward US adolescents' digitally-mediated recreational fanfiction practices. For example, my previous research on fanfiction-related articles published within *The New York Times* prior to 2011 revealed that 74% of the data set was published from 2003 to 2011, with a modal year (16%) of 2008. According to material uncovered during this study's literature review, this period of increased news media attention occurred at roughly the same time the first pilot programs for incorporating fanfiction into US K-12 public school classrooms were being conducted by and reported to US literacy educators.

News media depictions of educational issues represent important sites of inquiry for scholars' investigations into the media that contribute to educators' knowledge about research and practice (Buckingham, 2003a; Davis, 1997; Shaw & Nederhouser, 2005; Townsend & Ryan, 2012). However, while the analysis of news media reports during this period provides a view of the information US K-12 public school literacy educators may have been receiving about fanfiction from media intended for general US audiences, it does not indicate how material specifically intended for K-12 educators presented fanfiction during this same period. This represents a crucial gap in research for media researchers interested in increasing their understandings of how K-12 educators draw upon media in order to make decisions about classroom practice, which up until now has not been significantly addressed within the field of literacy education research. In order

to address this gap, this study investigated how information about fanfiction practitioners and communities of practice were presented within professional periodicals designed to inform US K-12 literacy educators of research and trends in media literacy instruction that occurred within the United States at the beginning of the 21st century.

During this study, I employed a sociocultural frame analysis research paradigm, in an effort to uncover how articles in these professional periodicals defined, depicted, and discussed adolescent fanfiction literacy practitioners and their practices, ranging from accounts of online fanfiction communities to K-12 public school fanfiction literacy pilot programs. In April and May of 2013, I collected data from periodicals published between 2003 and 2013, a ten-year span centered around a high degree of news media attention toward fanfiction literacy practices (Berkowitz, 2012). This period has been characterized by scholars of US educational policy as an era of increased institutional pressure surrounding the practice of K-12 public school literacy instruction (Cross, 2015; Dee & Jacob, 2010; Marshall, 2009). During this time, K-12 literacy educators worked within an environment of rapidly-shifting institutional mandates, ranging from early responses to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, to struggles to modify high school literacy instruction to accommodate the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress Writing Framework. Restricting the data set to this specific period allowed for the longitudinal study of the literacy education discourses that US K-12 educators might have turned to in response to a particularly tumultuous and uncertain landscape of literacy instruction expectations and requirements.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary focus of the study is represented in the following research question:

“How is fanfiction framed for literacy education practitioner periodical audiences?”

LAYOUT AND ORGANIZATION

Following a definition of the terminology employed throughout this dissertation, the next two chapters constitute a comprehensive review of fanfiction. Chapter Two contains an account of the history of fanfiction practices, fanfiction practitioners, and fanfiction communities within the United States. This chapter also describes how fanfiction has traditionally been studied by researchers operating from a variety of academic disciplines, and how these scholars have typically applied a socio-cultural theoretical lens in their attempts to document, define, and categorize aspects of fanfiction practice. Chapter Three contains an account of the policies and pedagogies that have influenced how and why literacy education scholars study fanfiction literacy practices. The chapter focuses on the role fanfiction communities have played as crucial sites for literacy education research, and how this research contributed to ongoing debates over the intersection between media literacy and digital technology during the period of time corresponding to this research study’s data set.

Chapter Four describes the methodology of the research study. The chapter begins with an in-depth explanation the socio-cultural frame analysis research paradigm and how it was operationalized in order to organize and code the study's data. This chapter also provides a detailed account of data collection and coding processes. Chapter Five presents an analysis of the data, and begins by identifying the data set's most notable thematic elements. It highlights how the articles within the data set framed fanfiction's relationship to a wide variety of problems and solutions within the field of K-12 public school literacy education. This chapter contains a full account of the three major frames uncovered by the research study: the Youth Practice frame, the Out-of-School Practice frame, and the Utilitarian Practice frame. It describes how the frames were constituted, the key characteristics of each frame, and what each frame category reflects within the data set.

Chapter Six situates the study's findings within larger contexts of literacy education research that existed before, during, and after the time period covered by the research study. This is followed by a discussion of how the nature and context of adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices have changed since 2013. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how research conducted on articles published between 2003 and 2013 may contribute to current and future scholars' forays into fanfiction-related literacy education research.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Affinity spaces: This term, often used by literacy researchers to describe and define the nature of fanfiction communities, refers to informal learning communities composed of individuals who all wish to share, discuss, or increase their understanding of a common interest or interests (Gee, 2004).

Beta reading/beta reader: Beta readers are online fanfiction community participants who serve in a capacity roughly equivalent to an editor or proofreader. This term is used by fanfiction community members to describe the process that occurs prior to the publication and distribution of a fanfiction work in its final form (Jenkins, 2006, p. 180).

Critical media literacy: This is a term whose meaning varies depending on one's approach to media literacy and media literacy education. Critical media literacy represents both a theoretical lens and a set of analytic practices that may be applied to studies pertaining to literacy education, in order to uncover and challenge assumptions related to issues such as race, gender, and power that might be present within communicative contexts such as media discourse (Blackburn, 2003; Rowan et al., 2002). However, multiliteracy, digital literacy, and new media literacy scholars also use the term *critical media literacy* to describe a level of proficiency with new media technology. Unlike technical media literacies, which are required to use new media technologies, critical media literacies are required to critically *think*, *connect*, and *create* while using

new media communicative technologies (Bawden, 2008; Gilster, 1997; Markless & Streatfield, 2007; Rowan et al., 2002).

Discourses: Discourses are communicative practices that concern socio-cultural groups, affiliations, and relationships. They may involve situated group identities, methods of displaying and recognizing the group identities and affiliations of others, ways of coordinating and getting coordinated by other people and things, and characteristic ways of thinking about and expressing identity (Gee, 2005).

Discourse analysis: Discourse analysis is a research methodology employed during the examination of collections of communicative acts. There are many types of discourse analysis, including socio-cultural and cognitive-linguistic approaches. Discourse analysis has often been tied to investigations of the dynamics of power and agency related to the production, reproduction, and interpretation of a variety of communicative acts. It has also been employed in the examination of socio-cultural practices associated with media discourse (Fairclough, 1995).

Fan: From *fanatic*. A fan is an individual with strong cultural or media interest. In some cases, this interest may be related to practices that affirm, confirm, or develop an individual's self or group identity. The term is also often related to either a formal or informal affiliation with a group or groups whose members share a particular cultural or media interest (Jenkins, 1992).

Fanfiction: Fanfiction -- also known as fanfic, fan fiction, or fan fic -- is a term that describes both a category of literacy practice and its tangible product. Fanfiction authors/writers adopt and adapt elements from one or more sources -- such as books, movies, or television shows -- in order to create derivative, yet independent, creative works. Fanfiction is often shared and critiqued by fans of its source material. Within academia, fanfiction is often associated with online informal writing communities known as *fanfiction communities*.

Frame analysis: This term describes a research paradigm that may be utilized in order to determine how a particular concept or issue is defined or discussed across a collection of communicative events such as a media data set. The most dominant meanings, interpretations, and perspectives related to a concept or issue are known as *frames*. The related media research term *framing* is used to describe how frames emphasize the importance of certain meanings, ideas, and perspectives over others, as well as the process that affects this emphasis. Framing involves both the inclusion and exclusion of material, resulting in the transformation of how media audiences think, feel, and ultimately act in response to media messages (Entman, 1993, 2007; Goffman, 1974; Menashe & Siegel, 1998; Reese, 2001; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Multiliteracy: Multiliteracy is an alternative to traditional media literacy education pedagogy, developed in response to and recognition of the rapidly shifting social and technological landscapes that form the contexts for students' out-of-school

communication and learning practices (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Luke, 2000). Multiliteracy pedagogy is designed to nurture classroom communities centered around students' individual needs and perspectives. Multiliteracy incorporates multiple cultural perspectives and forms of communication, with the goal of better reflecting the dynamic nature and global cultural impact of modern media technologies (New London Group, 1996, p. 60; Rowan et al., 2002, p. 92).

New media literacy: This term is used within this dissertation to refer to newly emerging forms of media literacies that have accompanied recent technological advances such as high-speed internet and digital distribution of content (Buckingham, 1993; Buckingham, 2003b; Buckingham, 2007; Livingstone & Boville, 1999). Television programs, movies, books, newspapers, and magazines that take advantage of new literacy mindsets, such as post-industrial views of production and democratizing socio-cultural innovations (Knobel & Lankshear, 2006), may also fall under the umbrella of new media literacy. New media literacy is an important research concern for educators, because children receive a great deal of information from digital media (Buckingham, 2000; Bulger & Davison, 2018; Gretter & Yadav, 2018; Zhao & Lei, 2009). For example, a 2006 Pew Research study indicated that by age 21, the average American had exchanged 250,000 emails, instant messages, or text messages, spent 5,000 hours playing digital games, and used the internet for 3,500 hours (Rainie, 2006). By 2017, Pew Research found that 43% of Americans employed the internet as a source of news (Gottfried & Shearer, 2017) and

61% of US young adults watched television primarily through internet streaming services (Rainie, 2017)

Slash: This term denotes fanfiction works that focus on or emphasize the presence of romantic or sexual relationships between same-sex characters. Slash fiction most commonly contains homoerotic accounts of male-male relationships that are not present within the original works beyond subtext. Female-female relationships are often referred to using the associated term *femme-slash*. The term's origin is derived from *K/S*, a label employed by early *Star Trek* fanfiction communities' use of the term to denote homoerotic subtext between Kirk and Spock, the show's two male protagonists (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Hellekson & Busse, 2006; Jenkins, 1992). Aficionados of English-language fanfiction based on Japanese media properties employ the Japanese loan-word *yaoi* in place of slash (Peele, 2007; Pullen & Cooper, 2010) and *yuri* in place of *femme-slash* (Friedman, 2017).

Technical media literacy: This term was used by policymakers during the period covered by the data set to describe the proficiencies for using and operating new media communication technologies. In 2004, the US Department of Education described technical media literacy as "the knowledge and competence to compete in an increasingly technology-driven world economy" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 45). A variety of terms were previously used to refer to this concept, including: *emerging media literacy* (Shapiro & Hughes, 1996), *technological literacy* (U.S. Department of

Education, 1996), *technology and information literacy skills* (U.S. Department of Education, 2000) or *21st century skills* (CEO Forum on Education and Technology, 2001). Technical and skill-based literacies have also often been referred to as *digital literacies*, although during the period covered by the data set, this latter term was often entangled with forms of literacy that would later become more closely associated with the concept of new media literacy (Bawden, 2008; Gilster, 1997; Koltay, 2011; Kope, 2006; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Martin, 2006).

CHAPTER TWO

"To enter fandom is to escape from the mundane into the marvelous"

(Jenkins, 1988, p. 89).

THE ORIGINS AND STUDY OF FANFICTION

SUMMARY

This section describes how researchers and scholars from a wide range of academic disciplines have presented the history and nature of fanfiction practice within the United States. As this section will demonstrate, the most common motivation behind the academic study of fanfiction -- from the earliest efforts of cultural studies researchers to examine the socio-cultural practices of female science fiction and fantasy fans (Bacon-Smith, 1986), to the more recent investigations into slash fanfiction's defiance of "the stereotypes of homosexual masculinities" (Duggan, 2017, p. 39) -- has been the desire to ascertain just what differentiates fanfiction from other media practices. In order to present the academic foundations of the research study described in later chapters, this section will contain descriptions of how scholars have defined the origins of English-language fanfiction practice, as well as how they have generally restricted their studies of fanfiction to a specific range of media consumption, engagement, and production practices.

This will be followed by a discussion of how researchers have set about their investigations of fanfiction practitioners and fanfiction practitioner communities. This section will provide a description of the ways in which scholars have researched the practices of fanfiction, including an account of the theoretical frameworks that scholars have tended to employ within their studies. This conversation will summarize how scholars have historically interacted with fanfiction communities and practitioners, before transitioning into Chapter Three's more in-depth account of how education researchers have explained what fanfiction practitioners find appealing about fanfiction in comparison to other practices of media literacy consumption, engagement, or production.

ZINES AND *STAR TREK*

Much of the groundwork for scholars' current conceptions of fanfiction communities, practices, and practitioners was laid in the last two decades of the 20th century by scholars interested in the role fanfiction practices played within the culture of media fan communities. Although these early fan communities communicated through means other than the internet, they nevertheless had their own distinctive and observable socially-mediated literacy practices and conventions, many of which later formed the basis for the digitally-mediated literacy practices of online fanfiction communities. By studying the media consumption and production practices of these communities, cultural scholars hoped to gain a greater understanding of how these communities' relationships to media differed from contemporary models of socio-cultural media engagement.

Although some fanfiction scholars have pointed out that fanfiction is simply the most current iteration of millennia-old iterative storytelling and oral tradition practices (Derecho, 2006), the set of media literacy practices and products that are commonly referred to by academic researchers and fanfiction practitioners as *fanfiction*, *fan fiction*, *fanfic*, or *fan fic* did not emerge as a distinctly identifiable category until the mid-20th century. Within the United States, fanfiction evolved out of a related media production practice known as zine publication (Coppa, 2006; Verba, 1996). Decades later, the practice of zine publication would become closely linked with British punk music subcultures (Hebdige, 1979), but at the time they most commonly took the form of amateur literary magazines that science fiction and fantasy aficionados had begun publishing in the 1930s as a means “to fill in the dry weeks between” the releases of their favorite genre publications (Pohl, 1974, p. 23). Beginning with the 1930 publication of *The Comet* (Perkins, 1992), zines served as a focal point for science fiction and fantasy fan discourse, circulated through mailing lists and at science fiction conventions among fans who wished to critically discuss their favorite media works (Coppa, 2006; Lamb & Veith, 1986; Verba, 1996).

In the late 1960s, one particular subset of American fantasy and science fiction subculture began to produce zines that would go on to attract significant scholarly attention. In 1966, a short-lived science fiction television series named *Star Trek* began airing on the United States television network NBC. Following the show’s cancellation, *Star Trek* developed a particularly fervent community of fans, one which drew unusually negative portrayals within United States news and entertainment media. As a result of

these negative depictions, *Star Trek* aficionados had developed a reputation for being obsessive, fanatical, and immature, and this attracted the attention of scholars interested in studying how depictions of media subcultures negatively influenced societal views (Jenkins, 1992).

In the process of their research into *Star Trek* fan communities and their practices, it became apparent to scholars that *Star Trek* fans had begun to produce a new variety of zine, focusing on “not simply the critical discussion typical of science fiction fandom but creative responses” as well (Coppa, 2006, p. 45). Beginning in 1966, *Star Trek* zines such as *Universal Translator*, *Scuttlebutt*, *Spockanalia*, and *ST-Phile* began to cater to a predominantly female subset of *Star Trek* fans interested in exploring the untold adventures of *Star Trek*'s protagonists (Bacon-Smith, 1986, 1992; Coppa, 2006; Jenkins, 1988; Lamb & Veith, 1986; Penley, 1992, 1997; Russ, 1985; Selley, 1986). These zine publications contained elements that were different from those of previous science fiction fanbases' fan-made periodicals. For instance, rather than discussions of fan theories, their contents were focused much more on the production of fan-made creative works, such as unofficial stories based on *Star Trek*'s characters and situations (Coppa, 2006; Verba, 1996).

Over time, fan-written stories became a prominent and well-regarded fixture of *Star Trek* fan publications. Several stories, such as Ruth Berman's *For the Good of the Service* (1969) and Lelamarie S. Kreidler's *Time Enough* (1969), achieved acclaim within the *Star Trek* fan community, particularly among many members of the show's female fanbase (Lichtenberg et al., 1975; Verba, 1996). Although these stories were mostly

faithful to the television show upon which they had been based, many contained slight variations from the source material -- or canon -- of officially released *Star Trek* media. For instance, some authors took the *Star Trek* characters out of their science fiction setting and placed them in new literary genres. Other authors shifted the focus away from the male-dominated main cast toward secondary female and minority characters who received significantly less screen time. A number of authors personalized their *Star Trek* stories by writing idealized versions of themselves into their stories -- a literary convention that later came to be known within fanfiction communities as *Mary Sue*, after a term attributed to community member Paula Smith (Coppa, 2006; Driscoll, 2006; Jenkins, 1992; Lackner et al., 2006; Willis, 2006). Over time, common patterns of deviation from the source material would coalesce into identifiable narrative tropes and conventions, and by the end of the 20th century would form the basis for the practices of a variety of digitally-mediated fanfiction communities (Day, 2014; Jenkins, 1992).

SUBCULTURES

During the first several decades of *Star Trek* fanfiction practice, there were records of many disruptive verbal altercations between female *Star Trek* fanfiction authors and male fans of both *Star Trek* and other science fiction franchises. The most notable of these disagreements was the uproar that arose from fanfiction authors Jacqueline Lichtenberg and Laura Basta's receipt of the 1974 Hugo Award for best fan writing, revolving around the perception that their works were too amateurish or too

catered toward the interests of female fans (Coppa, 2006; Verba, 1996). These gendered conflicts effectively galvanized fanfiction's reputation as a way for female science fiction and fantasy fans to engage with their media interests in a manner distinct from standard male-led science fiction and fantasy media engagement (Bacon-Smith, 2000; Jenkins, 1992).

As fanfiction writing became more and more strongly associated with female media engagement, a number of fanfiction literacy conventions arose that were specifically intended for female readers. The most notable of these conventions was *slash*, a literary archetype that originally focused on homosexual romance between the *Star Trek* characters Kirk and Spock (Lamb & Veith, 1986), but which prominently persists in fanfiction communities to this day. Many fanfiction scholars have focused on how slash fiction exemplifies the “subversiveness of women writing erotic fiction against the mainstream media” (Hellekson & Busse, 2006, p. 20), and how slash’s homoerotic nature, coupled with the high degree of authorial agency within the production of fanfiction, have contributed to the spread of fanfiction practice to the female members of a wide variety of non-*Star Trek* fan communities (Derecho, 2006; Driscoll, 2006; Duggan, 2017; Hale, 2005; Penley, 1997).

Fanfiction practices soon began to attract the attentions of the corporations who owned the rights to fanfiction works’ source texts, who came to view fanfiction as essentially free advertisements for their products. In their eyes, communities of fanfiction enthusiasts represented easily identifiable, and potentially lucrative, targets for commodification and incorporation into the “broader cultural economy” (Noppe, 2011, p.

7.1) of popular culture media marketed toward media fans (Pearson, 2010; Scott, 2009). Soon, relationships between the creators of fanfiction works and the creators of the media properties upon which fanfiction works were based began to take on recognizable forms that attracted the attentions of academic researchers interested in observing socially-mediated practices of entertainment media engagement (Andersen, 2010; Lammers, 2016).

