Living Here, yet Being There: Facebook as a Transnational Space for Newcomer Latina/o Adolescents

Mary Amanda Stewart

Living Here, yet Being There:

Facebook as a Transnational Space for Newcomer Latina/o Adolescents

Mary Amanda Stewart, Texas Woman's University

Abstract

Under the category of diaspora media studies, the present case study investigates the social networking use of four newcomer adolescent English Learners in a U.S. high school. Demonstrating their transnational skills, the students use the social networking site of Facebook prolifically outside of school in order to connect to their home countries, maintain their Latina/o identities, and acquire English. Findings from analyzing the students' Facebook pages, interviews, and in-school observations illustrate that they are transnational, multicultural, emergent bilinguals who engage in sophisticated multimodal ways of communication outside of school, challenging their at-risk label in their high school. Immigrant students' transnational skills that are being nurtured through technology should be leveraged for academic learning such as acquiring English in the classroom and learning through global perspectives. Furthermore, language pedagogy and policy must change in response to transnationalism and new technologies in order to provide English Learners an equitable education.

Valeria, a 19-year-old high school sophomore from El Salvador, stares at a chemistry exam in front of her. She is classified as a Beginning English Learner and has not received much language support in her content area classes in the three semesters she has attended the U.S. high school. With her pencil, she quickly makes an attempt at the inaccessible exam to appease the teacher, and then takes out her phone. She escapes the schooling environment that continually makes her feel incompetent to enter her transnational space on Facebook. She searches to see if the sister she left behind in El Salvador is currently online. Valeria's 40-hour workweek allows her to have a smart phone and pay for her family in El Salvador to have internet access. While sitting in that chemistry class, Valeria catches up on news with her sister in Spanish, practices using some phrases in English, and exchanges pictures across multiple geographic borders, all on Facebook.

As a newcomer to the U.S., Valeria is older than her peers and is on a race against time to successfully complete high school. She faces many challenges: learning English, passing state tests, and acquiring the necessary credits for graduation, all while beginning a new life nothing like she has known before. However, Valeria, like other immigrant youth (Bruna, 2007; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007), possesses sophisticated transnational literacies that could be employed to mediate her academic achievement. Many of these literacies are nurtured through the digital space she and other newcomers have created for themselves using Facebook. Burgeoning social networking sites such as Facebook are facilitating new literacies and social practices that have not adequately been studied with immigrant youth (Warschauer, 2009). As the school-aged population grows more transnational, one of five students in U.S. schools have at least one

Stewart: Living Here, yet Being Here   29

immigrant parent (United States Census Bureau, 2010), it is incumbent that educators, researchers, and policy-makers understand how these youth are using social networking to develop their transnational identities so that the resulting abilities might be leveraged for academic learning.

Past research implores us to investigate immigrant youth's transnational literacies (Jiménez, 2003; Lam & Warriner, 2012; Sánchez & Kasum, 2012) as well as how these youth use social networking to foster their transnational identities (Hornberger, 2007; Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009) in order to connect their multilingual, transnational, and multimodal abilities to classroom learning. Consequently, the research that I present falls under the broader category of "diaspora media studies" (Lam & Warriner, 2012) and investigates four newcomer Latina/o high school students' use of social networking. Specifically, the research questions that guided the study are as follows:

1. For what purposes do the participants use Facebook?
2. How does their transnational Facebook use challenge their label as at-risk students?

Theoretical Framework

This study uses a transnational lens in order to understand the participants' use of social networking, specifically Facebook. The union of transnationalism and technology was conceived by the New London Group (1996) through their concern regarding the great disparities that exist in education which lead to inequitable economic, political, and social capital. They believe that the conception and teaching of literacy must change in response to transnational and digital practices in order to give all students equitable access in society.

