

Popular Culture and Geography Education

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According to a range of commentators, school life is becoming increasingly marginal to how young people inform, present and position themselves as social actors. This suggests that the 'geographical imaginations' of the students taught in schools are largely shaped outside of the classroom, through television, films, travel and consumption. This paper offers some reflections on the implications of such a 'cultural pedagogy' for school geography. It discusses the erosion of the boundaries between schooling and popular culture and the ways in which geography has traditionally been suspicious of popular knowledges. The paper considers the potential of recent work in cultural geography to develop a geography education that engages with popular culture, and goes on to discuss the type of pedagogy that might be suited to such a task.

Introduction

Most of the education that matters today is taking place on a global scale. Electronic media, the vastly proliferating network of images that inscribe themselves on us everyday, and the hybridized sounds of new technologies, cultures, and ways of life have drastically altered how identities are shaped, desires constructed, and dreams realized. (Giroux, 1994: x)

According to a range of commentators, school life is becoming increasingly marginal to how students inform, present and position themselves as social actors (Giroux, 1994, 1996; McLaren, 1995; Smyth *et al.*, 1999; Willis, 1990). Rather than regard pedagogy as something that happens exclusively in schools and classrooms, based around the relationships between teachers and students, it is now recognised that pedagogy occurs in a variety of cultural sites. These pedagogical sites include libraries, television, movies, Internet, newspapers, magazines, toys, and advertising. This suggests that any attempt to understand the educational process in the present moment needs to examine both in-school and cultural pedagogy. As a corollary of this, geography educators need to reflect upon the idea that the 'geographical imaginations' of the students we teach are increasingly shaped outside the geography classroom. There is a growing body of literature that points to the ways in which the 'geographical imagination' is produced in everyday life (for a wide-ranging review, see Morley, 2000). For example, much of the recent work on the 'geographies of consumption' point out that consumption refers not only to the things we buy, but also to everything we then do with these things and to the meanings we associate with them. Consumption ties us in with a set of real and imagined geographies (Jackson & Thrift, 1995). Bell and Valentine (1997) have discussed

the role of food in the production of identity. For example, the trip to the supermarket can open up a range of imagined geographies. The purchase of a jar of coffee from Nicaragua can open up an imagined relationship with people in another place. Thus the purchase of food products links us to a set of social relationships with other people in other places (Harvey, 1991). This may be a positive experience, leading to heightened awareness of issues of global inequality or what Massey (1991) has described as a progressive sense of place where the boundaries between places are eroded and imagined in new ways. However, it may reinforce geographies of difference. For instance, in his studies of consumption in an area of north London, May (1996) has suggested that the consumption of 'exotic' foods fits into a racist geographical imagination. Similarly, the purchase of cosmetics from a corporation such as The Body Shop contains a variety of messages about the nature of world trade and inequality (Morgan, 1997). Against such negative interpretations there are accounts that stress the way in which consumption can play a part in the formation of identities. Gillespie's (1995) study of young British Muslim women, for example, contains a fascinating episode in which the fast foods of McDonald's and Coca-Cola are seen as symbols of modernity and thus allow the negotiation of a hybrid identity that copes with both the pressures of tradition and Western society. The consumption of goods and services therefore plays its part in the construction of geographies.

These examples are provided in order to suggest that as geography educators we need to recognise the power of 'cultural pedagogies', shaped by commercial dynamics, to impose themselves on our lives and shape our understandings of space and place. This paper argues that we need to extend our notions of geographical literacy (Slater, 1996) to include a critical media literacy. According to Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997), developing such a pedagogy will hinge upon

(a) its ability to link the production of the representations, images and signs of hyperreality to power blocs in the political economy; and (b) its capacity, once this linkage is exposed and described, to delineate the highly complex and ambiguous effects of the reception of these images and signs on individuals located at various race, class and gender coordinates in the web of reality. (p. 90)

This paper thus stands at the intersection of the fields of geography education, cultural geography and cultural studies. I hope to show that an engagement with cultural studies can enable geography educators to gain insights into the ways in which individuals come to understand themselves and the worlds around them. I wish to engage with and develop Huckle's (1997) argument about the importance of cultural studies for geography education:

It is the realm of culture and cultural studies which presents critical school geography with its greatest challenge and potential ... [it] should acknowledge that young people face a world with few secure signposts yet display much commitment and imagination in using popular culture to construct meanings and identities. (p. 249)

Cultural Studies and Schooling

In this paper, no attempt is made to review the vast and varied literature of the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies (for a useful introduction see Grossberg *et al.*, 1992). However, I think it can be argued that cultural studies has maintained a commitment to those cultural practices that are marginalised by dominant forms of education. Thus, from a cultural studies perspective, there is a need to expand the range of issues and texts studied in the domain of education. Whilst we should continue to study print and books as academic artefacts, we should also study the values that are produced and distributed through the media such as television, films, Internet, video games, and advertisements. As I argue in the next section, traditional academic disciplines such as geography have been slow to adapt to such changes, and little attempt has been made by geography educators to formally reflect upon the implications of these texts for classroom practice. However, there are indications that geography educators are beginning to realise the importance of this task. For example, Rob Gilbert (1992, 1995, 1997) has attempted to explore the implications of what he calls a 'post-modern political culture' for education. He outlines the dimensions of a postmodern society in which traditional patterns of work have changed, where experience is constantly mediated by images, where the status of all knowledge is questioned as a matter of course, and in which there can be no assumption of shared values or morality. These trends have important implications for education, which in its modernist form seeks to impose a coherent world-view on the young. Increasingly, Gilbert (1992) argues, this world-view is rejected by young people. He suggests that

A feature of postmodernist styles is that they are archetypically the styles of life of the young – cinema, television, MTV, fashion, rock music, dance: cultural forms which are expressive channels of a generation. Educators ignore this lifeworld at their perils. (p. 56)

Gilbert notes two responses to these changes. The first seeks a return to classical values and morality based on the teaching of great works and traditional morality. The second response is concerned about the shallow and superficial experience of the world provided by the mass-mediated experience of television and consumption. Against this, Gilbert argues that if schools want to encourage young people to participate actively in society, they need to understand how the experiences of the young and their social location are represented to them by the cultures in which they live and those which they construct themselves.

Huckle (1996) too, has recently argued that the new (postmodern) forms of politics linked to consumption and popular culture need to inform curriculum developments in geography. He draws on the theory of reflexive modernisation developed by social theorists such as Lash and Urry (1994), Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992). Reflexive modernisation suggests that as societies are modernised the more people are able to reflect upon social conditions and act to change them. Detraditionalisation sets people free from social structures and allows them to monitor themselves in relation to their society and environment. Huckle (1996) suggests that reflexive modernisation provides the potential for a critical

pedagogy that 'connects with youth culture and turns its hedonism and concern for identity politics towards more relaxed and sustainable ways of living' (p. 115).

Similar points about the centrality of images are raised by Angela McRobbie (1994) in an essay which provides a starting point for teachers who are concerned to think through the implications of the fact that 'images push their way into the fabric of our social lives. They enter into how we look, what we earn, and they are still with us when we worry about bills, housing and bringing up children'. McRobbie points to the difficulty of drawing a line between image and reality, media and society, and popular culture and education. She is optimistic about the possibilities this offers. For her, the ever-increasing velocity of the circulation of signs is not nihilistic or superficial. Instead it can lead to a widening out of culture and provides a greater range of resources for people to construct their identities:

There is no going back. For populations transfixed on images which are themselves a reality, there is no return to a mode of representation which politicizes in a straightforward, 'worthwhile' way... [T]his need not be seen as the end of the social, or the end of meaning, or for that matter the beginning of the new nihilism. Social agency is employed in the activation of all meaning. Audiences or viewers, lookers or users are not simple-minded multitudes. As the media extends its sphere of influence, so too does it come under the surveillance and usage of its subjects. (pp. 22–23)

McRobbie's account stresses social agency and the active construction of meaning. She challenges educators to open up the classroom to the signs and images of popular culture, and see curriculum as a form of cultural production. My interest in this paper is with the implications of this argument for geography education.