The earliest academic explorations of fanfiction emerged from developing fields of cultural studies. Scholars operating out of these academic contexts were largely interested in the historical marginalization of adolescent popular cultures and media practices (Ang, 1985; De Kosnik, 2008; Felschow, 2010; Jensen, 1992; Sharratt, 1980). Their investigations often adopted subcultural models of transgressive media engagement as developed by Birmingham University's Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1970s (Hadas, 2009; Jenkins, 1992; Lothian, 2011). Prior to the dissemination of the Center's research, most cultural scholars held an aesthetic view of the relationship between culture and media, focused on drawing clear distinctions between cultural and non-cultural media works (Arnold, 1869; McNeill, 1996; Storey, 1993; Williams, 1961). The Center's scholars presented an alternative view of cultural studies, in which the everyday signs, symbols, and social interactions employed by members of societal subgroups could provide a window into the ways media were used to make meaning and articulate world views (Clarke et al., 2006; Hebdige, 1979; Willis 1977, 1978). These worldviews were then analyzed for their consistency with, or opposition to, prevalent societal norms concerning expressions of media tastes and media preferences.

The Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies' (CCCS) research was widely influential on a generation of socio-cultural researchers, particularly those who held the view that the media consumption and production practices of transgressive societal movements were tools of resistance rather than recreation (CCCS, 2006). Their approach was influenced by a number of other twentieth century cultural scholars like Roland Barthes and Antonio Gramsci, who envisioned culture as a complex network of classes, each competing to disseminate and naturalize their messages upon the less dominant members of society (Clarke et al., 2006). For instance, the use of the swastika within the iconography of British Punk music subculture constituted a deliberate attempt to fracture, challenge, and resist hegemonic attempts to manufacture cultural consensus about what such symbols should mean (Hebdige, 1979, 2006). By using the swastika, British Punks communicated their subcultural affiliations to one another in a way that deliberately antagonized non-Punks.

In turn, this antagonism contributed to the depiction of these signs, symbols, and rituals within popular and news media accounts as evidence of these groups' status "as threats to public order" or "as harmless buffoons" (Hebdige, 1979, p. 2). Here, the term *hegemony* was used to describe the ways in which researchers interpreted the constant dismissive portrayal -- or *marginalization* -- of deviant and transgressive ideologies and media preferences within popular and news media accounts of youth culture (Althusser, 1969; Barthes, 1972; Gramsci, 1971; Hall, 1977; Hebdige, 1979; McNeill, 1996; Williams, 1961). This conflict-theoretical lens would frequently be applied to the research of socio-cultural scholars, who posited that the dominant media preferences of

society were upheld through periodic attempts to systematically portray groups such as Mods, punks, and Goths as deviant, immature, and abnormal (Hall & Jefferson, 1979/2006; Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

Many of the earliest investigations into the practices of media fans were also heavily influenced by the views of contemporary feminist scholars. These scholars posited that female members of emerging subcultures placed a significant degree of importance on media practices which challenged prevalent societal gender identity norms. These scholars asserted that their contemporaries' research interests were fixated almost entirely on overly public, masculine expressions of subcultural identity, rather than more private displays of affiliation displayed by women (Lewis, 1987; McRobbie, 1984, 1991). Feminist scholars argued that this overly-masculine interpretation of fan practice might result in an inaccurate or incomplete academic understanding of fan practices typically enjoyed by women, such as fanfiction writing.

Cultural researchers who extended the scope of feminist socio-cultural theories to fantasy and science fiction fan communities found that groups of media fans shared many characteristics in common with models of female youth cultures as presented by feminist scholar Lisa Lewis (1987). These communities were overly composed of women who were dissatisfied with the constraints or ideals of traditional dominant, parent, and sci-fi/fantasy subcultures. Their members desired to share experiences, and identify with other young women. They placed a significant focus on media or consumer behavior. Most crucially, they incorporated a rejection of traditional male and female gender roles or domains of activity into their group ideologies (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992;

Lewis, 1992). This interpretation also drew from Angela McRobbie's research (1991) on how patriarchal power relations present in mainstream society carried over into male-dominated subcultures that consequently became just as oppressive toward women as mainstream society. Through this lens, the conflicts between the predominantly female *Star Trek* fanfiction practitioners and the predominantly male members of the general science fiction and fantasy fan community were evidence that fan communities themselves constituted subcultural sites of cultural conflict (Jenkins, 1992).

RESEARCH CONTEXTS

By the early 1990s, fan practices and fan communities became an increasingly popular focus for socio-cultural research (Bacon-Smith, 2000; Baym, 2000; Fiske, 1992; Grossberg, 1992; Jensen, 1992; Lavery et al., 1996; Tulloch & Jenkins, 1995). The most influential of these works would prove to be Henry Jenkins' *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992), an auto-ethnographic account of fan communities, their practices, and their status as marginalized media subcultures (TWC Editor, 2008). Jenkins adopted the term "textual poaching" from Michel de Certeau (1984) in order to describe not only the way that fanfiction practices were viewed by non-practitioner scholars, but also the mechanics that governed fanfiction's literacy practices. Jenkins formed a model of fanfiction as a media subculture, drawing on a variety of conflict-theoretical cultural perspectives such as Roland Barthes' *second-level signification*, Antonio Gramsci's *moving equilibrium*, Pierre Bourdieu's *aesthetic*

disposition, and Claude Lévi-Strauss' *bricolage* (Jenkins, 1988, 1992). Jenkins' resulting model of fanfiction practice depicted fanfiction authors as literary scavengers, who "take works that other people may regard as worthless, and turn them into a reward source of cultural capital" (Dozier, 2013).

Over the following twenty-five years, Jenkins' account of fanfiction as subculture would greatly influence the work of scholars whose interest in fanfiction community practices had long outgrown the confines of *Star Trek* fandom and had expanded to include and account for fanfiction works written by fans of a variety of popular media franchises. Scholars examined fanfiction works based on television shows such as *Xena: Warrior Princess* (Boese, 1998; Hamming, 2001), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Busse, 2002), *X-Files* (Silvergleid, 2003), and *Gossip Girl* (Land, 2010); novel series such as *Harry Potter* (Duggan, 2017; Shave, 2004), *The Hunger Games* (Curwood, 2013), *Lord of the Rings* (Smol, 2004), and *Twilight* (Day, 2014); musicals such as *Wicked* (Lammers & Marsh, 2015); children's cartoons such as *My Little Pony* (Ellis, 2015); and video games such as *Overwatch* (Deyo, 2016; Gorry, 2016). As academic interest in fanfiction began to grow, fanfiction practices themselves were undergoing a gradual shift toward a new form of distribution that would soon change how scholars examined and interpreted the production of fanfiction works.

On December 2, 1992, Jean Prior established ForKNI-L, an online mailing list for fellow fans of the early 90s Canadian vampire crime drama *Forever Knight* (Coppa, 2006). Prior to ForKNI-L, fanfiction authors most commonly exchanged their stories through letters and fanzines and face-to-face at conventions. Some fanfiction authors had

begun to share their works online via newsgroups such as Usenet, but at this point this means of communication was considered difficult for the uninitiated to access or navigate (Usenet, 2018). ForKNI-L and the numerous mailing lists that quickly followed provided mediums of communication for reading and distributing fanfiction which did not require their users to possess extensive knowledge of computers. Accessible to anyone with an email address, and run by administrative teams of “highly educated, science-oriented women” (Coppa, 2006, p. 53), these online mailing lists served as stepping stones for both existing and newly-formed fanfiction communities to bring their means of distribution and communication in line with advances in telecommunications.

Subsequently, bulletin boards, message boards, and online journaling network websites such as Livejournal quickly and successively replaced one another as the preferred platforms for media fans to exchange stories based on a wide variety of media source texts (Hellekson & Busse, 2006; Verba, 1996). The widening accessibility of online fanfiction websites (Lammers & Palumbo, 2017) soon gave way to new community contexts for the exchange of fanfiction works, such as the Nifty Archive, an online repository hosting erotic fanfiction works based on real-life celebrities rather than fictional characters (Hale, 2005). The rise of these searchable fanfiction databases -- filterable not only by source text, but also by a story’s tone or content -- allowed fans of *the medium of fanfiction itself* to explore archives containing hundreds of thousands of stories, based on practically any contemporary or past media franchise.

The migration of fanfiction communities into these new digital contexts resulted in much broader changes to the nature of fanfiction practice than just an increase in the

diversity of ways fanfiction practitioners shared and distributed fanfiction. The ease with which readers' critiques of fanfiction works could now be instantaneously communicated to fanfiction authors resulted in more frequent and productive interactions between members of fanfiction communities. Additionally, as access to fanfiction became more readily available, fanfiction began to attract an ever-widening population of authors with their own particular motivations for, and means of, producing fanfiction works. As the nature of fanfiction's form and function broadened, there became a need for scholars to identify just what they meant when they referred to fanfiction practices.

FANFICTION AFTER JENKINS

The most influential and widely-used academic model of fanfiction during the late 20th century conceived of every work of fanfiction as being based on one or more source texts, whose canonical storylines and characterizations effectively constituted a framework of conventions and requirements for authors (Bacon-Smith, 1986; Derecho, 2006; Garcia, 2016; Jenkins, 1992). These requirements were specific expectations, placed upon fanfiction authors by fanfiction readers and fanfiction communities. Such contextual requirements were enforced and mediated by authors and readers, and provided an informal “rubric of details regarding the laws and policies and history of the universe set forth” by the original work's author (Stein & Busse, 2009, p. 196). For

example, if the original author of *Harry Potter* had firmly established that one of Harry's teachers was trustworthy, a fanfiction author might be criticized by other fanfiction aficionados for writing a story in which that teacher betrayed Harry. These informal rules were coupled with more formal, coordinated social norms about issues like fair use and creativity, which differed from fanfiction community to community (Hetcher, 2009).

This model for understanding would come to be strongly associated with the work of socio-cultural scholar Henry Jenkins, whose 1992 publication of *Textual Poachers* was the most frequently-cited work of fanfiction scholarship within the articles examined in preparation for this literature review. Fanfiction communities were presented by Jenkins as groups of authors and/or readers bound by an interest in engaging with fanfiction works and their source texts (Jenkins, 1992). Jenkins' model would be referenced or employed within studies conducted by scholars operating from a wide range of academic fields, including: cross-cultural examinations of Japanese self-published fanfiction comic books known as *dōjinshi* (Leavitt & Horbinski, 2012; McLelland, 2011); gender scholars investigating homoerotic English-language fanfiction works -- based on Japanese animation franchises such as *Mobile Suit Gundam Wing* -- which were referred to as *yaoi* rather than slash by their authors (Peele, 2007; Pullen & Cooper, 2010); legal scholars focusing on the norms of online fanfiction practice as they relate to pre-existing doctrines of intellectual property and fair use (Hetcher, 2009); linguistic scholars interpreting fanfiction communities as *zones of proximal development* (Thorne, 2009); and -- most

pertinent to this study -- literacy scholars (Andersen, 2010; Lammers, 2016; Land, 2010) modeling fanfiction communities as multimodal affinity spaces (Lammers et al., 2012; Thein & Beach, 2013) wherein adolescents engage in democratizing (Kelley, 2016), identity-constructing practices (Thorne et al., 2015). Across all disciplines, these Jenkins-inspired fanfiction studies were found to have focused not only on the relationships of fanfiction works to their source materials, but also on the digitally-media literacy practices involved in fanfiction's creation and distribution.

Studies of the digital mechanisms and mediums through which fanfiction has been conveyed and discussed were often focused on fanfiction communities as common contexts for fanfiction practice (Hellekson, 2015; Lammers & Marsh, 2015; Van Tuyl, 2016). Fanfiction researchers have often ascribed to online fanfiction practitioners an adherence to basic, community-defined patterns of production, consumption, and interpretation (Jenkins, 1992; Noppe, 2011). Many of the terms that scholars use to refer to these patterns and practices -- such as *beta reading*, a form of peer interaction that fanfiction community members employ in place of the tasks traditionally carried out by editors within the publishing industry (Karpovich, 2006) -- have been adopted directly from the discourse of fanfiction practitioners. This is the result of a high concentration of fanfiction practitioner researchers within the field of fanfiction research, whom fanfiction scholars colloquially refer to as *aca-fans* as a diminutive for *academic fans* (Hills, 2002).

Aca-fans play an important role in fostering goodwill and cooperation between academic researchers and fanfiction practitioners, many of whom are highly attuned to the ways in which their practices and communities might be negatively or inaccurately portrayed by outsider media discourses. Fanfiction researchers have historically been strongly influenced by fanfiction community input, as evidenced by the heavy citation bias in favor of Jenkins' *Textual Poachers* (1992) over *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth* (1992), a similarly comprehensive account of fanfiction community practice published in the same year by Camille Bacon-Smith. Although Bacon-Smith's ethnographic work contained many of the same insights as Jenkins' auto-ethnography, many female authors of homoerotic slash fanfiction reacted negatively to Bacon-Smith's depictions of their cultural practices and motivations, and believed Jenkins' text was a more nuanced and sympathetic portrayal of gender and sexuality in fanfiction (Fanlore, 2017a; Yost, 1994). A more recent example of the necessity of goodwill between fanfiction researchers and fanfiction practitioners was Ogi Ogas and Sai Gaddam's infamous *Rule 34: What Netporn Teaches Us About The Brain*, a survey of Livejournal-based fanfiction communities that was abandoned after several fanfiction practitioners voiced significant ethical and methodological issues about the study (Fan History, 2010; Fanlore, 2017a).

Among practitioner researchers, fanfiction has frequently been treated as a topic of cross-disciplinary academic interest. As a result, fanfiction researchers have often presented their studies at conferences specifically devoted to interdisciplinary investigations of fan practices and fan communities (Berkowitz, 2011). However, as

research into fanfiction community practices continues to grow, researchers have begun to develop consistent ways of interpreting the practices of fanfiction communities and practitioners within the contexts of their particular fields of study. Within the field of education, literacy researchers have incorporated online fanfiction communities' patterns of behavior into their new and evolving conceptions of what precisely constitutes digitally-mediated literacy practice.

In the following chapter, the focus of this literature review will turn to the lenses through which digitally-mediated, as well as socially-mediated, fanfiction reading and writing practices have typically been examined by these literacy education researchers. The ensuing discussion will include an examination of how literacy scholars have come to reconcile the mechanisms of fanfiction literacy practice with existing models for adolescent literacy practice. It will also include an investigation into the factors that have made fanfiction such an important focus of educational research interest during the period covered by the study's data set, as well as the implications that this research has had, and continues to have, on the rapidly-shifting landscape of US K-12 public school literacy curriculum and pedagogy.

CHAPTER THREE

"By the mid-1990s, the emphatic and singular connotations of the term 'literacy' were beginning to work not-so-well" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 1).

FANFICTION LITERACY PRACTICE

SUMMARY

In 1984, literacy scholar Brian Street put forth a model that defined literacy as "the social practices and conceptions of reading and writing" (Street, 1984, p. 1), which -- although contentious at the time of its publication -- became one of the most widely-accepted definitions of literacy practice among US literacy education scholars (Koltay, 2011). Building upon the earlier work of Silvia Scribner and Michael Cole (1981), Street advanced a conception of literacy that encompassed not only the technical skills and proficiencies necessary for the practice of reading and writing, but also the socio-cultural contexts within which literacy practices were situated (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008). Research into these literacy contexts involved questions of what and where, but also the how and the why: considerations for the access, authority, and power that influence literacy practitioners' agency and ability to make their voices heard within their own literacy practices (Koltay, 2011). Investigations of how literacy practices were enacted within these socio-cultural contexts resulted in a wave of research into new forms of

democratically-oriented literacy education pedagogy, with the goal of expanding “the power, voice, and influence available to a broad range of communities who are differentially situated in relation to the dominant institutions and practices of the broadcast era” (Jenkins, in Stein, 2014, 2.77).

Yet, for some scholars, the rapidly changing nature of the contexts within which literacy is practiced has led to an overwhelming sense that “the list of newer literacies does not seem to end” (Koltay, 2011, p. 218). By the beginning of the 21st century, Street’s once controversial model for a socio-cultural conception of literacy practice had resulted in a complex ecosystem of competing approaches to technologically-mediated classroom literacy pedagogy (Bawden, 2008). Prominent literacy scholar David Buckingham had begun to caution his peers against contributing to the increase in new literacy terminologies, arguing that “this proliferation of literacies may be fashionable, but it raises some significant questions,” specifically about whether “literacy” had become merely a “vague synonym” for skill or competency (Buckingham, 2007, p. 43). Other scholars expressed concerns that the preponderance of new forms and new conceptions for literacy had lent a sense of confusion to scholars’ attempts to distinguish these literacies from one another, and that “definitional issues have plagued the concept” (Koltay, 2011, p. 215) of literacies, such as informational literacy (Ward, 2006). It was from this tumultuous landscape that the study of fanfiction as a literacy practice emerged as a potentially fruitful site for exploring how closely scholars’ new pedagogical models for literacy resembled the ways in which adolescent engagement with digital media was continuing to develop.

Literacy scholars' investigations into digitally-mediated literacy practice have resulted in the publication of a number of findings concerning the nature of fanfiction practices, fanfiction practitioners, and fanfiction communities. Many of the articles within the study's data set (see Chapter Four) presented US K-12 public school teachers with suggestions derived from these findings. To that end, this chapter examines how these findings have emerged from work conducted by United States literacy scholars prior to and during the ten-year period covered by the research study.

POLICY FOUNDATIONS

Fanfiction's role as a literacy practice has always been an element of the academic study of fanfiction, dating back as early as Henry Jenkins' foundational work establishing the mechanisms of fanfiction production (Jenkins, 1992). However, the relationship between fanfiction literacy and US K-12 public school literacy instruction did not truly develop in earnest until changes within the US K-12 public education system necessitated that literacy researchers work to provide literacy education practitioners with the tools to meet new literacy education mandates and standards. This section describes how the policy environment of US K-12 public school education in the late 20th and early 21st centuries led researchers to pay closer attention to recreational literacy practices such as fanfiction writing.

Throughout the 20th century, US K-12 public school educators were no strangers to bold predictions about how their profession would be fundamentally improved or

transformed by new and developing forms of media communications technology. For example, in 1922 the popularization of film entertainment led Thomas Edison to claim that "the motion picture is destined to revolutionize our educational system, and that in a few years it will supplant largely, if not entirely, the use of textbooks" (Edison, in Weir, 1922, p. 85). Just a decade later, Ohio School of the Air founder Benjamin Darrow made similar predictions about radio (Darrow, 1932). Half a century later, digital forms of communication had become the new focus of prognostication, with scholars such as Seymour Papert asserting that "there won't be schools in the future... I think the computer will blow up the school" (Papert, in Clark & Wentworth, 1997, p. 9).

By the end of the 20th century, though, the internet and its associated new forms of socially-mediated communication had not made US public schools obsolete. Nevertheless, they remained the focus of considerable education-related speculation and discussion. Digital forms of interpersonal communication had become the focus of a new era of advocacy for increased classroom technology use (McKinsey & Co., 1995; Mehlinger, 1996; Murray, 2006). However, as many scholars had already begun to point out, this era was destined to be remembered not for its successful policy implementation, but rather by the "unfulfilled promise and continued enthusiasm" of and toward media technology (Zhao & Lei, 2009, p. 674).

By this point in the history of the US public school education system, teachers and policymakers had long abandoned the notion that existing standards of literacy instruction adequately reflected "life-altering changes" (Zhao & Lei, 2009, p. 675) to the ways that people had come to engage in practices of written communication. However,

there was little consensus among policymakers or literacy researchers about what, precisely, needed to change in order to bring classroom reading and writing instruction in line with the way reading and writing was being conducted outside of schools. The crux of this debate concerned the impact of computer technology use on student achievement.