Transnationalism

The New London Group's (1996) first claim is that literacy research should "account for the context of our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalized societies…the multifarious cultures that interrelate and the plurality of texts that circulate" (p. 9), namely transnationalism. To understand the notion of transnational literacy, it is first important to note the term *transculturación*, or transculturation, pioneered by Fernando Ortiz (2002) in his seminal essay, *Contrapunto Cubano del Tabaco y el Azúcar*, on the historical relationship between the United States and Cuba. He problematizes the then more popular term, acculturation, which he believes is ethnocentric, signifying that one culture is completely replaced by another. He uses the term transculturation to demonstrate the fluid, complex flow of one culture to another and the mutual effect they have on one another and the people present. According to Ortiz (2002), to truly understand and study the Cuban people, one must study not only the impact of outside cultures on Cubans' lives over multiple generations, but also the effect they had on those other cultures. Likewise, Latino immigrant youth in the U.S. must be understood through the same transnational lens as they effect and are affected by a myriad of cultures. To view their culture as being replaced by the dominant culture upon emigration is indeed an ethnocentric lens of this people group, their customs, and their practices.

This foregrounds the term transnational which embraces the local diversity and global connectedness referred to by the New London Group (1996). Transnational can be used as a noun, referring to people who have "moved bodily across national borders while maintaining and

cultivating practices tied…to their home countries" (Hornberger, 2007, p. 325), as well as an adjective to "depict social practices, political processes, and cultural phenomena among individuals who do cross geopolitical borders regularly as well as those who do not" (Warriner, 2007, p. 209).

Using a transnational lens, some studies have investigated immigrant youth's "transnational literacies" (Sánchez, 2007) that include their clothing (Bruna, 2007), music (Poveda, 2012), social networking (McGinnis, Goodstein-Stolzenberg, & Saliani, 2007), and language choices (Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007) resulting from the transnational spaces (Moje, 2004) they inhabit in which literacy occurs. In these spaces individuals construct their identities, demonstrate cultural pride, and stay connected to multiple places. For example, according to Flores (2009), reggaeton music, which is extremely popular with most Spanish-speaking youth, is known as the first transnational music, representing the crossroads of many communities. As Poveda (2012) noted in his study of Latin American immigrants in Spain, this musical genre represents a transnational experience which many immigrant students understand personally. Therefore, reggaeton music itself represents the lived experiences of many nonmainstream students who cross multiple borders on a daily basis.

Researchers have called our attention to these transnational spaces as crucial sites for further investigation (Hornberger, 2007; Jiménez, 2003) because many youth "are constructing hybrid ethnic identities that draw increasingly from multiple texts of multiple spaces" (Moje, 2004, p. 37). Therefore, by adopting a transnational lens, the present study will build upon past research (Jiménez, Smith, & Teague, 2009) that offers ways students' transnational literacies can be leveraged for classroom use. Recognizing the close ties between transnationalism and digital literacy, this study specifically investigates how immigrant students use social networking to negotiate their transnational identities.

Technology

The second claim of the New London Group (2000) is that literacy "now must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies" (p. 9). This view of literacy is echoed by Leu and colleagues (2011) as they discuss the way that technology has dramatically influenced the notion of literacy. They state that the very nature and meaning of literacy is in constant change: "To be literate tomorrow will be defined by even newer technologies that have yet to appear and even newer social practices that we will create to meet unanticipated needs" (p. 6).

Nestor García Canclini (1995), a Latin American anthropologist, discusses how technology uniquely affects the hybridization of cultures occurring in transnationalism. He states: "The question is to understand how the dynamic itself of technological development remodels society and coincides with or contradicts social movements" (p. 227). As a result, the continual influx of technology intersects with the crossroads of the hybridizing cultures, adding another dimension of juxtaposition. He addresses this unique area similarly as the New London Group (1996): Literacy changes as cultures are affected by transnationalism, hybridization, and technology. Lam and Rosario-Ramos' (2009) study of 262 immigrant high school students illustrates that immigrant youth are prolifically using social networks. They are creating transnational spaces to foster relationships across geographic borders. Smaller-scale studies (Black, 2006; Lam, 2004; McLean, 2010; Yi, 2007) have primarily investigated how Asian

Stewart: Living Here, yet Being Here   31

immigrant youth develop their multilingual and multicultural identities in digital spaces through the use of a variety of technology. The participants use their digital spaces to reflect cultural pride, express their loyalties to specific groups, and maintain their cultural identities while living in a new country. These studies show the crucial nature of digital spaces in immigrant students' lives, but lack strong representation from Latino youth.