Geography and Popular Culture

In societies such as Britain, the mass education systems that developed in this century have tended to see the 'everyday knowledges' possessed by children as in need of correction. The early promoters of geography in schools such as Halford Mackinder were suspicious of the cultural activities of the people (see O Tuathail, 1996). Whilst cultural geographers have focused to some extent on 'folk geography', geographers have generally ignored popular culture. Popular culture is seen as far removed from the concerns of the educated and cultivated mind. Even within the work of humanistic geographers, which has perhaps been more open to the study of 'culture', there has been a marked reluctance to move beyond 'serious' topics and texts and a tendency to dismiss popular cultural landscapes. Warren (1993) notes the neglect of the landscapes of cultural consumption by cultural geographers: 'The most sustained commentary on the everyday has resolutely dismissed it as dangerously mindless "mass culture"' (p. 175).

Humanistic geography has much in common with the conservative tradition of 'culture and society', focusing on the symbolism and meaning found in literature and art. Burgess and Gold (1985) note that from the record of published

work about literature, geographers 'emerge as being profoundly elitist in their interests, with a derogatory view of the "mass" media and thus its "mass" audience'. For example, Yi-Fu Tuan (1976) drew a clear distinction between 'high class' and 'pulp' literature, and Relph (1976) classified place experiences on a scale ranging from the deepest authentic to the shallowest inauthentic (examples of which included Disneyland and the Mediterranean coast). Gregory (1994) notes that: 'There is on occasion more than a hint of Leavis's rasping elitism in the conservative canon of humanistic geography' (p. 84).

The disdain for 'mass' or popular culture is also evident in the work of radical geography, which has been much influenced by the Frankfurt School of critical theory which tended to regard popular culture as promoting 'false consciousness'. Thus Harvey (1989) and Soja (1989) note the tendency for 'theme park' experiences in the contemporary city, and Sack (1992) condemns the consumer world as 'immoral'. Zukin (1992) describes how property developers have constructed new 'landscapes of power' which have threatened the 'authenticity' of places.

Given this general suspicion of popular culture, it is not surprising that geography educators have tended to stress the negative environmental costs and social costs of consumerism. For example, Huckle (1987) argues that

A look around any town centre shopping arcade on a Saturday afternoon suggests that young people are particularly susceptible to the culture of consumerism. Yet this is profoundly anti-educational; appealing to wants rather than needs, offering only temporary satisfactions and suppressing knowledge which could inform real choice. (p. 148)

However, in recent years, the development of a 'new cultural geography'² (see Jackson, 1989; Shurmer-Smith & Hannam, 1994) has led to a sustained and theoretically sophisticated engagement with media culture, popular culture and the geographies of 'everyday life'. Much of the early work drew upon the influential work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University, though later approaches are more eclectic in their use of theory from cultural and literary studies. In what follows, I provide a brief account of some of the literature in this area.

One of the earliest engagements between geography and cultural studies can be found in Burgess and Gold's (1985) edited collection *Geography, the media and popular culture*. The tone of their approach is reflected in the following comment:

The media have been on the periphery of geographical inquiry for too long. The very ordinariness of television, radio, newspapers, fiction, film and pop music perhaps masks their importance as part of people's geography 'threaded into the fabric of daily life with deep taproots into the well-springs of popular consciousness'. (p. 1)

Burgess and Gold are concerned that 'elite' forms of culture have been over-valued in geography at the expense of 'popular' or subordinate forms of culture, and this theme is taken up in Cosgrove and Jackson's (1987) agenda-setting article on 'New Directions in Cultural Geography'. They cite studies of 'mugging', gender, racism and youth subcultures as relevant to a revised cultural geography that recognises the importance of the strategies of resistance used by

subordinate groups to contest the hegemony of powerful groups. These themes are developed in Peter Jackson's (1989) *Maps of Meaning* which develops the idea of cultural politics – defined as the 'domain in which meanings are constructed and negotiated, where relations of dominance and subordination are defined and contested'. Examples of these approaches can be found in Anderson and Gale's (1992) *Inventing Places*. The essays in this collection are diverse, ranging from studies of the elite landscapes of corporate culture and high-class residential developments, through the ways in which assumptions about gender relations are encoded in shopping malls and urban space, through to the media coverage of the environmental impacts of economic developments.