Studies of the relationship between student access to computers and in-school literacy performance produced a number of contradictory findings. Some indicated that this relationship was positive (Blasewitz & Taylor, 1999; Nix, 1998; Scrase, 1998; Tracey & Young, 2007), whereas others found that bringing computers into classrooms limited, rather than encouraged, the development of critical thinking (Waight & Abd-El-Khalick, 2007). Several studies tied frequency of home computer use to lower in-school performance and test scores (Antonijevic, 2007; Aypay et al., 2007; MacDonald, 2004; Schacter, 1999). Despite this lack of consensus, the US Department of Education put forth a National Educational Technology Plan in 2004, promising a path toward "a new golden age in American education" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 9), brought about by the integration of new, digital literacy tools into US K-12 public schools.

For many scholars of education policy, this mandate was merely the latest in a long series of proclamations made by policy makers, policy advocacy groups, and school administrators (CEO Forum on Education and Technology, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 2000), who, regardless of conclusive proof of the specific link between technology and student achievement, were "fueled by

the hope that technology can bring significant improvement in education" (Zhao & Lei, 2009, p. 672). By the turn of the 21st century, calls for "connecting the public K-12 schools to the information superhighway" (McKinsey & Co., 1995, p. 12) had resulted in not only a "national infatuation with computers" (Cordes & Miller, 2000, p. 1), but also a significant amount of educational spending on classroom technology. A series of national and state policy directives saw billions of dollars allocated toward providing students with internet-capable classrooms. Teachers working in these classrooms were expected to modify their existing instructional practices in ways that would instill their students with "the knowledge and competence to compete in an increasingly technology-driven world economy" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 45). Yet, it quickly became apparent that existing classroom instructional practices were relatively resilient in their resistance to the influence of new classroom technologies (Cuban, 2001; Fox, 2005).

Policy scholars such as Yong Zhao and Jing Lei observed that, despite 60 billion dollars of school technology upgrades, "it would be quite difficult to find many meaningful differences in how and what students study in school today and how and what they studied in school in 1996" (Zhao & Lei, 2009, p. 672). Some early research on technology policy implementation indicated that the parties most frequently blamed for the failure of technologically-based initiatives were teachers, who were characterized as unable or unwilling to incorporate new technologies into their classrooms (Conway & Zhao, 2003; MacMillan et al., 1997; Noble, 1996). Other scholars laid the blame on local

school administrators, whom they suggested had failed to successfully observe and learn from other districts' effective technology-based school reforms (Bogden, 2001; Fullan, 2001; Stager, 2006). Yet, it was during this same period that many educational policy researchers (Campbell, 1998; Committee on Technological Literacy et al., 2002; Yannie, 2000) had begun to strongly assert that the problems with US educational technology reforms lay with the failure to realize that the ubiquity of technology would not necessarily lead to greater understanding of the ways "technology interacts with people and society" (Zhao & Lei, 2009, p. 672). These researchers echoed a concern that literacy education scholars had been voicing for decades: that no matter how many resources the US public school education system devoted toward filling their classrooms with computers, classroom tech use was bound to fail as long as schools "merely focus on how to use specific technology hardware and software, but not the deep understanding of the nature of technology" or the way in which it was employed (Zhao & Lei, 2009, p. 672).

For years, many critics of school policy posited that there was a fundamental incompatibility between digital media communications technologies and the structure of K-12 public school education (Collins, 1996; Papert, 1993; Ravitch, 1993). These scholars suggested that a new approach to classroom literacy education pedagogy was required in order to successfully employ such technologies within public school classrooms. In order to reconcile these incompatibilities, these scholars suggested that

educators turn their attentions toward the literacy pedagogies that underlie their classroom implementations of digitally-mediated technology (New London Group, 1996). Rather than focusing on employing digital technology as a tool, these scholars proposed alternative literacy pedagogies that would treat technology as a context for critical interaction within a rapidly changing, digitally-mediated cultural landscape (Bawden, 2008; Cuban, 2001; Gilster, 1997; Hobbs, 1998).

MEDIA LITERACY

By the end of the 20th century, scholars' conceptions of the mechanics of students' out-of-school literacy practices had begun to rapidly change in response to a new landscape of media technology, and researchers had turned their attentions toward identifying the ways these changes were altering political, economic, and interpersonal interactions in society (Giroux, 2005; Rainie, 2006; Zhao & Lei, 2009). However, the tendency of US public school policy makers to focus solely on the technological causes of these societal shifts was viewed by many researchers as a grave systematic error. These researchers' examinations of students' engagement with contemporary media technologies had led them to conclude that policy makers had misjudged exactly how much -- or rather, how little -- these technologies themselves effected societal change. They asserted that what was important was not the new technology that was now being

used for purposes of adolescents' personal expression, but rather how changes in personal expression guided adolescents' selection and use of this technology.

Researchers took issue with policy makers' assumptions that, when given a choice between digitally-mediated forms of reading and writing and their traditional alternatives, students would overwhelmingly choose newer mediums of communications. Studies such as Gunther Kress' investigations into how children select their own means of socio-cultural expression (1997) demonstrated that that K-12 students' choices of particular forms of expression over others were primarily dictated by "the materials they have at hand, or the techniques they have mastered, on the basis of 'interest' in what is of crucial importance to them at the given moment" (Van Leeuwen, 2015, p. 460). This, in turn, bolstered scholars' assertions that, to US K-12 students, the ability to express oneself was a more important consideration than the means through which the self was expressed. For this reason, many scholars pushed K-12 educators to disentangle their views of reading and writing from their views of the mediums through which reading and writing were conveyed. The idea that the nature and merit of particular mediums of expression, such as print publications or multimedia videos, were necessarily tied to the nature and merit of the messages they conveyed to their audiences, was considered an outdated model of literacy pedagogy.

For these reasons, researchers' prescribed reforms to traditional classroom literacy pedagogies and instructional practices shifted away from models of technological literacy

-- “the ability to ongoingly adapt to, understand, evaluate and make use of the continually emerging innovations in information technology” (Shapiro & Hughes, 1996) -- toward models of media literacy -- the ability to access, create, understand, and critically evaluate media content (Koltay, 2011). Shifting notions of what precisely constituted the practice of media literacy within this new era of telecommunications were shepherded by a vocal group of literacy scholars, who believed that traditional approaches to literacy education had become outmoded, outdated, and unable to adequately prepare students for the steady pace of media technology development that was likely to continue for most of their future adult lives. Rather than focusing on instilling students with the ability to identify, understand, and make use of these new technologies, media literacy scholars instead directed literacy educators to “facilitate understanding of how the media produce meaning, how they are organized, and how they construct their own reality” (Gutiérrez Martín and Hottmann, 2006, p. 4). Many scholars suggested that one possible way to implement these changes might be to modify K-12 classroom literacy instruction to more closely emulate the patterns of literacy engagement in which US K-12 students were already likely to engage (Giroux, 2005; Moje, 2000; Rainie, 2006; Rideout et al., 2005; Shifrin, 2006).

Researchers who called upon teachers to adopt and adapt their students’ existing recreational literacy practices for classroom use often operated under the view that out-of-school contexts for literacy practice were in some way pedagogically superior to in-

school contexts. For instance, literacy researcher James Paul Gee posited that digitally-mediated contexts of literacy practice offered adolescents a greater variety of routes to participation and status when compared to traditional K-12 literacy classroom settings (Gee & Hayes, 2010). Gee coined the term *affinity space* to describe informal learning spaces whose members shared a common desire to discuss and increase their understanding of a particular interest. Affinity spaces provided participants with opportunities to conduct reciprocal learning across experience lines and to transform media content in response to the actions and interactions of fellow participants (Gee, 2004, pp. 87-88).

Gee's interest in adolescents' recreational literacy practices was shared not only by scholars who adopted affinity space terminology (Lammers et al., 2012) but also by literacy researchers and theorists who operated under other literacy frameworks (Merchant, 2009; Thorne, 2009). The literacy researchers who would come to be most closely associated with the study of fanfiction were those operating under multiliteracy and new media literacy frameworks. In 1996, a group of scholars known as the New London Group (1996) met to discuss and outline a cohesive pedagogical model for the in-school replication of the most beneficial aspects of out-of-school literacy practices. These guidelines focused on maintaining "a teaching and learning relationship" between peers and ensuring a "full and equitable social participation" among diverse student bodies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; New London Group, 1996, p. 60). This model, which

the New London Group referred to as a *pedagogy of multiliteracies*, influenced many literacy scholars' growing understandings of media literacy. It served as a guide for literacy researchers and educators to envision their students' out-of-school media practices, and served as a signpost for a new scholastic movement toward newer, more democratizing forms of conceiving and teaching the relationships between individuals and the media they regularly produce and consume (Aufderheide, 1992; Koltay, 2011). Over the next decade, this pedagogy of multiliteracies would grow and diversify into a number of angles from which to evaluate recreational media literacy practices such as fanfiction.

FANFICTION RESEARCH

In subsequent years, a number of researchers and theorists strove to define and articulate the core operationalizable aspects of their proposed pedagogies for digitally-mediated media literacy instruction (e.g., Bawden, 2008; Martin, 2006). These new approaches were modeled on patterns of media engagement that these researchers had begun to observe in K-12 students' out-of-school recreational behaviors (Honan, 2009; Lanham, 1995; Rowan et al., 2002). In 1998, media literacy researcher Renee Hobbs posed seven key, unresolved pedagogical questions to these scholars, each one designed to clarify the processes by which new forms of literacy instruction were being developed for and implemented within K-12 classrooms (Hobbs, 1998):

- 1) Should media literacy education aim to protect children and young people from negative media influences?
- 2) Should media production be an essential feature of media literacy education?
- 3) Should media literacy focus on popular culture texts?
- 4) Should media literacy have a more explicit political and/or ideological agenda?
- 5) Should media literacy be focused on school-based K-12 educational environments?
- 6) Should media literacy be taught as a specialist subject or integrated within the context of existing subjects?
- 7) Should media literacy initiatives be supported financially by media organizations?

Over the next decade, debates over the answers to these questions would continue to drive media literacy research and theory. One of the consequences of these debates was the emergence of fanfiction as a site of literacy research. Prior to this point, fanfiction had often been implicitly referred to as a literacy practice within literacy theorists' discussions of adolescent media consumption and media engagement (Alvermann, 2008; Storey, 1996). Now, however, the drive to discover just how well scholars' theoretical models for adolescent literacy practice aligned to actual adolescent literacy practices led researchers to conduct more explicit investigations into what, precisely, it meant for fanfiction to be a *literacy practice*.

Many of the resulting studies of fanfiction sought to fit examples of fanfiction practice into existing theories of adolescent media literacy. Some scholars believed that

the horizontal and egalitarian structures common among fanfiction and other fan media creation practices (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Gutiérrez, 2013) closely corresponded to the New London Group's socially-oriented model for literacy practice. Consequently, digitally-mediated communities devoted to peer-oriented fanfiction writing were offered as examples of contexts for multiliteracy frameworks. Online fanfiction communities also fit the aims of researchers who had adopted the view that digitally-mediated affinity spaces were pedagogically superior to US K-12 public school contexts for reading and writing. For these researchers, the enthusiasm with which adolescent fanfiction practitioners engaged in creative writing stood in stark contrast to existing literacy education practices that they had characterized as incapable of sufficiently motivating or engaging a generation of naturally tech-savvy and media literate adolescents.

Fanfiction's use as an example within this discourse was pervasive. By 2008, literacy scholars Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel would remark: "it has almost become a research cliché to cite instances of young people trapped in literacy remediation in schools whilst winning public esteem as fan fiction writers, AMV remixers, or successful gamers online" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008, p. 8). Yet, despite the diversity of form and function within fanfiction practice, most educational studies of fanfiction presented remarkably identical models for the nature and context of adolescent fanfiction writing. K-12 literacy education researchers most commonly conceived of fanfiction literacy practices in terms of the conventions surrounding their patterns of media production within digitally-mediated online community spaces.

Literacy researchers contended that every work of fanfiction was based on one or more source texts, and that fanfiction authors expected that members of fanfiction communities -- or at the very least, those who chose to read their works -- shared intertextual knowledge about these established characters and storylines. Educational research on online fanfiction databases indicated that these sites of fanfiction literacy practice typically provided fanfiction authors with much more than just a repository for the storage of digital copies of their media works: they also offered creators large, multicultural peer communities, brought together by common media interests rather than demographics such as race, gender, age, class, or ability. This peer-oriented conception of fanfiction practice fit models of adolescent literacy such as affinity spaces that ascribed a strong egalitarian nature to digitally-mediated adolescent literacy practice.

During this period, literacy researchers observed that most online fanfiction communities set standards of discourse and interaction designed to govern these patterns of reception and discussion among members. Fanfiction community members' interests might include specific media source texts -- such as *Harry Potter* or *Gundam Wing* -- or they might involve an interest in specific types of fanfiction writing -- such as romantically-oriented *slash* or lyrically-driven *songfic* (Fanlore, 2017b; O'Malley, 2013) -- that members enjoy regardless of a work's particular source material. However, regardless of fanfiction's source material, fanfiction communities imposed informal rules and codes of conduct, which were typically found in conjunction with more formal, coordinated social norms about issues like fair use and creativity, including clearly delineated patterns of exchange and attribution (Jenkins, 1992; Noppe, 2011; Stein &

Busse, 2009) that differed from fanfiction community to fanfiction community (Hetcher, 2009).

In this way, the source texts' canonical storylines and characterizations were depicted as frameworks of specific expectations placed on fanfiction authors by other fanfiction enthusiasts. Unlike the expectations placed upon students by their teachers, these restrictions were determined by peer consensus. Fanfiction authors and their readers had determined which elements of the original texts were most important, and which were fair game for deviation. This allowed authors to produce works that adhered to beloved character traits and referenced popular storylines, while simultaneously granting them the creative freedom to create a desired sense of confusion and incongruity by willfully contradicting well-known elements of the original text (Jenkins, 1992; Stein & Busse, 2009).

Literacy researchers noted that, although “technically, there is nothing to stop a fanfic author from, say, simply taking the names of the characters [...] and transplanting them into an entirely different set of circumstances” (Parrish, 2010, p. 180), some elements of these characters must remain recognizable in order for the story to resonate with fanfiction readers. Although this might have the appearance of constituting a rigid limitation of fanfiction author creativity, literacy researchers asserted that, in practice, these conventions still allowed for substantial changes to the “basic components” (Day, 2014, p. 36) of the source texts. Some researchers have posited that these qualities of fanfiction practice represent tantalizing templates that can potentially be modified into creative writing exercises by US K-12 public school educators.

Within the bounds of online fanfiction communities, fanfiction authors manipulate and mediate the intertextual connections between their works and their works' source texts, resulting in an informal "rubric of details regarding the laws and policies and history of the universe set forth" by the original texts' authors (Stein & Busse, 2009, p. 196). The recognition of these intertextual connections constitutes a demonstration of critical literacy skill, while the application of these connections can be interpreted as a form of peer-mediated creative writing. Connections that allow fanfiction authors to play upon their audience's prior knowledge and tap into readers' sentiments toward the original work might be adapted into classroom assignments in which students work together to produce short stories based on previously assigned works of literature.

In this manner, fanfiction communities were presented by literacy scholars as having the potential to be adapted into empowering and rewarding classroom assignments, capable of instilling within adolescents a form of "cultural capital" that could foster media-based peer interactions (Kinder, 1999, p. 6). Fanfiction communities provide their members, many of whom are young, developing authors, with social networking techniques for attracting, cultivating, and interacting with large, diverse audiences of like-minded media fans. Scholars have theorized that if these patterns of interaction can be replicated within K-12 public school classrooms, then they might allow adolescent fanfiction practitioners to hone their creative and descriptive writing skills, learn positive methods of engaging in meta-discussions of writing and reading related

topics, and develop their abilities to give peer feedback constructively while simultaneously receiving it gracefully (Thomas, 2007).

However, notably absent from these depictions of the potential benefits of fanfiction practice were any substantive accounts of how fanfiction has been practiced outside of digitally-mediated online community contexts. Prior to and during the period covered by the data set, research examining fanfiction literacy practices as they related to US K-12 public school literacy education programs relied mostly on case studies and ethnographic accounts of adolescents participating in online fanfiction practitioner communities, none of which truly resembled K-12 classrooms that are dominated by in-person, peer-to-peer interactions. Although research has uncovered a great deal of information about online fanfiction literacy practice, literacy scholars have generally refrained from any serious investigations or discussions of fanfiction works whose authors did not engage in, or possibly even wish to engage in, any form of digitally-mediated new media practice.

Additionally, although there have been certain elements of online fanfiction practice that researchers have believed are beneficial enough to justify their extraction from recreational settings and adaptation into existing classroom practices, no research has attended to the issue of whether these are the same elements that draw adolescent fanfiction practitioners to fanfiction practices, or whether existing fanfiction practitioners will respond positively to seeing these elements appear in their mandatory school assignments. Considering the emphasis early fanfiction scholars have consistently placed on issues of marginalization and stigmatization, it is troubling that a period characterized

by such a significant increase in fanfiction scholarship contained such a lack of research attending to the issue of how existing adolescent fanfiction literacy practitioners might have responded to educators' attempts to re-contextualize fanfiction practice to fit the policy-driven institutional needs of K-12 public school literacy programs. As will be discussed in later chapters, this represents a blind spot for any researchers attempting to use student enthusiasm as a justification for bringing fanfiction into K-12 schools.

Ultimately, a necessary precursor to the discussion of whether educators' conceptions of fanfiction practice match the conceptions of their students is the exploration of what, precisely, literacy instructors have been taught about the nature of recreational fanfiction literacy practices. Furthermore, it is imperative for literacy researchers interested in bringing recreational literacies like fanfiction into K-12 public schools to know how what literacy instructors have been taught about recreational literacy compares to what they have been taught about existing methods and conventions of US K-12 public school literacy instruction. This study was designed to facilitate further explorations into K-12 educators' understandings of fanfiction literacy practice. To that end, the focus of this study has been directed toward a specific period in the history of US K-12 public school education that corresponds to both a rising interest in K-12 classroom literacy instruction reform and a rising interest in recreational fanfiction literacy practices. The next chapter of this dissertation will describe in detail how the study was designed, and how it was carried out.

CHAPTER FOUR

“Virtually all research involves documents, and most of these can be analyzed qualitatively” (Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 125).

METHODOLOGY

SUMMARY

Media exist in “a kind of dialogue with society” (Richardson, 2007, p. 26): the messages they contain and convey are capable not only of influencing their audiences’ beliefs, but also of reflecting existing beliefs of their audiences’ societies and cultures (Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 1999; Woods & Kroger, 2000). Although the specific mechanisms for the relationship between media reports and readers’ beliefs are still somewhat speculative and unclear, media researchers have nevertheless developed a variety of theories for identifying and interpreting how media shape, package, and present information (McCullick et al., 2003; Shaw & Nederhouser, 2005; Thomas, 2003; Townsend & Ryan, 2012). Among those theories, the socio-cultural media frame analysis research paradigm was chosen as the most appropriate approach to this study's investigation into its research question:

“How is fanfiction framed for literacy education practitioner periodical audiences?”