Furthermore, it is well-documented that Facebook use is a phenomenon quickly spreading across the globe and to younger populations (Junco, 2012). The purposes of this digital space address key issues of transnationalism with which immigrant adolescents are already negotiating due to the act of immigration (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). Thus, Facebook or other social networking sites can uniquely serve the purposes of youth who have experienced immigration.

This paucity of research addressing Latino immigrant youth's digital social networking is unfortunate because studies at the college level show that when students' digital literacies are understood and systematically used in the classroom, learning is enhanced (Lang, 2010; Skerrett, 2010; Reid, 2011). "Additionally, the social networking platform of Twitter has proven a dynamic platform for helping high school students negotiate meaning from multiple historical perspectives in the social studies classroom (Krutka & Milton, 2013; Lee et al., 2012)." Outside of the classroom, studies with college students evidence how social networking sites allow them to create social capital (Steinfield, Ellison, & Lampe, 2008), develop sophisticated literacy practices (Buck, 2012), and acquire a second language through multiple modalities (DePew, 2011). This study will distinctively address the transnational abilities and capital newcomer Latina/o youth develop through the use of the social networking site of Facebook.

Methodology and Data Sources

The data in this present work is from a larger study of the out-of-school literacies of four newcomer youth in the U.S. Upon receiving all necessary approval, I began volunteering in the participants' ESL classes on a weekly basis in January 2012. I did not work at the school, but had previous experience teaching newcomer immigrant youth. The class is in a high school located in a large city in a Southwestern border state. The school is composed of approximately 2,000 students in grades nine through twelve, and is primarily White and middle class. The initial sample was comprised of the 14 total students in the ESL classes.

After getting to know the students, I selected four students for the study based on their first language, age, and time in the country. I choose these four students because I speak Spanish, and the older, more recent arrivals had a shared set of experiences. The four students in the ESL classes who met the criteria all indicated they wished to participate and returned signed consent forms in Spanish. Data collection took place over five months and includes interviews, classroom observations, and the entire content of students' Facebook pages. At the time I recruited the participants I was not aware that any of them used Facebook or other social networking sites. This was a theme that emerged during data collection.

In addition to the participants' status as newcomer English Learners, they all maintain after school jobs to support themselves and save for college. Two of the participants also send most of their earned money back to El Salvador to support their mom and sister. Despite their

The Tapestry Journal *5*(1)

after school jobs that sometimes demand more than 40 hours a week, they all qualify for free lunch at the school, demonstrating their economic situation. Table 1 provides basic information about the participants.

Table 1.

Participants and Information as of January 2012.

Name	Age	Country of Origin	Time in U.S.	Grade in School	Level of Education Completed in Country of Origin
Valeria	19	El Salvador	20 months	Sophomore	In first year of bachillerato = 10th grade
Alejandra (Valeria's sister)	17	El Salvador	20 months	Junior	In second year of bachillerato = 11th grade
Celia	17	Mexico	18 months	Junior	Finished secundaria = 10th grade
Miguel	20	Guatemala	9 months	Junior	In third year of universificado = 12th grade

All names are pseudonyms approved by the participants.

Interviews

I interviewed the participants individually five to eight times each during their 35-minute lunch break about many of their out-of-school literacies. Much of the content of these interviews is regarding their use of Facebook to send and receive messages. During these interviews I showed them content I had printed from their Facebook pages and discussed it with them. I followed a constructivist approach to grounded theory interviews (Charmaz, 2003) which facilitated the participants' ability to create their own meaning of their social networking. I used an adaptation of Seideman's (1991) three-part phenomenological interview format which covers the historical context, present usage, and deeper purposes of their social networking literacies. Previous scholarship and a pilot study (Stewart, 2014) provided a framework for the interview questions, yet each individual had different experiences with social networking; thus, each interview followed a distinctive direction based on the participant's unique experiences. I conducted most of the interviews in the students' first language, Spanish, and only used English when they wanted to practice a few phrases with me.   I transcribed each interview within at least two days of the actual interview using NVivo software. The transcriptions denote the participants' exact words including their pauses, facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language.