The concern that geographers have ignored popular culture in their studies is acknowledged in the recent collection of essays edited by Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine (1998) entitled *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*. The collection seeks to explore the 'diversity in young people's lives in order to place youth on the geographical map and to demonstrate youth's relevance to a range of geographical debates'. The chapters focus on different aspects of young people's identities, including gender, ethnicity, disability and sexuality. Throughout there is a concern with the everyday and the popular, including television and the use of computers, and everyday spaces such as the home, school, workplaces, streets and clubs. The book represents a significant contribution to popular geographical studies and challenges geography educators to incorporate such perspectives into our teaching.

Overall, much recent work in the 'new cultural geography' is concerned with the landscapes of everyday life. There is a growing number of studies that move away from the traditional concerns with the geographies of production, the workplace or the industrial region to the geographies of consumption, the home and the street. Whilst the nature of this 'cultural turn' is hotly debated and involves a wide variety of theoretical positions (Sayer, 1994; Mitchell, 1995), the potential exists to incorporate elements of cultural geography into school geography.

Developing a Cultural Pedagogy

Thus far, this paper has suggested that recent work in critical pedagogy stresses the importance of cultural pedagogy in forming and sustaining the identities of young people. This observation is supported by recent work in cultural geography which stresses the role of the media and consumption in the construction of the geographical imaginations of young people. This work has challenged the preoccupations of educators and geographers who have tended to regard popular culture as inauthentic and corrupting of young people, and the task of education to elevate young people's minds to higher things. Having suggested that there is an urgent need to engage with the geographies of everyday life, the remainder of this paper is concerned with the question of what type of pedagogy is appropriate to such a task. In order to do so, the paper considers recent debates in media education, where questions of popular culture and schooling have been debated.

As noted at the beginning of this paper, there is a growing literature that considers the implications of popular culture for pedagogy. The tenor of this work is well-summarised by Steinberg and Kincheloe (1998), who argue that to use cultural studies means that teachers need to:

take popular culture seriously; the attribution of significance is manifested by the teachers' attention to the process by which students use it to make meaning in their lives.... Thus, TV, popular music, movies, video games, comic books, and other commercially produced youth culture or kinderculture become cultural artefacts to be examined around the questions of experience and identity ... they focus on the politics, cultural aspects, personal meanings circulating within them and between them and their audiences. (p. 235)

In his influential book *Teaching the Media*, Len Masterman (1985) argues that developments in media education are relevant to the work of geography teachers. He advocates the development of media education and media literacy in the teaching of all subjects. This is based on two ideas. First, media materials are increasingly used in a routine way in the teaching of all subjects. However, these materials are still used largely as 'transparent' carriers of information. Masterman argues that materials need to be read critically: 'In particular, the basic media literacy technique of relating media messages to the political, social and economic interests of those producing them, needs to be encouraged as a matter of course by teachers of all subjects' (p. 242). Second, there is a considerable overlap between the contents of the media and the content of the school curriculum. Students do not come to school with blank minds ready to be filled with knowledge. They bring with them prejudices, misconceptions, ideas and stereotypes. Masterman argues that effective teaching will take this into account, and might well begin with a consideration of media representations of the topic at hand.

Masterman argues that geography is a subject with considerable scope for developing critical media literacy. For a start, it is a subject in which visual images have a particularly prominent place. He cites Wiegand (1982) who argues that visual images 'offer a short cut to the understanding of ideas or features that would otherwise require lengthy explanation' and 'evoke powerful and long-lasting images of what places are like'. Masterman suggests that questions about the sources of information or images, selection, captioning and agenda-setting are all applicable in a subject where photographs and videos are 'all too often handled transparently by the geography teacher' (p. 243).

However, Masterman argues that there is a need to go beyond simply questioning the sources of geographical materials. For the very substance of the subject cannot itself be viewed innocently or transparently. Landscapes can be interpreted in a variety of ways, and we always understand them through particular frames. A key idea in Masterman's account is that of the distinction between 'image' and 'reality'. He quotes approvingly Youngs, who argues that 'image-regions' are 'naïve images', and gives the example of the cinematic and literary representations of the ante-bellum American South which are full of images of debonaire young men, beautiful heroines, courtship, duels and dances, whilst in the cotton fields the 'darkies' sing contentedly in their work. A key pedagogical strategy is to demonstrate the gap between 'image' and 'reality': 'How do the images of Dallas in Dallas, Denver in Dynasty, or Miami in Miami Vice compare with the socio-economic realities of these cities?' (p. 246).