In this chapter, the study's methodology is fully laid out, including a full description of how I collected and cultivated the study's data set. The subsequent sections of the chapter describe how the study's socio-cultural frame analysis research paradigm was operationalized and applied to the initial coding in order to reorganize and parse the data. Explicit examples from the coding and analysis processes are employed throughout the chapter to demonstrate how frame analysis locked in the data, and how all of the aforementioned steps resulted in the identification of the three distinct frames that will be extensively discussed in Chapter Five.

FRAMES

Media accounts of social and cultural issues are capable of presenting these issues in a variety of ways that, although equally accurate, may convey widely different meanings to their audiences (Richardson, 2007, p. 49). For this reason, many researchers have adopted the view that media constitute critical sites of social and cultural discourse, and have developed a variety of research paradigms designed to explain and uncover the ways the media's meanings, symbols, and messages influence, reinforce, and perpetuate their audiences' existing beliefs about a range of socio-cultural issues (Cooper, 1989; Fairclough, 1995; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Ryan, 1991; Schudson, 2011). Within

these researchers' descriptions of media communication, the term *framing* is often used to describe the "selection, emphasis, and presentation" of "what exists, what happens, and what matters" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7).

Framing refers to the processes by which documents are consistently aligned to organizational and conceptual standards within and across a set of media works (Kosicki, 2006; McCombs et al., 1997; Scheufele, 1999). This alignment can occur innately (Goffman, 1974; Koenig, 2004) or be the result of an active and conscious process (Reese, 2001; Tankard, 2001) designed to bring the structure and presentation of the works' contents in line with their audiences' prevalent language, sentiments, and beliefs. For example, newspapers cite the testimonies of bystanders whom they expect their readers to consider peers, and call upon the knowledge of experts whom their readers might consider credible authorities (Fairclough, 1995; Fowler, 1991; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1998; Schudson, 1995). Similarly, publications for professional communities adhere to their readers' professionally agreed-upon conventions for sharing and discussing information. (Gee, 1999). Consequently, *framing theory* is a way of conceiving how the presentation of ideas is built and set.

Although some theorists have noted that framing is a term that has historically been "characterized by theoretical and empirical vagueness" (Scheufele, 1999, p. 103), and that it "has been used in different ways in several different disciplines to mean different things" (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997, p. 39), efforts to determine the scope of framing theory have resulted in a conception of framing as a theoretical paradigm or model for media effects (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999; Zhou & Moy, 2007). Framing

represents a way of viewing media attempts to “develop and crystallize meaning” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 2) in the form of patterns of message building and message setting. Under framing theory, media create patterns of inclusion and exclusion by consistently selecting and organizing messages in a way that promotes particular socio-cultural voices and perspectives as more salient and important than others. Many scholars of communication who engage in the identification and categorization of these patterns have come to refer to them as *frames* (Entman, 1993; Entman, 2007; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Goffman, 1974; Menashe & Siegel, 1998; Reese, 2001; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Referring to these media effects-related patterns as frames grants media researchers a model for understanding how media messages are organized. Additionally, the categorization of these patterns into frames affords researchers a greater "operational understanding" (Matthes, 2009, p. 350) of how these patterns occur and recur within and across a data set. Implicit to the categorization of these patterns into frames is the view that the repetition of frames across a representative data set indicates the ways in which media assign problems and support remedies in relation to particular socio-cultural issues (Coburn, 2006; Entman et al. 2009; Matthes, 2009). In this way, framing research methodologies operate to convey to researchers what media portray as important, whom they portray as experts, and whom they portray as at fault in relation to the issues that the researchers are investigating (Entman, 1993; Fairclough, 1995; Gordon, 2015; Menashe & Siegel, 1998; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Van Gorp, 2007; Wallack et al., 1993).

By uncovering, identifying, and organizing patterns within a representative data set into frames, literacy education researchers may discover a broad range of economic anxieties, moral ambiguities, and institutional mistrusts that pervade media audiences' attitudes toward public education (Entman, 1993, 2004; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Goffman, 1974; Menashe & Siegel, 1998; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Snow & Benford, 1988; Snow et al., 1986; Tankard et al., 1991; Van Gorp, 2007; Wadsworth, 1998; Wallack et al., 1993). For example, a frame-oriented research analysis paradigm can be employed in order to uncover what makes news media reports that consistently “point to problems regarding our children’s ability to read and write” (Strickland, 1998, p. 102) resonate so strongly with their readers (Entman, 1993; Fairclough, 1995; Sosnoski, 2015; Van Gorp, 2007). Similarly, the identification and analysis of frames can indicate to researchers which media processes underlie the construction of these reports' structure and scaffolding (Price & Tewksbury, 1997; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

The identification and analysis of media frames constitute a qualitative method of discerning patterns of inclusion and exclusion within media data. This allows qualitative media researchers to effectively parse “what will be discussed, how it will be discussed, and, above all, how it will *not* be discussed” (Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 52) and “what exists, what happens and what matters” (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7) within a longitudinal set of data (Altheide, 1976; Davis, 1997; Epstein, 1973; Fishman, 1980; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Schudson, 2011; Thomas, 2002). By employing an operational understanding of framing theory, researchers are able to focus on what frames *do* -- such as define the

scope of problems and evaluate potential solutions (Entman, 1993; Matthes, 2009) -- thereby allowing the researcher to distinguish frame patterns from other patterns related to "themes, arguments, assertions, and other under-theorized concepts" (Entman et al., 2009, p. 176). The following sections of this chapter will describe how framing theories were operationalized as a socio-cultural media research paradigm within this study, and why this paradigm was considered the best fit for the study's research objectives.

MEDIA RESEARCH PARADIGM

Based on the strong socio-cultural focus of literacy researchers' investigations into fanfiction practices (see Chapter Three), I determined that socio-cultural frame analysis was a suitable choice for the study's media research paradigm. Socio-cultural frame analysis and cognitive-linguistic frame analysis are the two primary categories of frame analysis research (Sosnoski, 2015). These two categories are similar insofar as both they can be employed in order to uncover how words, images, and phrases are selected and ordered within data (Ryan, 1991; Sosnoski, 2015). Although both are equally valid approaches to the study of media messages, socio-cultural methodologies are better suited to the task of identifying how elements within media messages represent larger patterns of discourse, and cognitive-linguistic methodologies are better suited to the task of identifying how these larger patterns of discourse contribute to the production or understanding of specific media messages. Socio-cultural media frame analysis was therefore an appropriate media research paradigm for this study's investigations into how

fanfiction literacy practices were conveyed within the overarching discourses of a representative sample of K-12 public school literacy education-related periodicals.

This paradigm allowed for the discovery of not just how the articles published within these periodicals deliberately or consciously chose to discuss fanfiction literacy practices, but also how fanfiction literacy practices were tangentially discussed within the context of articles not directly concerned with issues related to fanfiction practices, practitioners, or communities. During the selection and construction of the study's methodology, I posited that teachers might be just as likely to encounter depictions of unfamiliar new literacy practices within discourses about literacy education practice in general as they were to seek out articles specifically about these unfamiliar practices. As a result, my study required a media research paradigm that was capable of uncovering not only the ways in which fanfiction literacy practices were described and discussed within articles about fanfiction practice, but also the ways in which fanfiction literacy practices were described and discussed within articles about other literacy issues and dilemmas.

SOCIO-CULTURAL FRAME ANALYSIS

Socio-cultural approaches to media research carry with them a number of theoretical and tangible implications for the study of media practice. These implications have tangible effects on a researcher's interpretations of narrative structure (Davis, 1997; Schudson, 2011; Thomas, 2002) and conceptualizations of audience/reader reception (Entman, 1993; Gitlin, 1980; Goffman, 1981). Acknowledging and embracing these

implications allows a researcher to mindfully identify and link media context with media content, with the goal of determining the normative social and cultural values that influenced the data's social and cultural contexts of production and consumption (Altheide & Schneider, 2013; Gamson, 1992). Like all socio-cultural approaches to media research, this study's socio-cultural frame analysis paradigm situated the study's data within these social and cultural contexts of production and consumption (Gamson, 1992; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Ryan, 1991). This allowed for the analysis of the impact of normative values and perspectives on the data.

In order to craft a version of the socio-cultural frame analysis paradigm that best fit this study's aims, I examined how the paradigm has been employed in the exploration of a wide range of socio-cultural issues. I reviewed a number of studies, including but not limited to: Baldwin Van Gorp's (2005) study of news media coverage of asylum seekers as victims or intruders; Douglas Downs' (2002) study of news media marginalization of United States gun owners; and J. Richard Stevens and Christopher Bell's (2012) study of forum posts about comic book ownership and digital piracy. Within each of these studies, researchers focused on identifying how media produced and conveyed particular meanings, symbols, and messages that simultaneously influenced and perpetuated readers' beliefs and values (Cooper, 1989; Fairclough, 1995; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Schudson, 2011). During the coding process, these socio-cultural frame analysis researchers uncovered and tracked patterns of discourse that followed the standard four operations associated with frame building and frame setting: they consistently identified and defined problems, interpreted causal connections, morally

evaluated practices, and prescribed possible solutions (Entman, 1993; Fowler, 1991; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1998; Schudson, 1995; Tankard et al., 1991). These messages were organized by the researchers into frame categories, differentiated in part by the ways their associated patterns of discourse were found to employ certain views, beliefs, speech patterns, and modes of discourse that presented particular experts and stakeholders as more viable or trustworthy than others (Fairclough, 1995; Fowler, 1991; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1998; Schudson, 1995).

Within these previously conducted frame analysis research studies, the process of extracting patterns from the data and then identifying them as frame categories has been conducted inductively (Worthington, 2001), meaning that frame categories were determined during data analysis, deductively (Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad, 2000), meaning that frame categories were pre-determined prior to analysis and built into the study's initial codebook (Matthes, 2009), or through a combination of both inductive and deductive extraction protocols (Van Gorp, 2007). In the case of this study, frames were extracted using Van Gorp's hybrid frame matrix method (Van Gorp, 2005; Van Gorp, 2007), which Van Gorp adapted from the prior work of William Gamson and Kathryn Lasch (1983). This method has been characterized by the use of inductive data analysis to "determine for each text which elements and propositions can probably function as framing or reasoning devices" (Van Gorp, 2007, p. 72), followed by the use of deduction to determine the full extent of these devices' presence within the data set. I selected this method because it allowed for literacy research studies uncovered during this study's literature review -- including those related to the context of public school literacy

education policy within which the data were historically situated -- to guide the discovery of elements "embedded in media content" (Van Gorp, 2007, p. 61).

Armed with the knowledge of how socio-cultural frame analysis research had been successfully conducted by previous scholars, I then worked to implement a protocol for data collection, as described in the following section.

RESEARCH PROTOCOL

Many research studies benefit from the implementation of a comprehensive, yet generalizable, research protocol: a "description of planned research" (Ohio State University, 2014, p. 1) encompassing all elements of the study's methodology, from its research design and sampling procedures to its codebook and data analysis paradigms. Research protocols are far more likely to be found within medical and clinical studies than in other fields of academic research. However, in 2013, media researchers David Altheide and Christopher Schneider presented a comprehensive protocol model designed to aid scholars in the design and implementation of qualitative media research studies. I found Altheide and Schneider's model to be a particularly valuable resource while conducting this research study, particularly in its capacity to promote a better understanding of how the research study's questions, items, categories, and variables "guide data collection from documents" (Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 44). Altheide and Schneider's model included the following twelve elements:

Step 1: Pursue a specific problem to be investigated.

Step 2: Become familiar with the process and context of the information source...

(Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 39).

Step 3: Become familiar with several (6-10) examples of relevant documents, noting particularly the format. Select a unity of analysis...

(Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 39).

Step 4: List several items or categories (variables) to guide data collection, and draft a protocol (data collection sheet).

Step 5: Test the protocol by collecting data from several documents.

Step 6: Revise the protocol, and select several additional cases to further refine the protocol

(Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 44).

Step 7: Arrive at a sampling rationale and strategy...

(Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 54).

Step 8: Collect the data, using preset codes, if appropriate, and many descriptive examples...

(Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 62).

Step 9: Perform data analysis, including conceptual refinement and data coding...

(Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 68).

Step 10: Compare and contrast "extremes" and "key differences" within each category or item...

(Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 71).

Step 11: Combine the brief summaries with an example of the typical case as well as the extremes. Illustrate with materials from the protocols for each case. Note surprises and curiosities about these cases and other materials in your data

(Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 72).

Step 12: Integrate the findings with your interpretation and key concepts...

(Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 73).

These twelve steps provided my study with a set of generalized guidelines for understanding the processes of qualitative media research studies, including “the context of discovery in documents, the process or life cycle of a document, and the use and meaning of that document” (Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 19). The first three steps involve preparing and staging the research study, and describe how research questions are developed, literature reviews are conducted, and exploratory pilot studies are typically carried out by qualitative media researchers. Steps four through six contain theoretical explanations of the processes researchers conduct in order to draft, test, and revise their research methodologies. Steps seven through twelve describe data sampling, collection, coding, analysis, and reporting.

A number of alternative explanations of the process of qualitative media analysis were available at the time I initiated this study, including those advanced by Kathy Charmaz (2006), Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2011), and John Richardson (2007). Although all of these models were valuable in terms of their ability to inform my methodological perspectives, they lacked the flexibility necessary for the broad range of

socio-cultural frame analysis research paradigms that I encountered during my review of prior studies and was selecting from at the time I was designing my study's methodology. Only Altheide and Schneider's model was able to account for all of the possible forms of socio-cultural media frame analysis that I was considering at that point. The following sections of this chapter describe the partially-inductive method of extracting frame categories from the data that I ultimately decided upon.

DATA COLLECTION

This section describes how data were collected, categorized, and initially coded. One of the guiding principles of data collection is the early identification of the study's basic unit of analysis, the typical portion or segment of the data analyzed at any given time (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004; Pell Institute, 2017; Trochim, 2006). The scope of the study's research question necessitated that the unit of analysis allow for the examination of patterns of discourse employed across many articles, for the purposes of determining messages throughout the entire data set. This precluded the use of a research approach focused on the internal structures of just a few documents. With this in mind, I identified the study's basic unit of analysis as articles within literacy education practitioner periodicals containing descriptions, depictions, or discussions of fanfiction literacy practice.

This data set was composed of articles published within periodicals gathered between April 5 and May 8, 2013, through the ProQuest Central research database. The

ProQuest database contains millions of full-text articles from periodicals relating to areas of academic interest, and is searchable by article title, author, keyword, periodical name, and a number of other methods using an online web portal. The ProQuest database served not only as the source of the data, but also as part of the justification for restricting the data set to articles from professional literacy education periodicals. Although other sources such as academic books represented potentially interesting sites of research for the investigation into how professional education materials presented fanfiction literacy practices, it was determined early on during the data collection process that both practicing and pre-service public school literacy educators had the greatest access to, and thus the greatest potential to be influenced by, the articles contained within online research databases.

The process began with a search for articles containing the terms *fanfiction* or *fan fiction* in combination with one or more of the terms *literacy*, *language arts*, and *English education*, which represented common ways of discussing K-12 classroom contexts of literacy education. The search was limited to documents published within the ten years prior to the period of data collection. Restricting the range to ten years produced a field of data that was both diverse enough to account for a wide range of journal publications, which increased the data set's coverage, and narrow enough in scope to ensure that these publications were reasonably contemporary to one another, which ensured that comparative data analysis could be conducted on the data set.

A second wave of the data collection process was then initiated in order to gather additional relevant articles that were not picked up by the first stage's search protocol.

This additional stage was designed to allow for the possibility that articles related to fanfiction literacy practice had gone undetected due to their use of synonyms for the study's initial search terms. During this stage, every publication that was the source of an article collected during the first stage was searched again for the terms *fanfiction* and *fan fiction* in addition to the terms *reading*, *writing*, *learning*, *teaching*, and *attainment*. Expanding the search to these five new terms successfully produced a number of additional articles from publications that were already represented within the data set. Although these terms did not represent an exhaustive list of ways of referring to literacy education, they were included in order to increase the possibility of comparing articles from the same publication during the frame analysis stage.

The data collection process ultimately yielded an initial set of 131 distinct articles published within a total of 51 periodicals, which at this point were coded based on the publications' stated purposes. This resulted in the following distribution of periodicals within the initial data set:

Practitioner periodicals -- based on general educational research:

72 articles

Practitioner periodicals -- based on research conducted on secondary students:

17 articles

Practitioner periodicals -- produced explicitly for secondary teachers:

9 articles

Practitioner periodicals -- reporting best practices in the field of K-12 education:

7 articles

Strategic planning resources:

5 articles

Dissertations:

4 articles

Research periodicals -- professional associations:

4 articles

Research periodicals -- teacher preparation:

3 articles

Trade publications -- commercial content, press publications, etc.:

3 articles

Association periodicals -- non-research:

2 articles

Planning resource periodicals:

2 articles

Librarian association research periodicals:

1 article

Research periodicals -- teaching as it relates to parenting:

1 article

Teacher federation periodicals:

1 article

During the coding process described in this chapter's next section, 36 of these 131 articles were removed from the data set based on a number of predetermined exclusion criteria, including but not limited to: articles that mentioned fanfiction only within their annotated bibliographies; articles that were entered into the online ProQuest database with incorrectly transcribed abstracts; and articles whose means of publication did not meet the stated criteria of the study, including dissertations and paid advertisements.

Articles were also excluded from the data set if they were found to have no bearing on the practice of K-12 public school literacy instruction within the United States. Although other English-speaking countries -- such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada -- had strong histories of both fanfiction and classroom literacy research (and thus the potential to influence US-based teachers' views on fanfiction literacy practices), articles published within non-US periodicals were included only in cases where their presentation of classroom literacy practice was deemed transferable to US classrooms. For instance, Neil Andersen's "Media Literacy's Gifts to Literature Study" -- published in the New Zealand-based journal *English Teaching: Practice and Critique* -- was included within the data set due to the article's focus on strategies for increasing student engagement with texts commonly taught within US classrooms, while Barry Duncan and Carol Arcus' "Skills for Surviving the 21st Century" -- published in the Toronto-based *Education Forum: The Magazine for Secondary School Professionals* -- was excluded from the data set because its focus on drawing distinctions between national and provincial Canadian K-12 public school literacy education policy guidelines

was not deemed transferable or pertinent to the relationship between fanfiction literacy practices and US classroom literacy instruction.

By the end of the coding process, the data set contained ninety-five articles published within thirty-five distinct periodicals (see Figure A). The articles were then coded as described within the following section.

Figure A: List of Periodicals in Data Set by Frequency (n = 95)

Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy	16
Language Arts	11
Research in the Teaching of English	8
English Journal	7
Voices from the Middle	7
Reading Research Quarterly	6
English Teaching: Practice and Critique	4
On the Horizon	4
Annual Review of Applied Linguistics	3
Educational Researcher	2
Phi Delta Kappan	2
Research in the Schools	2
ALAN Review	1
Children's Literature	1
Children's Literature Association Quarterly	1
College English	1

Composition Studies	1
Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue	1
Education Week's Digital Directions	1
English Education	1
Gifted Child Today	1
International Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society	1
Journal of Advanced Academics	1
Journal of Computer Assisted Learning	1
Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia	1
Journal of Literacy Research	1
Kappa Delta Pi Record	1
Language Teaching	1
Literacy Research and Instruction	1
Middle School Journal	1
MultiMedia & Internet@Schools	1
Reading Horizons	1
Resource Links	1
Teacher Librarian	1
The Social Studies	1

CODING

As mentioned previously in this chapter, I employed a socio-cultural media frame analysis paradigm in order to uncover the fanfiction-related patterns within the data set that “define problems”, “diagnose causes”, “make moral judgments”, and “suggest remedies” (Zhou & Moy, 2007, p. 84). In order to accomplish this task, I first created a codebook designed to gather both metadata and content-based “elements and propositions” (Van Gorp, 2007, p. 72) from each article. As individual articles were identified as the study’s basic unit of analysis, each article was coded for this metadata and content independently from the rest of the data set, before being standardized into a form that would allow for cataloguing and comparison.