Stewart: Living Here, yet Being Here   33

Observations

      I was a participant-observer during 16 of their 45-minute ESL classes during the five months of data collection. I helped them with their class work and observed them during the time the teacher was instructing. After each class, I wrote field notes about what I had observed from each participant. Additionally, I met with them informally before school on three occasions and had six informal lunches with them. During these times I helped them with their homework for other classes. I also kept field notes from these meetings. All of my field notes were hand-written, then typed into word documents and imported to NVivo for coding. The total amount of time I spent with them not in an official interview totals 21 hours which was spread out from January through May.

Facebook Data

      In order to access the students' private Facebook pages, I became their "friend" on the site. I initially sent Valeria a friend request after getting her permission to do so, and then the other three students quickly sent me a friend request when they saw me on Valeria's page. Because they viewed me as an "americana" with whom they could authentically practice English, they were eager to "friend me."

      The analysis of the students' Facebook pages includes text, images, and audio from the time they began their page through the end of the study in June 2012.(See Table 2) Their Facebook data contain three spaces that their friends, those they have allowed to view their page, may access: their wall, information page, and photos. On their message wall the participants themselves or their friends may make a post. Posts include pictures, internet links, videos, chain messages, and personally written messages or comments to previous posts. The data on their information page includes information about themselves such as their favorite music and television shows. Additionally, they can post and upload photos for their friends to view. For each photo, a post can be created which can begin an entire conversation regarding the picture posted. Some of their conversations relating to a certain picture contain 50 posts. Although Facebook does contain a feature to send private messages, the participants and their friends carry out most of their conversations on their walls or in the photo section, making it visible to all friends.

Table 2.

Quantity of Facebook Data Analyzed.

Participant	Date Started Page	Number of Facebook Friends	All Posts by Participant	All Posts to Participant
Valeria	January 2011	241	543	965
Alejandra	December 2010	79	91	364
Celia	August 2011	69	31	62

The Tapestry Journal *5*(1)

Miguel	May 2011	83	11	29

Data as of June 2012

Since the Facebook pages are not stagnant artifacts, but undergo continual change from the participants and others, I continuously analyzed the documents throughout data collection. By copying and pasting the Facebook data into Word documents, I had nearly one hundred pages of digital data to import to NVivo for coding. In order to fully protect the participants' identities and their Facebook friends, I use pseudonyms for all names of people and places mentioned on Facebook.

Analytic Approach

As suggested by Charmaz (2003) for constructivist grounded theory interviewing and analysis, I first coded the data with a specific term that denoted the literacy or its purpose. This allowed me to compare the data acquired from one participant with another. Examples from this step of coding are: Composing a post in English (tomorrow i have test), receiving a post in English (What is your number?), using codes in English (lol), responding to a friend's picture using English words (i love), and code-switching (Yeap thats true>333 tas preciosa).

Next, I concentrated on more abstract focused coding which allowed for the creation of categories that represent sets of like data. In the previous example, all of the codes from the first step were collapsed into the broader category of English Acquisition on Facebook. After I coded each piece of data, I used my coding to inform subsequent data collection, particularly interview directions. For instance, as I realized during my analysis that Alejandra was attempting to use codes in English ("lol" and "omg") on her Facebook page, I asked her how she learned them, why she used them, and if she thought her Facebook friends understood the message.

Credibility

In order to maintain credibility (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), I strived for transparency of the data as I kept detailed memos about the coding process in a notebook. I wrote notes to myself about the limitations and properties of each focused code regularly since those properties continually evolved during the analysis. After coding the data, I shared my memos with a bilingual colleague and she checked my analysis of each piece of coded data. During this peer debriefing (Brenner, 2006), she sometimes asked for clarification about why I had coded an interview excerpt or Facebook post a certain way. After sharing with her my reasoning, she agreed in all instances with my coding of the data.

Additionally, member checks (Brenner, 2006) were conducted at the end of the data collection with all participants for the coding of the data that pertained to them. I met with all of the participants during lunch and shared the themes I developed about the purposes of their Facebook literacies. I showed them charts of the categories I had developed and explained in Spanish to ensure their understanding.   All participants agreed with my data analysis and confirmed that the information was an accurate representation of them.