For Masterman, media education involves the study of 'structured absences'. For instance, in the generalised images of rural England that appear on TV,

advertisements, soap operas, films, posters and the media, what are persistently absent are images of rural poverty, exploitation, unemployment and immobility. The overall conclusion that Masterman reaches is that a 'functional media literacy' could be

Invaluable in raising important questions about the taken-for-granted visual illustrations which are used in all classrooms, and in encouraging teachers and students to treat school books and images not as transparent carriers of knowledge, but as culturally loaded texts which need to be actively deconstructed and critically read. (p. 250)

Masterman adopts an 'oppositional' stance to the products of media culture. He recognises the media as a central element of young people's lives, but also as the primary means whereby the 'dominant ideology' is imposed upon them. He emphasises the need for the 'objective analysis' of media texts and images. This requires students and teachers to stand back from the images and texts they are studying and analyse them systematically using semiotic methods. Such detached, critical analysis would enable them to identify how media texts are constructed and selected, and thus reveal their 'suppressed ideological function'. Teaching the media is thus a process of 'demystification'. It is concerned with what Masterman calls 'alternative realities', by which he means those constructions implicitly rejected, suppressed or filtered out of the images that appear.

An example of this type of work in geography education is provided by Jenkins (1990) in his critique of the various representations of the British countryside in a series of programmes about the regional geography of Britain produced and distributed to schools by the transnational corporation Shell. He suggested that they have a visual-picture-postcard appeal, offer a touristic view of the landscape, focus on quaint rural crafts rather than the realities of working in the capitalist countryside, promote a view of the countryside as based on harmonious social relationships rather than conflict, and are ahistorical in that they fail to provide a convincing account of the forces that have shaped rural Britain. Jenkins concluded that these films were ideological, and worried that there is a tendency to treat films as 'transparent' when in fact the information presented is: 'a highly selected, socially constructed reality and the view offered may be ideologically base serving a particular set of interests and values'. Jenkins argues that it is important that teachers and students develop a critical media literacy in order to counter these selective representations of the rural. Youngs and Jenkins (1984) suggest a number of practical activities for developing such a media literacy.

There is considerable potential for geography educators to develop this type of critical media literacy in the classroom. Williamson's (1978) *Decoding Advertisements* is useful here, as is Kellner (1995). A thought-provoking text is Goldman and Papson's (1996) *Sign Wars* which contains a chapter on Green advertising. They review a whole series of advertisements and conclude that: 'By stimulating the high levels of consumption necessary to support the logic of capital in the endless pursuit of increased profits, advertising aggravates tendencies towards environmental crises' (p. 187). Goldman and Papson suggest that green or environmental advertising is a response to the growth of the environmental movement and an awareness that overconsumption contributes to

environmental destruction. As a result, advertisers now seek to promote 'thoughtful' consumption as a solution to impending environmental disasters.³

These examples suggest the ways in which geography teachers might begin to use the products of media culture in their classrooms. However, we should recognise some of the potential problems with the type of 'demystification' advocated by Masterman. A criticism of this approach is that it tends to separate the 'cognitive' and 'affective' processes of learning, so that in the rational 'deconstruction' of texts students' emotional investments in them are neglected. Studies in anti-racist and anti-sexist teaching have pointed to the limitations of such a rationalist pedagogy that fails to displace students' pleasure in racist and sexist media texts (Cohen, 1988). For example, Judith Williamson (1981/82) in her article 'How does girl no. 20 understand ideology?' shows how the male students in her class were able to deconstruct sexist advertisements, but at the same time refused to change their sexist behaviour. In other words, they were able to 'play the game' and adopt 'politically correct' responses, giving the teacher what they thought she wanted to hear. Williamson's article reminds us that any approach to teaching is always situated in real classrooms peopled by individuals with different investments in the learning process. The most developed attempt to move beyond the 'demystification' approach is provided by David Buckingham. In a review of Masterman's *Teaching the Media*, Buckingham (1986) argues that by consistently emphasising that the media act as 'consciousness industries' whose primary aim is to maintain capitalist production, Masterman sees the main role of the teacher as raising questions regarding the economic base of the media. In other words, this involves asking 'whose interests are being served by this media text?'. For example, in discussing the Shell UK films on the regions of Britain, Masterman says that 'most basic question of all – who is producing the material and for what purpose? – is the key to unlocking the ideological significance of the films. Why should Shell UK make films about the British countryside?' (p. 247). Buckingham suggests that supposing an economic determination to the question of ideology is an over-simplification. In Masterman's view, 'ideologies are ideas or beliefs which underpin particular texts and which can be recovered by peeling away the surface layers of mystification which serve to obscure them from view' (Buckingham, 1986: 86).