For example, in the article “On the cusp of cyberspace: Adolescents' online text use in conversation,” by Margaret Berg (2011), the article’s author reported on a two-year mediated discourse analysis study designed to investigate how eight teenagers engaged with, and spoke about their engagements with, digitally-mediated literacy practices. The stated purpose of this article was to “delineate five patterns of text use -- reference, authority, experience, expression, and instrument” (Berg, 2011, p. 485) that occurred within observed conversations between young adults using computers within a public library, and to connect these patterns back to how literacies were taught within K-12 classrooms. During the first stage of the coding process, all of this information was coded in full, using quotations from the article itself whenever possible. However, upon coding all of the data set’s articles, the code corresponding to the stated purpose of Berg’s

article was appended to make it more clear that her article focused on drawing distinctions between classroom and out-of-school literacy practices. This was due to the realization that Berg's portrayal of a disparity between in-school and out-of-school adolescent literacy practices was an element that was shared by many other articles in the data set.

This disparity -- and the resulting implications it had on issues such as student engagement and student enthusiasm -- was noted in a number of other articles within the data set. Most of these articles were coded as presenting this disparity as a problem within K-12 public schools, including "Uses of digital tools and literacies in the English language arts classroom," in which fanfiction was presented as one of the many interest-driven "geeking out" practices that could be brought into classrooms in order to bridge the disparity (Beach, 2012, p. 45), and "What does TV viewing have to do with internet reading?: Readers, television 'texts', and intertextual links to companion websites," in which "more ongoing and explicit instruction in multiple literacies" such as fanfiction was presented as a possible remedy (Brown, 2009, p. 222). By coding this disparity in the form of an identified textual *theme*, it became much easier to categorize how fanfiction practices were defined, depicted, and discussed within the context of possible solutions to the articles' stated problems.

To further illustrate how the process of identifying and extracting textual themes was enacted, the study's codebook will now be presented, followed by an account of how articles such as "On the cusp of cyberspace: Adolescents' online text use in conversation"

(Berg, 2011) were coded, and a detailed description of how the coding of her article contributed to the identification of dominant frames within the data set:

- A -- Code
- B -- Full Citation
- C -- Year
- D -- Periodical Name
- E -- Title
- F -- Author
- G-- Periodical Type (See Figure A.)
- H -- Problem (What is the problem?)
- I -- Experts (Who is qualified to speak about the problem?)
- J-- Stake (What / who is at stake?)
- K -- Blame (Who / what is to blame / responsible for the problem?)
- L-- Solutions (Present solutions to the problem -- if multiple solutions, note this and present ones specifically pertaining to / employing discussion of fanfiction.)
- M -- Relation (Summarize or quote how fanfiction relates to problem or solution.)
- N -- Nature of Relation (Code + for [fanfiction linked to solution to problem], - for [fanfiction linked to cause of problem], M for [fanfiction linked to both], = for [fanfiction presented with no causal link to problem or solution], and N for [not applicable / determinable].)
- O-- Definition (How is fanfiction defined?)

- P -- Scope (What range of literacy practices are referred to in the article's discussion of fanfiction? For example, does the definition include poetry or songs?)
- Q -- Exemplifies (What literacy practices is fanfiction presented as an example of?)
- R -- Examples (What are presented as examples of fanfiction literacy practice?)
- S -- Associations (What other literacy practices is fanfiction presented alongside?)
- T -- Presentation of Fanfiction "Fans" (Code + for [positive], - for [negative], M for [mixed], = for [neutral], and N for [not applicable / determinable].)
- U -- Presentation of Fanfiction "Communities" (Code + for [positive], - for [negative], M for [mixed], = for [neutral], and N for [not applicable / determinable].)

This codebook was created in a way that made it easier to identify all possible socio-cultural factors that might influence the way in which fanfiction was presented throughout the data set. For example, “On the cusp of cyberspace: Adolescents' online text use in conversation,” (Berg, 2011), was published within the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, a literacy education practitioner journal whose contributors were typically made up of secondary school educators involved in literacy education research. Coding for the objectives of the journal in which this article had been published allowed for the possible later examination of the article’s socio-cultural contexts of production and reception. If, for instance, it had later become apparent that articles published within journals whose contributors were secondary school educators all suggested that public school administrators were to blame for the inferiority of classroom literacy practices as compared to out-of-school fanfiction practices, then the way in which the articles had

been coded would have facilitated further investigations into whether these patterns might be linked to editorial or reader expectations about reports on secondary school literacy education. This would have been accomplished by isolating articles published within journals that were coded for this particular *periodical type*, and then returning to and analyzing the parts of each article that corresponded to, or were associated with, the discussions from which the articles' *blame* codes had been originally derived. Although an anti-administrator theme was not expected to emerge from the data set -- and ultimately did not in fact emerge -- the codebook's construction was designed with the flexibility to both uncover and categorize such an unanticipated development.

Every article within the data set was assigned an accession code that conveyed demographic data about the journal in which it had been published and its year of publication. For instance, "On the cusp of cyberspace: Adolescents' online text use in conversation" was assigned the internal code AAL1101. *AAL* designated that the article originated in the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *11* designated that the article was from 2011, and *01* designated that the article was the first item from that periodical and year coded into the database. Each article was then coded for all metadata that was deemed useful to the analysis of the data set. This included the article's full citation for bibliographic purposes, with additional, separate codes for the article's author, year of publication, and full title. These codes allowed the database of articles to be entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and sorted by author, title, or year of publication during the analysis process. This spreadsheet included all ninety-five articles found within the

final data set, as well as entries for each of the thirty-six excluded articles in case of any unexpected developments that might require the analysis of excluded data.

The remainder of the codes were designed to record the non-demographic data that pertained to how fanfiction had been defined, depicted, and discussed throughout the data set. For example, AAL1101 defined fanfiction in terms of its end-product: stories written by adolescents "inspired by the books of YA authors and Japanese comic books (manga) in fan fiction forums" (Berg, 2011, p. 485). Since this definition occurred relatively early within the article (within its second paragraph) fanfiction was coded as a possible sensitizing concept for the article's discussion of adolescents' out-of-school use of "information and communication technologies (ICTs)" (Berg, 2011, p. 485).

Fanfiction literacy practices were situated within the article's discussions of a broad range of other "choices adolescents have available to them for their reading and writing practices" (Berg, 2011, p. 485). These choices included "magazines, comic books, graphic novels, young adult (YA) literature, classic literature, texting, instant messaging, blogs, chat rooms, multiplayer games, wikis, fan fiction, e-zines, MySpace, Facebook, and so on" (Berg, 2011, p. 485).

In cases like this, where articles' accounts of fanfiction literacy practices occurred in conjunction or association with accounts of other adolescent practices, these associations were coded by noting and quoting all of the other practices discussed alongside fanfiction. For example, AAL1101 drew comparisons between digitally-mediated fanfiction writing and the creation of user pages on MySpace and Facebook by characterizing all three as practices in which adolescents synthesize "words, images, and

music to represent themselves to other members of the sites” (Berg, 2011, p. 485). Fanfiction was also portrayed in AAL1101 as a form of peer interaction, and was associated with other examples of adolescents cooperating with one another in online multiplayer games by sharing knowledge of the games’ inner workings. Additionally, fanfiction was presented in AAL1101 as an example of common digitally-mediated youth practice alongside a list of other examples, including “downloading cell phone ringtones, uploading their artwork, blogging book reviews, and seeking out expertise to learn more in depth about topics that interest them” (Berg, 2011, p. 485). These associations and descriptions included citation-less references to the authors of “a number of other publications” (Berg, 2011, p. 485) -- including Donna Alvermann, Mizuko Ito, Michele Knobel, and Colin Lankshear -- that cemented connections between the article’s narrative and these other authors’ previous explorations of new media literacy practices as related to the development of information and communication technologies.

AAL1101 positioned "learning to teach on the cusp of old and new literacies" (Berg, 2011, p. 492) as the latest and greatest problem to challenge K-12 literacy educators, particularly those "hesitant to fully embrace" new forms of communications technologies in their classrooms (Berg, 2001, p. 492). The solution to this problem was coded as the suggestion that K-12 classrooms shift toward a more collaborative, interactive model of classroom tech use, which would empower students by drawing on their existing out-of-school literacy practices. This suggestion of how to reconcile the disparity was supported in the article by the presentation of links between students’ out-of-school literacy practices such as fanfiction and traditional literacy skills. These

comparisons drew upon assertions that students who share their out-of-school literacy interests with their peers can “strengthen the community of learners” (Berg, 2011, p. 489), and that teachers who aid students in “making connections between different literacy practices in their lives will benefit their understanding of texts in a variety of settings” (Berg, 2011, p. 489).

Each article within the data set was coded for whose voices and perspectives were called upon to act as experts on the nature and purpose of fanfiction literacy practice. This code included personal accounts made by adolescent fanfiction practitioners concerning what about fanfiction personally appealed to them. For example, AAL1101’s portrayal of students’ out-of-school literacy practices heavily relied on one particular research study participant, identified within the article as "Natalie" (Berg, 2011, p. 488). Natalie was described as an avid adolescent fanfiction practitioner who spent "most of her time online in the library writing her manga fanfiction" (Berg, 2011, p. 488). The article contained interviews with Natalie that highlighted the disparity between her out-of-school literacies and those taught within school classrooms. While coding AAL1101, these interviews were heavily quoted in order to provide a foundation for later analysis of trends within the data set related to the ways in which adolescent fanfiction practitioners were depicted as experts on their own literacy practices. The presentation of adolescents as experts on fanfiction within the data set painted a portrait of adolescent fanfiction practitioners as articulate and media-savvy.

The presentation of adolescent practitioner accounts of their own practices conveyed a great deal of additional information about how adolescents viewed

recreational literacies. For example, coding of AAL1101 indicates that Natalie considered her own creative literacy practices to be more valuable than her peers' passive consumption of digital multimedia content. Natalie's statements about her own fanfiction literacy practices, and the differences between these practices and those taught in school or enjoyed by her peers, were included within the article without the presentation of any accompanying counterpoints.

This effectively situated Natalie's views of the relationship between fanfiction and classroom practice as an unopposed expert viewpoint on the merit of fanfiction practice. Natalie's belief that her recreational practices were more "important" (Berg, 2011, p. 488) than the recreational practices enjoyed by her peers, such as consuming YouTube videos, was coded as the article's primary perspective on the relationship between adolescent literacy choice and adolescent literacy engagement. The voices and perspectives that articles employed to convey information about the state of fanfiction's relationship to K-12 literacy education were coded in order to identify which views of this relationship were overwhelming presented as legitimate throughout the data set. Consequently, sentiments such as Natalie's assertion that she had "never been asked by her teachers about her interest in manga or fan fiction, much less submitted it for class credit" (Berg, 2011, p. 488) contributed to the eventual identification of teachers as the party most frequently blamed by experts for the failure of K-12 public schools to adequately reflect their students' out-of-school literacy practices.

Many articles within the data set positioned teachers as both stakeholders within the article's central issues of classroom literacy practice and parties at least partially

responsible for the disparity between classroom and out-of-school literacy practices. For example, Kelly Chandler-Olcott and Donna Mahar lamented that teachers' "lack of knowledge" about "fanfiction meant lost opportunities for literacy learning" (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003a, p. 564). Similarly, Margaret Berg characterized fanfiction as an aspect of "changing literacy practices and cultural norms" which posed a problem for K-12 literacy education (Berg, 2011, p. 485), and laid the blame for this problem at the feet of literacy educators. Statements such as Berg's and Chandler-Olcott and Mahar's were coded not only for what they said, but also for what they strongly implied. For example, Berg's suggestion that educators needed "to take a genuine interest in their students' out-of-school literacies and encourage teens to reference, discuss, and share in school the texts and literacy practices maintained outside of school" (Berg, 2011, pp. 488-489) carried with it the implicit assumption that teachers were currently *not* taking an interest in their students' practices, a view that was bolstered by references to K-12 educators who were "hesitant to fully embrace ICTs" (Berg, 2001, p. 492).

These were not the only ways in which the data set was coded for implied statements about literacy practice. For example, for every article in the data set, the ways and contexts in which fanfiction literacy practices were defined were coded in as much detail as possible, including identifying quotes that helped to illustrate the code. However, 50 of the 95 articles within the data set were coded as not providing any sufficiently codeable definition of fanfiction literacy practice, while simultaneously discussing fanfiction as if it *had* been defined. The contexts within which fanfiction was discussed but not defined provided a great deal of information about what the articles'

authors or editors assumed that the articles' readers would already know about fanfiction literacy practice. For example, Cathy Fleischer and Kimberly Coupe Pavlock included fanfiction writing in their discussion of "everyday and polished writing" (Fleischer & Pavlock, 2012, p. 33), without any explanation for why they considered fanfiction to fit into this category. This was particularly notable because, as was discussed in this study's literature review (see Chapter Three), fanfiction has historically been associated with practices of subcultural media engagement by scholars. To categorize and normalize it as an everyday writing practice omits a particular aspect of how literacy researchers define fanfiction from the article's presentation of fanfiction writing, and the lack of definition for fanfiction suggests that the article was written in a way that assumed that the reader would accept this omission. The absence of fanfiction definitions from articles that contained fanfiction-related discussions therefore constituted a pattern of assumption on the part of the articles' creators about the knowledge that US K-12 public school teachers already possessed about fanfiction, its nature, its mechanisms, and its merits for inclusion within K-12 classrooms. In this way, many articles conveyed a great deal of information by saying very little.

The results of the coding process were then examined for the presence of easily-discernible patterns which would provide the first footholds into my further exploration into the data set. I returned to each article in order to identify and extract the elements from that article that were found to recur throughout a noticeable number of articles within the data set. Later in this dissertation, the data set's nine most pervasive recurring elements will be presented and explored (see Figure B). For the remainder of this

chapter, the process by which these elements were inductively identified within the data will be laid out, followed by an explanation of how these elements were then used to deductively detect and extract the data set's most salient frame categories.

FRAME IDENTIFICATION AND EXTRACTION

Returning again to AAL1101, the manner in which fanfiction was depicted in terms of its source texts -- such as "the books of YA authors and Japanese comic books (manga)" (Berg, 2011, p. 485) -- was noticeably similar to the ways in which many other articles within the data set referred to and discussed fanfiction source material. During the coding process, this repetition was noted, and upon examination of all the articles that referred to fanfiction in this particular manner, I determined that references to fanfiction in terms of its source texts formed a pattern that was significant enough to be labelled as one of the data set's underlying themes. As a result, an additional code was applied to each article's entry within the spreadsheet, indicating whether the article connected its descriptions and moral evaluations of fanfiction with descriptions and moral evaluations of the media upon which the article claimed fanfiction was typically based. The result of this coding was that 15 of the 95 articles (or roughly 16% of the data set) were identified with this particular pattern.

Nine patterns within the data set were found to occur at a frequency equal to or greater than the source text pattern. As noted above, the identification of these patterns was facilitated by the coding of articles using similar terminology. For example, 80

articles within the data set contained codes related to the disparity between in-school standards for classroom literacy instruction and out-of-school literacy practices within either their *problem*, *solution*, or *relation* categories. 47 of these 80 articles were coded for the presence of disparity-related concerns within the *problem* category, while 33 articles were coded for the presence of disparity-related concerns in either the *solution* or *relation* category but not the *problem* category. Cross-referencing these patterns of portrayal with codes related to the stated purpose of each article revealed that motivations for presenting gaps between in-school and out-of-school literacy practices varied greatly from article to article. Nevertheless, no matter where, why, or how these disparities were presented, the use of the term “disparity” to code for their existence allowed for the later, inductive identification of disparity as a common context for the discussion of fanfiction literacy within the data set.

These patterns were referred to during the coding process as *themes*, a term employed by some frame analysis researchers to describe the “cultural phenomena” (Van Gorp, 2007, p. 63) that frames draw upon in order to attach meaning to media messages. Each of these themes represented a set of views and sentiments about issues related to literacy instruction, media literacy, or adolescent recreational practice, which were pervasive enough within US society during the time period covered by the data set that they could be presented at face value to US K-12 literacy education practitioners. The inductive identification of the socio-cultural themes that were commonly used to ground or bolster arguments about fanfiction within the data set was a necessary precursor to the deductive identification of the frames that call upon these themes.

Every article in the data set was found to contain at least one of these nine theme patterns, and many contained several themes that were expressed either in combination with one another or individually within different sections of the same article. For instance, AAL1101 contained four theme patterns: the *online literacy* theme and *adolescent media engagement* theme, which manifested themselves within the article's characterization of fanfiction as an inherently or predominantly adolescent digital media practice; the *source text* theme, as described above; and the *skill-based* theme, which was found within the article's discussion of strong causal links between out-of-school fanfiction literacy practices and in-school forms of literacy skill development. Once identified, these salient themes -- which will be further described and explored in Chapter Five -- formed the foundations upon which the study's frame analysis was built.

NOTE ON FRAME CODING

During the frame analysis process, I expanded the codebook to include color-based codes associated with each frame category. These codes were implemented in order to facilitate analysis and later discussion of the study's findings. Red signified the Out-of-School Practice frame, Yellow signified the Utilitarian Practice frame, and Blue signified the Youth Practice frame. Orange was used to signify that an article was coded both Red and Yellow, Green was used to signify that the article was coded both Blue and Yellow, Purple was used to signify that the article was coded both Red and Blue, and Brown signified that the article was coded with all three colors. For example, AAL1101

presented in this chapter's previous section was coded Brown, reflecting how it described fanfiction as a predominantly out-of-school practice, characterized fanfiction as a practice that appealed to adolescents, and discussed the possibility of bringing fanfiction into K-12 public school literacy classrooms in the form of extra credit homework. The process by which each of these frames was identified within each article will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

“Readers reviewed Janice’s stories on FanFiction with feedback that both praised her character development and gave her suggestions for elaborating on sections of her story line. She characterized the site as ‘a bunch of writers critiquing each other’s stuff in, like, a really informal environment’” (Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2005, p. 188).

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

SUMMARY

This chapter describes how analysis of the data uncovered three media frame categories that reflected overarching depictions of fanfiction literacy practice within the data set (n = 95):

The Youth Practice frame was associated with the discussion of fanfiction as a literacy practice that appealed to K-12 public school students. This frame category reflected elements found within 87 of the data set's articles.

The Out-of-School Practice frame was associated with the discussion of fanfiction literacy practices as originating outside of K-12 public school classrooms. Such discussions often contained or led to evaluative statements about whether fanfiction

belonged within K-12 schools. This frame category reflected elements found within 83 of the data set's articles.