Buckingham argues against an approach that regards ideology as something that is inherent in the text, and that 'real' meanings can be uncovered by the removal of apparent or 'surface' meanings. He argues that by locating meaning at the level of the media industries or the producers of the text, Masterman is unable to discuss how readers are producers of ideology, as well as the products of ideology. In other words, ideology is a matter of what the text 'says' rather than how it works. Against this, it can be suggested that readers may interpret texts differently from how their producers intended them to be read.

Buckingham's work represents a shift in the dominant paradigm of media education, away from a concern with 'demystification' towards the writing and reading of media texts. He calls for teachers to move away from a defensive position where young people are seen as the potential 'victims' of media ideologies and teachers are agents of 'demystification', towards a position which stresses the importance of analysis and reflection. Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994) question the status of 'texts' in media education which usually focuses on an analytical deconstruction of particular texts or starts with a body of texts and

seeks to generalise across them. Such an approach presupposes the possibility of an objective meaning being recovered or unearthed, and suggests that meaning is immanent in the text. Buckingham and Sefton-Green argue that the meaning of a text or an image is not simply given, but is achieved or produced through a process of social negotiation, and is therefore diverse, unstable and contested. Viewed in this way, images and texts become resources for more open-ended play with the possibilities of meaning.

There is a growing body of research which suggests that, rather than accept the ideological power of the media to influence the way people interpret the world, we should see individuals as creative agents, capable of producing their own perspectives. This idea is summarised neatly by Ien Ang (1996):

the vitality and energy with which those who are excluded from legitimate, institutional power create a meaningful and liveable world for themselves, using the very stuff offered them by the dominant culture as raw material and appropriating it in ways that suit their own interests. (p. 139)

Ang's argument has been given ethnographic support by Paul Willis's (1990) description of the 'symbolic creativity' demonstrated by the young people he studied in Wolverhampton in their use of the products of consumer culture. He points to the 'extraordinary symbolic creativity' of

the multitude of ways in which young people use, humanise, describe and invest with meanings their common and immediate life spaces and social practices – personal styles and choice of clothes, selective and active use of music, TV, magazines; decoration of bedrooms; the rituals of romance and subcultural styles; the style, banter and drama of friendship groups; music-making and dance. (p. 2)

This section has outlined some resources which may be drawn upon by geography teachers who wish to use the insights of the 'new cultural geography' to develop forms of 'critical media literacy' with their students. That such forms of critical media literacy are important is summarised well by Huckle (1994):

We increasingly know our environment through the mass media which represent it to us. Representations of environments and environmental issues crowd our television screens yet few of us are educated to watch these in an informed and critical way ... a critical media education enables people to reflect and act on how they are constructed and how they might be re-constructed to better serve the interests of democracy, social justice, and sustainability. (p. 2)

However, rather than provide a set of rules for teachers to follow, this section has highlighted some of the debates and issues that surround the use of popular culture in the classroom (see also Smyth *et al.*, 1999; Shor, 1987). In closing this section, it is perhaps worth considering how these arguments might inform future research in geography and environmental education.

To date, very little is known about how young people make sense of the 'unofficial' geographies they consume. There is an urgent need to understand what meanings young people make about places from cultural texts, such as television programmes, news, films, advertisements and magazines, and how these inform

their geographical imaginations. An important question concerns the relationship between these 'popular geographical knowledges' and the 'official' knowledge taught in geography classrooms (for example, what happens when young people's mental maps of the United States come up against the representations offered in the school curriculum?) and how these representations of the world are negotiated. It is also interesting to reflect upon how geography educators use cultural texts within classrooms. For example, are videos and photographs treated as innocent representations of the world or are they treated as highly mediated social constructions that require deconstruction? Where popular cultural texts find their way into the classroom, how are they handled? These are the types of questions that might make up a research agenda in geography education.

Conclusions

In recent years, critical pedagogy has become increasingly concerned with the role of the media. For example, according to Henry Giroux (1994), if we are to make sense of the educational process in the late 20th century, we must take seriously both in-school and cultural pedagogy. Peter McLaren (1995) talks of the media enacting a 'perpetual pedagogy' and the need for critical pedagogues to develop strategies to resist its influence. Indeed, critical pedagogy has spawned its own term, 'cultural pedagogy' to reflect the idea that education takes place in a variety of social sites, including but not limited to schooling. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) argue that cultural pedagogy is structured by commercial dynamics, forces that impose themselves into all aspects of our own and children's private lives. They outline the importance of what they call the 'cultural curriculum of hyperreality':

We can develop as many wonderful multicultural school curriculums as we like, but as important and as influential as they may be, such lessons often don't address the cultural curriculum being taught by TV, movies, popular music, video games and the Internet. Popular cultural consumption shaped by TV and movie corporations and other entertainment industries positions power-wielding commercial institutions as the teachers of the new millennium.

The response to this powerful cultural pedagogy requires teachers, educational researchers, political leaders, parents and students to be empowered to 'expose the corporate curriculum and to hold corporate decision-makers accountable for the pedagogy they produce'. The idea of a 'critical media literacy' to counter this all-pervasive cultural pedagogy is developed by Kellner (1995, 1998). Kellner stresses the importance of teaching ourselves and others how to critically decode media messages and trace their complex range of effects. A critical media literacy would allow students to perceive the ideological views and codes in media products and distinguish between hegemonic ideologies and those images, discourses and texts that subvert the dominant ideology.

The arguments in this paper can be seen as part of a broader 'cultural turn' in geography, which involves a shift from a negative and dismissive treatment of popular culture to the idea that the consumption can be active and creative rather than passive.

In the British context, school geography developed in an education system that was strongly class based. There was a concern with policing the boundaries between (acceptable) high culture and (debased) low culture. Consequently, the professional identities of geography teachers have been based on the acquisition of specific knowledge, skills and attitudes. These have then been sedimented over time and are transmitted to new generations of students. The result is that the geography curriculum has tended to exclude the popular cultural knowledges, skills and attitudes possessed by young people. These do not find expression in the geography curriculum. In this paper I have suggested that contemporary economic and cultural change matter for geography. The globalisation of economic and cultural change and the ubiquity of media culture are helping to reshape the ways in which young people experience the world. As Gilbert noted, students are evolving cultures in which visual, musical and bodily elements are strongly present. The school geography curriculum, however, overlooks most of the cultural resources to which students now have access, and thus fails to fully engage the geographical imaginations of young people.

The incorporation of perspectives from cultural studies and the 'new' cultural geography offers the potential for devising a geography curriculum for the 'new times' (Quicke, 1999). An important feature of the new cultural geography that connects with the lived experience of young people is the way it recognises that our knowledge of the world is mediated through practices of representation and thus draws our attention to the plurality of meanings and interpretations of the world. This suggests that a geography education that draws on these perspectives should teach students to read critically places and representations of places, in other words the 'informal curriculum' that is taught by media culture. The wider context for the argument in this paper is the debate over the types of 'literacy' required for the demands of the 21st century (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). The argument about the relationship between cultural studies and geography forces educators to focus less on what is already happening in schools and more on 'what might be or what ought to be?'. It raises questions about the types of identities and belongings that young people are constructing in the contemporary world and what type of educational experiences geography can offer them (Huckle, 1997; Isin & Wood, 1999; Tomlinson, 1999). This paper is offered as a contribution to that debate.

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Notes

1. The phrase 'popular culture' is the subject of heated debate in cultural studies. In this paper I am using it with a high degree of generality, to denote a wide range of practices involving the consumption of media texts, such as films, television and also practices of consumption.
2. The term 'new cultural geography' is used to reference an emerging body of work in geography that is concerned with the theoretical study of cultural landscapes. It is used to mark its difference from work in cultural geography informed by the Berkeley School of cultural geography influenced by Carl Sauer.

3. Goldman and Papson's (1999) recent book *Nike Culture* is also worthy of attention by geography teachers, representing a rich set of ideas about the production and consumption of culture.

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