The Utilitarian Practice frame was associated with the discussion of whether fanfiction practice constituted techniques or a range of techniques that could be brought -- in whole or in part -- into K-12 public school literacy education classrooms. This frame reflected whether fanfiction was presented as useful to K-12 educators. This frame reflected elements found within 66 of the data set's articles.

Additionally:

76 articles corresponded to both the Youth Practice and Out-of-School frames.

63 articles corresponded to both the Youth Practice and Utilitarian Practice frames.

62 articles corresponded to both the Out-of-School and Utilitarian Practice frames.

60 articles corresponded to all three frames.

8 articles corresponded to the Youth Practice frame, but not the other two frames.

5 articles corresponded to the Out-of-School frame, but not the other two frames.

1 article corresponded to the Utilitarian Practice frame, but not the other two frames.

These frame categories were found to manifest themselves within the data through a variety of devices uncovered through the analytic process. These devices included the use of “word choice, metaphors, exemplars, descriptions, arguments, and visual images” that attached particular socio-cultural views and perspectives to the articles’ messages about fanfiction literacy practices and practitioners (Van Gorp, 2007, p. 64). The primary signposts for the influence of a frame on an article’s portrayal of fanfiction were *themes*: textual elements containing cultural views and perspectives that the article’s readers likely already shared or recognized (Van Gorp, 2007). These signposts were viewed under the lens of socio-cultural framing theory, which holds that the primary function of frames is to implicitly attach the article’s text to these pre-existing cultural sentiments (Van Gorp, 2007, p. 63), and in so doing, sensitize the readers’ predispositions to the article’s overall message. (For further discussion of these themes, please refer back to Chapter Four.) This chapter presents an explanation of the most salient patterns of the presence of cultural themes observed within the data set, followed by a detailed account of how these themes contributed to the identification and exploration of the ways in which fanfiction practices, practitioners, and communities were framed within the context of K-12 public school literacy education practice.

SALIENT THEMES

While cataloguing the study’s initial coding findings, I noted several patterns of fanfiction representation across the data set. Following the socio-cultural media frame

analysis research paradigm laid out by scholars such as Baldwin Van Gorp (see Chapter Four), I reexamined the articles associated with these patterns and noted the textual elements such as “images, stereotypes, metaphors, actors, and messages” that were most frequently employed in discussions related to fanfiction literacy practices (Matthes, 2009, p. 349). This allowed for the solidification of these patterns into standardized themes.

For example, many articles referred to the creation of media content as the dominant way in which adolescents use the internet. This pattern was uncovered by observing that fanfiction was often used as an example of adolescent content creation practice. While investigating the contexts in which these content creation practices were discussed, I noted corollary textual elements such as the use of statistics as evidence of the dominance of content creation practice. For instance, the prevalence of content creation practices within teenagers’ daily internet use was cited as fifty-seven percent in EMH0701 (Salen, 2007) and sixty-four percent in LAR1203 (Bomer & Malock, 2012). Other articles tied descriptions of adolescent literacy to vaguely-defined “buzzwords” (Gray, 2005, p. 225) commonly found within academic discussions of media literacy, such as in RIS1201’s references to “connecting Web 2.0 and social media to adolescents’ academic literacies” (Alvermann et al., 2012a, p. 34). As these patterns were identified within and extracted from the coding data, they were clustered together into cohesive thematic categories that represented aspects of the ways in which the articles framed fanfiction practice (Matthes, 2009).

Ultimately, nine of these thematic categories were conceptualized, each of which represented the repeated manifestation of a particular set of socially and culturally

mediated perspectives through which fanfiction was presented to the articles' readers.

Figure B, below, delineates the frequency with which these nine socio-cultural themes occurred within the data set:

Figure B: Dominant Theme Distribution Across Data Set (n = 95)

Theme Category	Number
Digital Literacy	78
Youth Practice	41
Intertextual	39
Literacy Skill	38
Community	35
Fans	25
Convention	16
Identity	16
Source Text	15

This metric was measured by the number of articles within the study's data set that contained at least one code that contributed to the identification of the theme's nature and scope. As a result, some of the themes correspond to a greater portion of articles included within the data set than others. However, since the study did not seek to

determine the relative influence of the data set's articles on their readers, it does not follow that a theme's frequency represents its salience within the data set. Therefore, it must be stressed that the information contained within Figure B conveys pervasiveness rather than impact.

These nine themes were conceptualized as patterns of fanfiction depictions, descriptions, and discussions across the entire data set. For this reason, they do not represent elements of individual articles, but rather trends that only become apparent when viewing the data set as a whole. Below, the nine themes are each summarized in terms of their impact on the entire data set. Examples of the themes' manifestations within individual articles are omitted from these brief summaries, although they will be included within the discussion of the study's three principal framing categories (discussed later in this chapter) in order to provide examples and explanations of the frame analysis process.

Digital Literacy: Patterns of discourse related to fanfiction's technological aspects typically presented fanfiction as a new media practice, excluding the perspectives of offline fanfiction practitioners and representations of fanfiction literacy practices exclusive to non-digital contexts of fanfiction production. This theme represented articles that focused on digital forms of fanfiction while simultaneously excluding substantial distinctions between online and offline fanfiction literacy practices. 78 articles were identified as being aligned with this theme.

Youth Practice: Within the data set, examples of fanfiction literacy practice were almost uniformly comprised of adolescent fanfiction practitioners. This theme represented discussions of fanfiction literacy practice as an emerging form of technologically-mediated adolescent literacy engagement, and was aligned with 41 articles.

Intertextual: One of the data set's most central themes was that fanfiction never exists within a vacuum; its creation and reception always occur within the context of other media. This theme included depictions of fanfiction as a technique or exercise capable of fostering increased understanding of other media works. This theme represented conceptual definitions and expository descriptions of fanfiction practices as a means of engaging with other media works, and was aligned with 39 articles.

Literacy Skill: Within the data set, discussions of fanfiction's possible use as a bridge between out-of-school literacy practice and in-school literacy instruction were generally accompanied by skill-based literacy evaluations of extracurricular fanfiction literacy practice. This theme represented 38 articles that were identified and coded as containing evaluative judgments of fanfiction literacy practice, particularly those that sought to define the literary qualities of fanfiction and compare them to K-12 public school literacy education standards and benchmarks.

Community: This theme represented 35 articles that explicitly defined, depicted, or discussed fanfiction as a collaborative, peer-oriented literacy activity, to the exclusion of fanfiction practices not grounded in a culture of participation or shared literary critique.

Fan: When discussions of fanfiction practice turned to the motivations of fanfiction practitioners, they frequently involved descriptions of fanfiction as the creative product of media enthusiasts. This theme represented the portrayal of fanfiction as a form of media practice -- created by and for fans of specific fanfiction source materials -- within 25 of the data set's articles.

Convention: The convention theme represented 16 articles that presented conventions of fanfiction literacy practice, governed either by community-determined technical and creative standards, or by the consensus of fanfiction practitioners.

Identity: Although fanfiction was cast as a beneficial recreational literacy practice throughout the data set, the specific nature of this benefit was most heavily explored within discussions of fanfiction's ability to serve as a medium of personal expression and self-reflection. This theme represented 16 articles containing descriptions of fanfiction that served to further broaden discourses concerning the formation and representation of new media literacy practitioner identity.

Source Text: When individual fanfiction works were described in terms of the works' relationships to their original source materials, these links were consistently associated with the inextricable qualities of fanfiction literacy practices. This theme represented 15 articles containing descriptions of fanfiction works in terms of their abilities to reproduce, oppose, correct, rewrite, or transcend elements of their source texts.

The following sections of this chapter describe how these themes served as the foundations for the identification and extraction of the data set's three dominant socio-cultural frame categories.

THE YOUTH PRACTICE FRAME CATEGORY

The most dominant frame category within the data set was the Youth Practice frame, which reflected the ways fanfiction practices, practitioners, and communities were defined, depicted, and discussed within 87 of the data set's 95 articles. At first glance, it seems incredible that a single socio-cultural pattern could be so pervasive that it would impact over 91% of the data set's articles. However, upon reflection, it should not be so astonishing that a frame related to adolescent literacy practice would be so influential on a discourse so heavily focused on K-12 literacy education.

The Youth Practice frame reflected how discussions of fanfiction practice were oriented toward depictions and portrayals of adolescent fanfiction practitioners (Berg, 2011; Dressman et al., 2009). During the coding process, it quickly became apparent that

many articles within the data set contained accounts of fanfiction literacy practices that were solely concerned with fanfiction practitioners who were adolescents. Furthermore, these articles' descriptions of the reasons why fanfiction practitioners found fanfiction to be a compelling form of media engagement tended to wholly exclude adult fanfiction practitioners from these discussions of fanfiction's appeal.

Perhaps it is only natural that articles published in journals that were explicitly concerned with K-12 public school literacy instruction would be more focused on a literacy practice's K-12 aged practitioners than its adult practitioners. However, the articles within the data set placed such a heavy emphasis on fanfiction's appeal to adolescents that they effectively presented a view of fanfiction communities to readers that was entirely bereft of adult participants. This incomplete portrait of the makeup of fanfiction communities had a number of tangible effects on the data set's presentation of the benefits of bringing fanfiction into K-12 classrooms.

For example, CLA0801 (Tosenberger, 2008b) contained a description of fanfiction works that had been created in response to revelations about the *Harry Potter* character Dumbledore's sexual orientation. The article's discussion of these works began by sensitizing readers to the presence of a significant number of adolescent participants within online communities devoted to the discussion of *Harry Potter* (Tosenberger, 2008b, p. 200). This passage within the text specifically emphasized that the appeal of "thoughtful and nuanced" (p. 200) forms of fanfiction practice to adolescents was not merely hypothetical or theoretical, but rather represented a form of peer-mediated, youth-led new media engagement. By framing adolescent fanfiction practitioners as the

primary stakeholders within the problem of negative fan reactions to Dumbledore's sexuality, and excluding adult fanfiction practitioners from depictions of online community discussions of this topic, this article conveyed an inaccurate view of *Harry Potter* fan communities as spaces in which adolescents engage in practices aligned with the goals of K-12 literacy instruction without the influence of adults.

Additionally, as was noted earlier in this chapter, articles within the data set were quick to align fanfiction practices with statistically-backed conceptions of how teenagers use the internet, especially when these conceptions of adolescent literacy could be supported by quantitative research findings. These depictions were associated with the youth practice theme (see Figure B), which was often observed within articles affected by the Youth Practice framing of fanfiction as a strictly youth-oriented literacy practice (Brown, 2009; Gibbons, 2010; Golding, 2011; Leland et al., 2012; Pitcher et al., 2007; Salen, 2007; Thorne & Black, 2007). Roughly half of the articles shaped by the Youth Practice frame were also identified as containing thematic elements that had been coded as youth practice themes. These youth practice themes were generally found to occur within articles that framed the landscape of online fanfiction practice as a digitally-mediated space for interactions between adolescent fanfiction practitioners in absence of adult supervision (Moje, 2009; Schwarz, 2010). Within these articles, fanfiction practitioners were often presented as a group either predominantly or entirely composed of adolescent literacy practitioners, whose enthusiasm for particular media franchises motivated them to “actively engage with, rework, and transform” their objects of interest into fanfiction (Steinkuehler et al., 2005, p. 97).

The tendency of articles within the data set to frame fanfiction in this manner had three primary effects on the data set's overall depiction of fanfiction practice. First, as mentioned above, by presenting fanfiction as a literacy practice produced by adolescents, these articles situated any and all discussions of fanfiction community peer writing practices within contexts of adolescent peer interaction. This precluded any discussion of situations of mentor-like relationships between adolescents as experts and adults as novices. This would have had particularly interesting implications on the argument that fanfiction communities instill adolescents with a level of cultural capital they likely never could attain within K-12 public school environments. This cultural capital was characterized as a level of pre-existing knowledge of either the media upon which fanfiction was based or the process of adapting media into fanfiction works, both of which would normally be qualities ascribed to teachers, not students, within K-12 classrooms.

Second, this focus on adolescent fanfiction practitioners created a sharp contrast between in-school and out-of-school forms of adolescent literacy learning. The processes by which adolescent fanfiction community members learned how to create and improve written fanfiction works were characterized as egalitarian interactions between adolescent peers, while the processes by which these same adolescents learned how to write and improve their writing skills within K-12 public schools were characterized as hierarchical interactions between adult teachers and subordinate students. In this manner, the exclusion of adult fanfiction practitioners from accounts of fanfiction practice created a false dichotomy between practices in which adults were portrayed as absent and practices

in which adults were portrayed as present, thus reducing the difference between these two sets of practices to the presence or absence of adult influence.

This distinction effectively framed fanfiction literacy practice as an emerging form of technologically-mediated adolescent literacy engagement (Berg, 2011; Dockter et al., 2010; Greenhow et al., 2009; Sekeres, 2009). Comparisons between positive aspects of fanfiction literacy practices and negative aspects of classroom literacy practices worked to highlight the peer-oriented nature of online fanfiction communities, as well as the ability of fanfiction communities to connect adolescent literacy practitioners with their more experienced peers (Black, 2009a; Lam, 2012; Lotherington & Jenson, 2011; Schechter & Denmon, 2012). Although this framing pattern resulted in the positive portrayal of fanfiction to K-12 educators who might have been interested in bringing fanfiction practices into their classrooms during the period covered by the data set, this portrayal precluded common elements of educators' students' actual experiences within fanfiction communities. As a result, this pattern of framing fanfiction practice represented a possible disparity between how fanfiction experiences were presented to teachers and how students actually experienced fanfiction during the period covered by the data set.

Finally, the absence of adult practitioners from accounts of online fanfiction practice had particular implications on discussions of digitally-mediated interactions between adolescent fanfiction practitioners who did not necessarily enjoy or perform well within public school literacy programs. As noted above, interactions between adolescent fanfiction community members were often described as a type of cultural capital

exchange that was not possible within public school classrooms (Yoon & Wilder, 2010). The tendency to depict adolescent fanfiction practitioners as struggling in class, yet thriving online, served to tie these descriptions to pre-existing socio-cultural narratives about K-12 public school students who “love to learn” but “just hate school” (Mathew & Adams, 2009, p. 39). Several of these descriptions also tapped into narratives about “failing” students (Steinkuehler, 2010, p. 62), “reluctant readers” (Stolle, 2009, p. 451), and “immigrant youths” (Black, 2009a, pp. 689, 691-692) who struggled with K-12 reading and writing achievement. In this way, fanfiction was portrayed as a panacea to remedy or mitigate problems with marginalized students’ literacy performance, although this depiction did not appear to fully account for students with no pre-existing interest in fanfiction writing.

Depictions of adolescent fanfiction practitioners who struggled in schools supported the assertion that fanfiction literacy practices operated outside of the continuum normally used to gauge students’ reading and writing capabilities. This conveyed the message that, although “adolescents who struggle with literacy typically aren’t motivated to engage in academic reading” (Snow & Moje, 2010, p. 68), the same could not be said for reading occurring within digital environments. Within discussions of these online contexts, fanfiction was depicted as a common practice of students who were not considered to possess in-school literacies (Black, 2005, 2009a) or who were not high achievers within academic settings (Alvermann et al., 2012a; Black, 2009b, 2009c). Such descriptions of fanfiction’s adolescent appeal were observed within larger discussions concerning underachieving students, wherein fanfiction was employed as an

example of how fiction “relevant to adolescents’ lives is often beyond their reading level” (Snow & Moje, 2010, p. 68).

THE OUT-OF-SCHOOL PRACTICE FRAME CATEGORY

The second most dominant frame category within the data set was the Out-of-School Practice frame, which reflected the ways fanfiction practices, practitioners, and communities were defined, depicted, and discussed within 83 of the data set’s 95 articles. The central characteristic of the Out-of-School Practice frame was that it reflected how accounts of fanfiction practice were oriented toward the discussion of the extracurricular settings within which fanfiction works were found, produced, and consumed, as well as statements about the non-traditional nature of what constituted literacy practice within these extracurricular settings during the period covered by the data set. These discussions emphasized the recreational nature of fanfiction practice, bringing examples of fanfiction into depictions of K-12 aged students who “collectively read and write vast cascades of multimodal text as part of their play” outside of K-12 classroom environments (Steinkuehler, 2010, p. 61). Within these contexts of digital literacy discussion, fanfiction was framed as an example of adolescent internet use, defined as a set of technologically mediated practices, and included in discussions of students’ use of “digital tools for constructing online literary texts” (Beach, 2012, p. 50).

Upon examining the codes related to the articles’ use of fanfiction as an example of adolescent literacy, it became apparent that discussions of students’ online literacies

within the data set often presented fanfiction as one of the many ways US adolescents conduct themselves in online and out-of-school literacy contexts. Such discussions of adolescent media engagement often included statistics demonstrating the overwhelming percentage of students who voluntarily enter online environments devoted to media creation practices (Martin, 2011; Salen, 2007). This represented a strong correlation between the Youth Practice and Out-of-School Practice frames. 76 of the articles within the data set that were shaped by the Youth Practice frame were also shaped by the Out-of-School Practice frame, resulting in the frequent intersection of the two frames' influence on individual articles. For instance, analysis of the coding indicated that fanfiction was often portrayed as a typical example of “young people’s home computer use” (Kent & Facer, 2004, p. 450) within larger discussions of how computer literate students expressed their “wider context of hobbies and interests” (Kent & Facer, 2004, p. 450) through digitally-mediated, out-of-school literacy practices (Alvermann et al., 2012b; Brown, 2009; Hagood, 2010; Kinzer, 2010; Lewis & Fabos, 2005; Schechter & Denmon, 2012; Schwarz, 2010; Wohlwend, 2010).

The intersection of these two frame patterns was also observed within sociological discussions of the relationship between out-of-school literacy and adolescent identity (Williams, 2008), wherein fanfiction was introduced as an example of “how young people construct their online literate identities” through peer-oriented literacy practice (Alvermann et al., 2012b, p. 181). These identity-construction practices were often discussed within much broader contexts of recreational media literacy engagement, such as in ENT1002’s equalization of fanfiction, re-reading a book multiple times, and

ways of displaying one's identification in terms of media preference such as "wearing a T-shirt" (Andersen, 2010, p. 106). When framed in terms of practitioner identity, fanfiction practices took the form of "vernacular engagements", a category of literacy practice presented across the data set as being rooted in lived experiences that include "everyday" forms of writing such as "scrapbooking, website design" and "keeping a diary" (Roozen, 2009, p. 166). Within the larger context of adolescent media literacy engagement, fanfiction was coded as serving as a frequent example of how adolescents increasingly expect literacy activities to "serve purposes of identity representation and affinity building" (Dockter et al., 2010, p. 420). These depictions served as signposts for identifying these frames' joint influence on descriptions of adolescents' methods of experimentation with personal identity (Black, 2009a; Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2005).

The Out-of-School Practice frame also reflected the ways in which online fanfiction communities were discussed as sites of typical out-of-school practice within articles concerned with the "Internet-mediated environments" (Thorne & Black, 2007, p. 133) which teachers "need to understand much more about" (Bomer & Maloch, 2012, p. 47). This study's conceptualization of the Out-of-School Practice frame category emerged out of examinations of articles that discussed fanfiction within these contexts. Analysis of these articles and their codes indicated the presence of youth practice and digital literacy themes (see Figure B). These themes intersected to form calls for teachers to become more familiar with the ways that their students' media practices and media preferences differed from their own (Mackey, 2003a; Moje & Luke, 2009; Roach & Beck, 2012). Central to this mandate was the assertion that, although fanfiction was not

one of the “official literacy activities” practiced in classrooms, “teachers need to know what multimodal literacies count, and for whom” (Mills, 2010, p. 38). Much of this “for whom” was framed as adolescent women, and discussions of these young women's digitally-mediated recreational literacy practices (Beach, 2012) often employed examples of fanfiction in order to illustrate “the intense engagement girls have with such online texts in comparison with print literacy texts” (Benson, 2008, p. 642).

The Out-of-School Practice frame also reflected the ways in which digital repositories of fanfiction writing were defined as examples of social networking sites. Analysis of the study's coding revealed that these sites were commonly described across the data set as points of interaction between participants with similar media interests (Elias et al., 2010; Letcher, 2010; Leland et al., 2012; Wohlwend, 2010). These descriptions were often introduced in order to frame the contrast between new media practices and traditional print-based alternatives. For example, ALA0901 (Mathew & Adams, 2009) presented accounts of adolescent fanfiction practitioners who were “most comfortable” with “cyber” fanfiction, and who regarded online communities such as fanfiction.net as the “safest place they know” (Mathew & Adams, 2009, p. 38).

Examination of these codes indicated that this link between literacy preference and fanfiction practice was particularly emphasized within literacy education contexts, wherein fanfiction was described as a “particularly effective way to connect literacy to children's play with their favorite media characters” (Wohlwend, 2010, p. 150). Fanfiction communities were described as fertile ground for teen online literacy engagement, “pedagogically interesting” (Thorne, 2009, p. 89) cultures that served their

adolescent participants' "immediate educational needs for just-in-time [sic] learning" and development of literacy skills (Hagood, 2010, p. 238). As one author commented, continued participation in communities centered on mutual literacy interests might even encourage adolescent participants to "read other books" (Leland et al., 2012, p. 29). In this way, participation in fanfiction community discussion was favorably portrayed as a possible stimulus for further recreational literacy activity, including activities aligned with the objectives of K-12 public school literacy education practitioners.

THE UTILITARIAN PRACTICE FRAME CATEGORY

The third and final dominant frame category within the data set was the Utilitarian Practice frame, which reflected the ways the utility of fanfiction practices, practitioners, and communities were defined, depicted, and discussed within 66 of the data set's 95 articles. The central characteristic of this frame was that it reflected how accounts of fanfiction literacy practices were oriented toward discussions of: differences between fanfiction and modes of literacy practice commonly found within K-12 public school literacy education programs; presentations of the ways in which these differences made fanfiction literacy practices useful in some way for K-12 public school literacy educators; and examinations into whether these differences constituted insurmountable obstacles for the adoption and adaptation of fanfiction into K-12 public schools during the period covered by the data set. The Utilitarian Practice frame was uncovered and extracted from the data by organizing the codes related to the articles' definitions and examples of

fanfiction literacy practice by both content and tone, and then codifying the contexts within which each of these definitions and examples occurred. Upon examination, these contexts were found to include discussions of how online fanfiction communities set and enforced rules and guidelines for proper and appropriate practices of creation, critical consumption, and attribution, and to what extent these standards were compatible with their counterparts within K-12 public school literacy learning environments.

The Utilitarian Practice frame reflected the ways in which out-of-school fanfiction practices were presented in terms of their relationships to and implications on K-12 public school literacy education. These relationships were often presented to readers in the context of questions about whether particular aspects of fanfiction literacy practice were appropriate for inclusion in school classrooms. Analysis of these contexts of discussion indicated that when fanfiction was framed as a model for literacy practice, it was not *fanfiction as a whole* that was presented to readers for inclusion in K-12 public school classrooms, but rather *fanfiction in part*.

Startlingly, many of these descriptions of the aspects of *fanfiction in part* that were characterized as best suited for K-12 classrooms did not include the aspects of fanfiction practice that researchers had found most pedagogically captivating about online fanfiction communities (see Chapter Three). For example, VFM1202 (Schechter & Denmon, 2012) ignored the democratizing and peer-oriented components of fanfiction practice. Instead, the article characterized fanfiction as a form of creative writing centered around the extension of existing media works' plotlines, which could be adapted for K-12 classroom use in the form of graded writing assignments such as 15-page short

stories based on television programs such as *Pretty Little Liars* and *Dragon Ball Z*. In this way, many articles minimized the impact of the media literacy movement's call to transform K-12 public school literacy instruction by bringing recreational media literacy practices into public schools. Rather, they called for the much less controversial practice of supplementing existing K-12 public school literacy instruction practices with aspects from recreational media literacy practice that could easily or conveniently be dropped into K-12 classrooms.

Yet, even when presented in a much less democratic or interest-driven form, fanfiction was described as a potential panacea for the "epidemic" (Schechter & Denmon, 2010, p. 22) of K-12 students' disinterest in improving their literacy skills. Within such discussions, fanfiction was often employed as an example of the ways in which K-12 students who were disinterested in classroom literacy practices were nevertheless enthusiastically engaging in literacy practices outside of schools. The role of fanfiction within these discussions was discovered through analysis of the study's *problem, cause, and solution* coding findings, which indicated that 80 articles within the data set positioned the disparity between in-school literacy instruction and adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices as an element of the issue the article sought to address.

When examples of fanfiction practice were employed within discussions of the causes of this disparity, they served to illustrate how out-of-school literacies differed from classroom literacies. When examples of fanfiction practice were employed within discussions of proposed solutions to this disparity, they were presented in the form of techniques for bridging gaps between out-of-school literacy practices and in-school

literacy instruction. In both cases, the inclusion of fanfiction within discussions of gaps between adolescents' classroom literacy practices and recreational literacy practices served to define the extent of these gaps and to frame them as surmountable “boundaries” (Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2005, p. 199) between in-school literacy instruction and out-of-school literacy play (Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2005; Schechter & Denmon, 2012).

In these ways, the Utilitarian Practice frame reflected discussions of the many ways technology afforded adolescents digitally-mediated “opportunities for construction and expression” and how these opportunities could be brought into K-12 classrooms (Downes & Bishop, 2012, p. 10). Fanfiction communities were framed as possessing the potential to supplement and enhance classroom literacy instruction, by providing students with extracurricular spaces for “acquiring valuable new literacy skills” (Owens, 2011, p. 53) and producing “fan fiction figures and fan art” that serve as “both a point of departure and a new space for engagement” with academic literacy (Christianakis, 2011, p. 28). Analysis of the study’s *solution* coding findings indicated that many stated pedagogical benefits of this relationship were presented to readers within discussions of common fanfiction community rules and conventions, and were associated with the fanfiction community convention theme (see Figure B).

Discussions of fanfiction communities' rules and standards often depicted the processes through which new fanfiction community participants received mentorship “related to their technology use and their composing processes” from more experienced fanfiction practitioners (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003b, p. 366). Examination of the study’s coding findings indicated that fanfiction community mentoring was positively

depicted within the data set by employing terminology associated with K-12 public school literacy education objectives, such as in RAL0701's depiction of mentorship as a process that "tempered critique of form with enthusiasm for content and rhetoric" (Warschauer & Grimes, 2007, p. 15). Depictions of these rules and standards were frequently situated within the context of broader cultural concerns about the limits placed on US K-12 public schools by standardized requirements for literacy instruction.

Fanfiction communities were discussed within these contexts as examples of how good literacy practices were modeled for adolescents within recreational settings. For example, sixteen articles within the data set presented the rules governing fanfiction community members' patterns of content attribution and appropriate authorship in order to compare them to the tenets conveyed by K-12 literacy instructors (Lotherington & Jenson, 2011; Thomas & Sassi, 2011). These articles found that fanfiction communities both required and taught specific media literacy skills and competencies that were comparable in sophistication, if not in form, to the literacy skills taught within more institutional contexts of literacy instruction. In this manner, fanfiction communities' creative and technical "practices of writing and sharing" (Steinkuehler, 2010, p. 62) were framed and evaluated in terms of their relationship to similar standards found in "the traditional schooled version of literacies" (Zacher, 2007, p. 81).

Analysis of the study's *definition* and *examples of fanfiction* coding findings indicated that these writing and sharing practices were often portrayed within larger discussions of the ability of recreational media literacy practices to foster students' engagement with K-12 public school creative writing exercises. In order to associate

fanfiction writing practices with standards related to K-12 writing instruction, fanfiction was often depicted as a peer-oriented literacy practice surrounding the fanfiction authors' shared understanding of the original text (Black, 2009a; Bomer & Maloch, 2012; Lammers et al., 2012). For instance, VFM1203 portrayed fanfiction as a literacy practice or genre that invited readers to "rewrite and share stories written by others" (Leland et al., 2012, p. 29). Fanfiction was depicted as a particularly effective tool for teachers to foster student engagement in classroom writing practice due to its characterization as a practice that particularly appealed to adolescents.

In 63 articles, the Utilitarian Practice frame was found to operate in conjunction with the Youth Practice frame, resulting in a depiction of fanfiction practitioners as adolescents who performed "the kind of passionate, engaged writing" that educators sought to foster within their classrooms (Cherland, 2008, p. 280). Under this depiction of fanfiction literacy practice, the source texts for fanfiction works were described as "fodder" (Steinkuehler, 2010, p. 62) for new, distinct works of original, self-directed creative writing (Black, 2005; Cherland, 2008; Hébert & Pagnani, 2010; Kell, 2009; Mackey, 2003a, 2003b; Warschauer & Grimes, 2007; Yi, 2008). Although often written in the same style as the original work (Hall, 2008), these resulting "extensions" (Leland et al., 2012, p. 29) included new material created by the fanfiction author, including new characters, settings, themes, plots, and relationships, that conveyed expressions of the adolescent author's enthusiasm for and desire to engage with the original work (Alvermann, 2008; Black, 2009a).

The derivative nature of the relationship between these original works and fanfiction writing was often framed as a means by which to evaluate the literary merit, and thus classroom applicability, of fanfiction literacy practice. Analysis of the study's *definition* coding pointed toward the identification of a pattern within the data set of portraying fanfiction writing as a form of literary critique of, or as an act of defiance against, the original work's content or intent. For example, COE0301 described fanfiction as an "irreverent" (Mackey, 2003b, p. 403) medium capable of rejecting the intentions of the source materials' original authors.

However, some articles suggested that, by providing an outlet to voice dissatisfactions or disagreements with the original authors' intentions, this irreverence granted the fanfiction author "the authority and tools to intermingle her own voice" (Alvermann et al., 2012a, p. 37) with the original authors' words. This form of interaction was presented as a means of textual engagement that normally would not be possible within K-12 classrooms, which were characterized as treating works that students read in class as immutable. The oppositional qualities of fanfiction practice, and its ability to share and spread concerns or grievances with the original work among communities of like-minded media fans, were cited within portrayals of fanfiction writing as a form of "dissatisfaction with the source text" that constituted a "compelling motivation to write fanfiction" (Tosenberger, 2008b, p. 204).

Analysis of the study's *solution* coding findings led to the exploration of the ways in which fanfiction practitioners' motivations were discussed in terms of the potential benefits of "allowing a slice" (Gutiérrez, 2011, p. 228) of out-of-school literacy practice

into school environments on student engagement and student enthusiasm (Berg, 2011, 2013). The adaptation of fanfiction practice for use within K-12 public school classrooms was framed as a way to make classrooms more welcoming of “students’ outside-of-school reading choices,” and in the process encourage students to make connections between their patterns of recreational reading and the reading they were assigned by their teachers (Gutiérrez, 2011, p. 228). Within this context, fanfiction was presented not as an interest-based community practice, a media subculture, or even as a tool for literacy learning, but rather as a tool to foster student engagement and alleviate student disinterest: a fun classroom exercise that students would consider a potential break from school “monotony,” blending new things with “some of the old things they already liked to do” (Schechter & Denmon, 2012, p. 26).

In addition to portraying fanfiction as a remedy for problems related to K-12 public school student engagement, fanfiction was also framed as a means by which to solve problems related to student achievement, most notably within discussions of ways in which to better foster literacy skills in English-language learning -- or ELL -- students (Black, 2005, 2009a). ELL students were frequently coded as examples of fanfiction practitioners who used fanfiction literacy practices to gain proficiency in English while communicating, socializing, and entertaining themselves in recreational settings (Dressman et al., 2009; Kinzer, 2010; Yi, 2008). Examination of the discussions within which these examples were deployed in the data set resulted in the identification of patterns of presenting fanfiction communities to ELL literacy educators as environments that benefited students for whom English is not a primary language. These patterns

manifested themselves in the form of descriptions of digitally-mediated fanfiction practice as an outlet for creative writing and social activity with communities of multilingual youth (Alvermann et al., 2012b; Black, 2009c; Kinzer, 2010). In this manner, fanfiction was framed as a prescriptive solution for problems within K-12 classrooms: a strategy -- “aligned with school-sanctioned literacy and language development practices, such as collaborative composition, peer-review, peer-editing, and mentoring” (Thorne & Black, 2007, p. 146) -- and a tool -- akin to “colored pencils and paper,” “emoticons,” or media-oriented “shrines” (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003a, pp. 556 & 559, 2003b, p. 368) -- to be applied and used in the service of classroom literacy practice.

CONCLUSION

The stated goal of this dissertation was to report on the findings related to the following question:

“How is fanfiction framed as a pedagogical practice for literacy education practitioner periodical audiences?”

To that end, a socio-cultural frame analysis research paradigm was employed to: extract and analyze the most salient factors that influenced the data set; uncover the voices and perspectives that these factors framed as experts and stakeholders; discern

how these factors influenced the inclusion and exclusion of particular descriptions and depictions of fanfiction literacy practice; and investigate how these descriptions and depictions shaped discussions concerning fanfiction's place within US K-12 public school literacy education classrooms.

As a result of this analysis, I uncovered three dominant frame categories -- the Youth Practice frame, the Out-of-School Practice frame, and the Utilitarian Practice frame -- each of which reflected how discussions of fanfiction literacy practice were aligned with particularly salient perspectives on the nature and worth of K-12 students' recreational literacy practices. The Youth Practice frame reflected an orientation toward the view that recreational literacy was juvenile. The Out-of-School Practice frame reflected the implications and connotations associated with labeling recreational literacy practices as non-academic. Finally, the Utilitarian Practice frame reflected how recreational literacies were evaluated in terms of their ability to foster in-school literacy performance and assessment. This section summarizes how the identification and analysis of these frames aided in fulfilling the aim of the study.

The Youth Practice frame reflected how depictions of fanfiction practice within the data set were oriented toward discussions of adolescents as the default demographic for fanfiction literacy practice. Although no articles within the data set categorically denied the existence of adult fanfiction practitioners, their depictions of how members of online fanfiction communities interacted with one another were wholly geared toward the discussion of adolescents' interactions with other adolescents. One of the principal effects of this framing pattern was that peer-mediated writing practice within fanfiction

communities was depicted as an egalitarian relationship between participants who, the narrative implied, were relatively the same age and in possession of relatively the same in-school literacy education. Another implication of this framing pattern was that, since fanfiction was predominantly cast as an adolescent practice, it could be considered an out-of-school practice, in the sense that it was practiced by adolescents out of school.

The Out-of-School Practice frame reflected the second major way that the presentation of fanfiction practice was shaped within the data set. By presenting fanfiction as an out-of-school practice, rather than a recreational or non-academic practice, articles within the data set were able to draw distinctions between in-school literacy practices and fanfiction literacy practices without presenting these practices to K-12 literacy educators as an inferior form of literacy. This distinction was especially important in contexts where fanfiction was being presented for possible inclusion within K-12 classroom literacy programs. Within these contexts, the phrase *out-of-school* was used in order to remind readers of the current absence of practices similar to fanfiction from classrooms, while the terms *recreational*, *extracurricular*, and *non-academic* were labels that denoted possible reasons why such practices were currently absent from schools.

These terms carried with them certain implicit socio-cultural assumptions about how teachers tended to view the skills necessary to engage in *recreational*, *extracurricular*, and *non-academic* writing practices, as well as the seriousness, merit, and sophistication of the texts that these writing practices tended to produce. These patterns of framing fanfiction allowed for the contexts within which fanfiction was

produced to be discussed without the need to include discussions of value judgments about fanfiction practitioners' reading and writing aptitudes, as the use of this terminology would naturally remind teachers of their previously-held beliefs about recreational writing skills. This only served to emphasize discussions within the data set that contradicted readers' implicit assumptions, as readers would already have these assumptions in mind. This emphasis increased the effectiveness of the articles' explanations of how students who underperformed within K-12 public school classrooms could nevertheless be considered successful and skilled creators of written texts within out-of-school contexts.

The Utilitarian Practice frame reflected the third major way that accounts of fanfiction practice were shaped across the data set. Whereas the Youth Practice frame reflected the ways practitioner periodicals framed *who* practiced fanfiction, and the Out-of-School frame reflected the ways practitioner periodicals framed *where* fanfiction was practiced, the Utilitarian Practice frame reflected the ways practitioner periodicals framed *what it meant* to practice fanfiction. One of the principal effects of this framing pattern was that the appeal of fanfiction was presented to K-12 literacy educators in terms of its processes rather than its products.

Although many articles described fanfiction as works of fiction based on elements from previously existing works, the data set as a whole did not frame the pedagogical appeal of fanfiction as residing within these works, but rather in how these works were created by adolescents. Within the many articles that directed educators to take a closer look at their students' literacy practices, the tools, techniques, and skills involved in the

creation of fanfiction were framed as the aspect of fanfiction that deserved educators' attentions. As a result, descriptions of educators' efforts to incorporate fanfiction into their K-12 classrooms focused on identifying the aspects of the fanfiction creation process that were most worthy of adapting into the classroom, and swapping them in for their corresponding elements within existing classroom literacy practices. In this manner, bringing fanfiction into the classroom was presented as equivalent to modifying existing practices in ways that educators hoped would make them more appealing to students who already enjoyed fanfiction.

Finally, although this chapter provided a full and detailed account of the frame analysis process, there were many other elements of the data set's findings that did not fit neatly into a frame analysis framework. These additional findings and observations will be presented at the beginning of the next chapter, as their introduction will be necessary for the discussion of the study's implications on the current field of literacy education research.

CHAPTER SIX

“Most of the creative work that students undertake in school is designed for an audience of one: the teacher-as-examiner. The existence, or even the potential existence, of a real audience can qualitatively change how students conceptualise production work, and what they learn from it” (Buckingham, 2007, p. 52).

IMPLICATIONS

SUMMARY

The previous chapters of this dissertation have contained a report on the objectives, foundations, methods, and findings of a research study designed to uncover how fanfiction was framed for US K-12 public school literacy education practitioner periodical audiences between 2003 and 2013. Although the previous chapters presented a full account of how this study’s socio-culturally grounded analysis enabled me to address and answer the study’s research question, they have not constituted a full or complete picture of the study’s context within, and impact on, the overall field of literacy education research as it exists at the time of this dissertation’s publication. This chapter’s overall goal is to relate the ways that fanfiction research findings were conveyed to K-12 public school literacy education practitioners in the past to the ways that fanfiction is currently being researched in the present.

To that end, this final chapter of the dissertation contains a series of discussions on aspects of the research study that have implications for the current field of literacy education research. The first section of this chapter summarizes how practitioner journals' descriptions and depictions of fanfiction literacy practices changed over the course of the ten-year period represented by the data set. Demographic information gathered during the coding process is presented in order to construct a detailed account of how certain concerns and discussions were more prevalent at particular points than others. This is followed by an examination of the study's limitations in terms of its scope and methodologies. Finally, this chapter describes how fanfiction practices have changed since the period covered by the data set, and how these changes have impacted literacy scholars' understandings of how fanfiction is practiced when it is brought into contexts other than online fanfiction community database websites.

DEMOGRAPHIC PATTERNS

While coding and analyzing the data, I noted a number of interesting demographic patterns within the data set that, despite contributing to the identification and extraction of the study's three frame categories, were not explicitly discussed elsewhere in this dissertation. For example, the data set contained the following distribution of articles by year of publication (see Figure C):

Figure C: Distribution of Articles by Year of Publication

4 articles in 2003.

1 article in 2004.

3 articles in 2005.

4 articles in 2006.

8 articles in 2007.

12 articles in 2008.

19 articles in 2009.

19 articles in 2010.

11 articles in 2011.

13 articles in 2012.

1 article in 2013.

(Note: as data were collected between April 5 and May 8, 2013, articles from the second half of 2013 are not accounted for within this chronal distribution.)

As this infographic shows, references to fanfiction within the context of literacy education were fairly infrequent prior to 2007. Examination of the study's coding indicated that these earlier articles were mostly uniform in their depictions of fanfiction, in the sense that they all introduced fanfiction into discussions of literacy contexts. For example, recreational fanfiction practices and online fanfiction communities were primarily presented as alternate or new landscapes for adolescents to engage with media (Knobel & Lankshear, 2006), the study of which "suggests new definitions of what literacy is or could be" (Steinkuehler et al., 2005, p. 97). During this period, fanfiction's

relationship to K-12 public school literacy education was mostly framed in terms of the necessity of literacy educators and students to become aware of “how these literacies differ from school literacies” (Lewis & Fabos, 2005, p. 496). Analysis of the *experts* and *examples of fanfiction* coding findings indicated that fanfiction was often introduced in adolescent practitioners’ own words through case studies and other direct interactions (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003a; Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2005).

Beginning in 2007, however, there was a marked uptick in articles about fanfiction, the height of which was concentrated in 2009-2010, before returning in 2011 to about the level they were at in 2007-2008. Coding data indicated that articles published during the 2009-2010 zenith were characterized by the presentation of adolescent fanfiction practice as a new form of media engagement (Owens, 2011; Tierney, 2009; Van Amelsvoort, 2009). During these two years, fanfiction was introduced to educators alongside other emerging adolescent media engagement practices, and researchers were cited far more than their adolescent research participants as experts within descriptions of fanfiction practice (Gibbons, 2010; Kell, 2009; Lotherington & Jenson, 2011; Mills, 2010).

This trend continued into the latter half of the data set, by which point conversations about fanfiction had turned almost entirely toward the discussion of digital contexts for fanfiction reading and writing (Owens, 2011; Steinkuehler, 2010; Steinkuehler & King, 2009). “Popular social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook” (Williams, 2008, p. 683), and the literacies practiced within them, were presented as major concerns for educators during this period. Examinations of this

study's frame analysis findings indicated that fanfiction was framed within these discussions as a "particularly interesting social network site for language and literacy development" (Warschauer & Grimes, 2007, p. 15). Fanfiction became increasingly associated with discussions of other digital contexts for adolescent socialization, which were often accompanied by discussions of how adolescents engaged with media within these spaces. These accounts of adolescent media engagement often conveyed the concern that students were becoming more technologically literate -- but not necessarily more conventionally literate -- than their teachers (Schechter & Denmon, 2012; Thomas & Sassi, 2011).

Concerns that tech-savvy adolescents might lack the conventional literacy skills necessary to critically engage with the digital media they consumed and used to communicate with one another relied on the voices and perspectives of adults, rather than of adolescents, to define the scope and nature of adolescent literacy practice. The study's coding findings indicated that during the data set's later years, when discussions of fanfiction practitioner literacy aptitude became more and more prevalent, the articles had ceased to appeal to the authority of fanfiction practitioners to describe fanfiction practice. Instead, they relied on the researchers who studied fanfiction practitioners and the theorists who speculated about fanfiction's implications on K-12 classroom literacy instruction.

For instance, analysis of the *expert* coding findings indicated that only 9 of the data set's 95 articles depicted adolescent fanfiction practitioners as experts on their own literacy practices, and that only 2 of those 9 articles were published after 2008. Yet, the

data set was dominated by depictions of literacy researchers and theorists as experts on fanfiction: 81 of the 95 articles within the data set were coded with some variety of literacy researcher or literacy scholar. This suggests that, as attentions toward fanfiction communities increased, informal explanations sourced from actual fanfiction practitioners were ultimately excluded from materials written for K-12 public school literacy educators, in favor of formal scholastic evaluations of whether fanfiction practice constituted an expression of conventional literacy skill.

These findings have implications for the continuing research of fan literacy scholars into the level of control adolescent and adult fanfiction practitioners have over the future trajectory of their online literacy practices. Many literacy researchers have investigated the extent to which non-practitioners are able to define or shape the broader US socio-cultural conceptions of fanfiction practices and fanfiction communities (Gee & Hayes, 2010; Noppe, 2011; Pearson, 2010; Scott, 2009). Within these scholars' studies, the ability of non-practitioners to dictate what constitutes the acceptable nature and scope of fanfiction practice has long been presented as an issue.

Recently, the development of commissioned for-profit fanfiction works on sites such as Amazon Kindle Worlds (Baker-Whitelaw, 2014) has led to renewed concerns for the ways "corporate entities see fan fiction -- like texts -- as a way to engage the audience" (Hellekson, 2015, p. 129). For instance, fan scholars and entertainment journalists have observed that producers of animated television shows have become much more willing to encourage adolescent fanfiction and fan art practices. These commentators have pointed to the ways in which shows such as Cartoon Network's

Adventure Time (Avery, 2014), Nickelodeon's *The Legend of Korra* (Robinson, 2014), and VIZ Media's *Sailor Moon* (Roncero-Menendez, 2014), canonically validated popular lesbian fanfiction and fan art romantic pairings. They have also pointed to the creation of plotlines specifically centered around fanfiction and fan art practitioners, such as in Amazon/Troyca's *Re:Creators* -- a fantasy series whose villainess sprung to life out of the pages of a fanfiction work after internet bullying drove her teenage creator to commit suicide (Ekens, 2017) -- and Crunchyroll/Kyoto Animation's *Miss Kobayashi's Dragon Maid* -- a situation comedy about a group of mythological dragons who befriend members of various Japanese media subcultures (Silverman, 2017).

During the period covered by the data set, research related to concerns of practitioner control over public perception of fanfiction practice had been focused on the possible repercussions of what fanfiction practitioners saw as attempts from outside commercial and institutional groups to commodify or co-opt fanfiction works "at the expense of fans" (Noppe, 2011, p. 5.1). More recently, fanfiction and fan art practitioners have seemingly received these overtures from media creators on a case-by-case basis. Online fanfiction practitioner communities have accused several US entertainment media creators of marketing their franchises to fans of same-sex fanfiction works in ways perceived as cynical and manipulative by some LGBT fanfiction practitioners (Minkel, 2016; Romano, 2014, 2016). The most well-received of these overt attempts to market to fanfiction fans has been *Overwatch*, a 2016 video game specifically, and successfully, designed to appeal to creators of fanfiction and fan art (Deyo, 2016; Gorry, 2016). However, literacy scholars such as James Paul Gee and

Elisabeth Hayes have continued to caution their peers on the dangers of bringing fanfiction literacy practices into classrooms in ways that might transform contexts of fanfiction production into sites of “cultural hegemony in which people are socialized into dominant values” (Gee & Hayes, 2010, p. 186). The tendency of articles within this study's data set to increasingly rely on institutional voices -- such as researchers and theorists -- rather than actual fanfiction practitioners to convey *what fanfiction is* to readers suggests that this transformation might have already begun to occur by the end of the period represented by the data set.

These shifts in the ways that the relationship between K-12 education and out-of-school fanfiction literacy practice were characterized within the data set suggest that Gee and Hayes may have been right to be concerned. In less than 10 years, the focus of the data set's definitions, descriptions, and discussions had turned away from the exploration of fanfiction communities as intellectually interesting sites of recreational literacy, meant to provoke K-12 educators' curiosities, and toward a more standards-based evaluation of the merits of fanfiction literacy practices, meant to convey fanfiction's place within a number of developing conceptions of out-of-school student literacy aptitudes. Whether portrayals of *other* out-of-school literacy practices within professional education periodicals underwent similar shifts during the same period -- and whether portrayals of fanfiction within professional education periodicals have continued to undergo similar shifts in more recent years -- would be potentially interesting topics for future literacy education research, as such trends might indicate a pattern of changing institutional views about the merits and applicabilities of students' non-academic literacies.

NATURE OF PORTRAYAL

Prior to conducting this study, I had personally encountered several aca-fans (see Chapter Two) at conferences who expressed concerns about whether K-12 public school educators were being instilled with negative views of fan practices. Based on the findings of this study, it appears that the opposite may be the case. Overall, the portrayal of fans and fan communities within the data set was relatively positive: 61 articles portrayed media fans positively within the context of these fans' literacy practices, while 3 articles portrayed them negatively, 4 articles contained a mix of positive and negative portrayals, and 27 articles did not contain any noticeable value judgment. Communities of media fans were portrayed slightly more positively, with 65 articles containing positive portrayals, 2 containing negative portrayals, 1 containing a mix of both positive and negative portrayals, and 27 not containing any noticeable value judgment about fan communities.

The positive portrayal of fans and their communities appeared to extend to discussions of fan practices. Within articles that discussed fanfiction practices within the context of the central problem the article sought to address or the solutions the articles suggested for these problems, fanfiction was tied to the solution within 68 articles, the problem within 11 articles, and a mixture of both the problem and the solution in 9 articles (7 articles did not tie fanfiction to either the problem or the solution in any noticeable way). The implications of these findings are that, during periods when in-school literacy instruction did not appear to line up with students' actual out-of-school

literacy practices, students' practices were much more likely to be viewed as a possible source of reconciling this disparity than as a possible cause of the disparity itself. In other words, when students practiced literacy in ways that deviated from traditional methods of classroom literacy instruction, it was neither the students nor their practices that are considered at fault, but rather some other party.

In many cases within the data set, that other party was teachers. Teachers were coded within the blame category in 40 of the data set's articles. This represented the largest single entity or group of entities to be held responsible for issues related to classroom literacy instruction. This was relatively consistent with how teachers were presented within discussions of K-12 literacy education policy during the same period (see Chapter Three). However, teachers were notably also presented as stakeholders within the same problems of K-12 literacy education for which they were responsible: in the 83 articles where students were depicted as stakeholders within the article's stated problem, 77 of these articles also presented teachers as stakeholders. This suggested that even if lack of teacher knowledge or teachers' hesitations to implement new classroom policies were portrayed as the sources of K-12 literacy instruction dilemmas, they were nevertheless presented as having just as much at stake in these problems as their students.

FLATTENING THE NARRATIVE

Like any research grounded in a particular historical period and socio-cultural context, this study had particular limitations and constraints that must be acknowledged

in order to assess both its impact on and place within the field of K-12 literacy education research. The first of these limitations was related to the study's scope. Had this study been published in 2013, immediately after the data had been collected, its relevance and applicability to literacy scholars' understanding of what professional education periodicals tell US K-12 literacy educators about fanfiction literacy practice, and how research on fanfiction literacy practice within the field of education is being communicated to in-service or pre-service teachers, would be much more apparent. However, since the articles within the data set were between 5 and 15 years old, there may be a tendency to view the data set, and subsequently the study itself, as out of date.

However, upon reflection, while the study could only indicate what was told to educators between 2003 and 2013, it nevertheless has a tremendous impact on scholars' understanding of how developments in literacy research filter into and influence professional publications. For example, although national literacy education mandates that were current in 2008 were very different from those current in 2018, scholars arguably possess just as much if not more information about how policies from 2008 were enacted, as well as research on whether these policies were ultimately impactful or implemented effectively. By comparing how fanfiction literacy practices were presented as solutions to problems within the field of literacy education to research and documentation on policies designed to direct teachers toward solutions to these problems, literacy education scholars may increase their understanding of how new practices and pedagogies are presented as panaceas or common sense solutions for problems in K-12 education.

Another limitation of this study was that it focused entirely on print-based professional periodicals, primarily those published within peer-reviewed practitioner research journals and magazines. However, the period covered by the data set was characterized by a sharp increase in the use of web resources such as blogs as a means of disseminating information to and between K-12 educators (Loving et al., 2007; Ro et al., 2013; Strauss, 2006). Consequently, although the study accomplished its goal of illustrating the way professional education publications communicated ideas about fanfiction to teachers, it would be incorrect to state that the study fully accounted for all text-based means from which teachers may have acquired new conceptions of and knowledge about fanfiction literacy practices. This remains a limitation of the study only in that the research question itself did not direct the research toward blogs as an avenue of investigation. In that sense, the question of how educational blogs defined, depicted, and discussed fanfiction literacy practices during this period constitute a separate, yet interesting, direction for future frame analysis research.

Similarly, the study was limited in scope, in that it sought to investigate only practices that were described or defined as fanfiction by the articles and periodicals in which they had been published. This precluded the inclusion of certain discussions of fan works from the data set. For example, this dissertation would be unable to report on how fan art practices were communicated to K-12 art educators, or how fan music practices were communicated to K-12 music educators, during the period covered by the research study. Depending on whether one considers these practices to be variations of fanfiction practice, or rather equally interesting yet distinct methods of adolescent engagement with

pre-existing media works, this may represent a particular limitation on the data's applicability and transferability to the implementation of classroom practices based on existing patterns of adolescent media engagement.

Finally, the articles' focus on US K-12 public school programs resulted in an analysis that precluded the study's transferability, both to literacy programs within private K-12 schools and to those within other countries. While this was a planned limitation, what was unplanned was the study's lack of focus on pedagogical concerns that might be of particular importance to K-12 public school educators. For example, the study did not code for the socio-economic conditions of the school districts discussed within the data set, nor did it account for references to the race or class of the adolescent fanfiction practitioners mentioned within each article.

Arguably, these were factors that the study should have accounted for if it intended to fully explore all the socio-cultural factors that might possibly have shaped the way fanfiction literacy practices were framed within the data. However, I made a decision to exclude all socio-cultural themes from the analysis until they made themselves apparent during the inductive frame extraction process (see Chapter Four). Ultimately, although themes related to issues such as race, class, and gender of fanfiction practitioners were sought out within the articles, the only major socio-cultural threads that emerged across the data were the nine themes presented in Chapter Five.

THE FINAL FRONTIER

The authors of *Star Trek* slash fanfiction works in the 1960s might have found the fanfiction works produced, shared, and consumed by the adolescent literacy practitioners described within this study's findings to be very different from their own. Similarly, the practices of adolescent fanfiction fans in 2018 have many striking differences from the practices of adolescents during the period covered by the data set. The rise of easy-to-use and easy-to-navigate multimedia social networks have effectively eliminated the need for even the most specialized of fan communities to restrict the discussion or distribution of their works to fanfiction-specific community websites.

Similarly, fanfiction authors who decline to identify themselves with any particular fanfiction community can now find their own audiences using hypertext tags on platforms such as Tumblr, which boast a large and growing population of female users interested in the consumption, if not the creation, of fanfiction works (Lulu, 2013; Romano, 2014, 2016). The shift in where fanfiction is created, shared, and consumed from specialized, subcultural spaces to more open environments, coupled with the increased success and widespread popularity of formerly fan subculture-related media properties such as *The Avengers* and *Game of Thrones* has led several scholars (e.g., Jenkins et al., in Stein, 2014) to reclassify fan practices as more mainstream than subcultural, and more based on consumption than production.

On the other end of the subcultural spectrum, social media networks oriented toward high school and college-aged heterosexual cisgender men -- such as 4Chan and

Reddit -- have become host to online fanfiction communities devoted to exploring departures from socio-culturally accepted norms of masculine media interests (Duggan, 2017), such as male fans of the 2010 Hasbro children's show *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* who identify as "Bronies" (Ellis, 2015). These new contexts of fan media engagement have resulted in increased visibility for gender role-defying fanfiction works -- and subsequently, increased negative attention to non-heteronormative fanfiction content. The resulting conflicts between fanfiction enthusiasts and non-practitioner fans of popular fanfiction source materials have proved as tumultuous and divisive as any that occurred during the early days of zine-based fanfiction (Faraci, 2016; Geater, 2015; Grady, 2016; Hassenger, 2016; Romano, 2015).

Nevertheless, despite the changes that have occurred over the past half century to the practices of sharing and consuming fanfiction within the United States, fanfiction works themselves -- and the qualities that draw adolescents to become fanfiction literacy practitioners in the first place -- have remained remarkably constant. Thus, although this study is grounded in a particular historical period of US K-12 public school literacy education, I am confident that today's adolescent fanfiction practitioners would find much that reminds them of themselves within the data set's definitions, discussions, and depictions of fanfiction.

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APPENDIX I: JOURNAL ARTICLES COMPRISING DATA SET

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APPENDIX II: PERIODICALS IN DATA SET, NUMBER OF ARTICLES

<i>ALAN Review</i>	-- 1
<i>Annual Review of Applied Linguistics</i>	-- 3
<i>Children's Literature</i>	-- 1
<i>Children's Literature Association Quarterly</i>	-- 1
<i>College English</i>	-- 1
<i>Composition Studies</i>	-- 1
<i>Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue</i>	-- 1
<i>Education Week's Digital Directions</i>	-- 1
<i>Educational Researcher</i>	-- 2
<i>English Education</i>	-- 1
<i>English Journal</i>	-- 7
<i>English Teaching: Practice and Critique</i>	-- 4
<i>Gifted Child Today</i>	-- 1
<i>International Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society</i>	-- 1
<i>Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy</i>	-- 16
<i>Journal of Advanced Academics</i>	-- 1
<i>Journal of Computer Assisted Learning</i>	-- 1
<i>Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia</i>	-- 1
<i>Journal of Literacy Research</i>	-- 1
<i>Kappa Delta Pi Record</i>	-- 1

<i>Language Arts</i>	-- 11
<i>Language Teaching</i>	-- 1
<i>Literacy Research and Instruction</i>	-- 1
<i>Middle School Journal</i>	-- 1
<i>MultiMedia & Internet@Schools</i>	-- 1
<i>On the Horizon</i>	-- 4
<i>Phi Delta Kappan</i>	-- 2
<i>Reading Horizons</i>	-- 1
<i>Reading Research Quarterly</i>	-- 6
<i>Research in the Schools</i>	-- 2
<i>Research in the Teaching of English</i>	-- 8
<i>Resource Links</i>	-- 1
<i>Teacher Librarian</i>	-- 1
<i>The Social Studies</i>	-- 1
<i>Voices from the Middle</i>	-- 7