Stewart: Living Here, yet Being Here   35

Lastly, in order to give the participants a more direct benefit from participating in the study, I met with them before school to help them with their homework, assisted them in their ESL classes, and brought them lunch from local restaurants for each interview.

Findings

Purpose of Facebook Use

Research question one states: 1) For what purposes do the participants use Facebook? The participants' transnational identity is evident in their purposes for Facebook to:

1) Connect to home;

2) Maintain their Latina/o identities, and

3) Acquire English.

Like many immigrant youth, transnationalism is a significant yet understudied and undervalued component in the participants' lives. Although they did not leave their home countries until older teenagers, all of them grew up with immediate family members residing and working in the U.S., fostering a transnational identity from childhood. They are keenly aware that their basic needs were met due to the remittances sent from these family members working to support them. Through their Facebook literacies, this transnational component of their identity is continually developed, nurtured, and refined for the following purposes.

Connect to home: "For my sister and my mom".

None of the participants had a Facebook account prior to coming to the U.S., but now it is the primary means they have to stay connected to their friends and family they left behind. Alejandra and Valeria brought nothing more than a backpack with them on their arduous journey from El Salvador with coyotes, human smugglers. Consequently, all of Alejandra's "recuerdos" [memories] were left behind, including her mother and twin sister. However, she communicates regularly with her family through Facebook, exchanging pictures and messages from the two countries. When asked why she started her page upon arriving here when she never saw the need in her home country, her answer was very clear: "For my sister and my mom." Her twin sister in El Salvador sends both Alejandra and Valeria messages and pictures of herself, their friends, and other family members on a daily basis.

Facebook also provides a way for the sisters to share their new lives in the U.S. with their mother. Their pages contain pictures of science experiments at school, working at a fast food restaurant, and trips with their older sisters around the state. Through Facebook, Valeria can keep a somewhat normal relationship with her mother and sister. She becomes the protective big sister in a series of messages regarding a picture as she responds to one man: "Hey victor mucho respeto a mi hermana ok"[Hey victor respect my sister ok]. Her mother can even scold her and maintain some parental control through Facebook. "El otro día me regañó [mi mamá]porque eso, había una foto donde tenía el cabello todo arreglado y me gusta que lise el cabello. Se enojó por eso"[The other day she got onto me because there was a picture of me with my hair all done up and she likes my hair straight. She got angry because of that].Shortly after that incident Valeria changed her profile picture to please her mother and wore her hair straight every time I saw her.

Near the end of the data collection period, the sisters both changed their profile pictures to black ribbons to signify a tragedy in their family. Their walls became full of posts to and by them about the death of their grandfather, the only father figure they had in their lives. The few pictures that existed of him were digitally enhanced with pictures of flowers, hearts, and decorative borders and posted on their walls by family in various places across the two countries. They posted their feelings of grief, viewed pictures from the interment, and received many messages of comfort and solidarity.   Lastly, after an outpouring of support on their walls, they each posted messages of gratitude to their many Facebook friends. Facebook allowed them to grieve with their mom, sister, and aunts in El Salvador, as well as cousins throughout the U.S.

Much like the sisters, after 19 years in Guatemala, Miguel left behind everything and everyone he knew to come to the U.S. to live with a father he had rarely seen during his childhood. Nevertheless, he has maintained strong relationships with those closest to him through Facebook: "[Lo uso para mantener] contacto con mis amigos en Guatemala. Con mis primos. Mis hermanos también"[(I use it) to keep in touch with my friends in Guatemala. With my cousins. With my brother and sister also]. On his birthday, his first one away from Guatemala, his wall contained many posts from his friends back home: "feliz cumple pollo"[happy birthday chicken], "feliz cumple aki en guate mala lo qeremos muxo bndiciones muaa ..!! cuidece" [happy birthday here in guatemala we love you many blessings mwaaa ..!! take care].

Celia maintains relationships with her friends in Mexico by watching a video of their graduation posted on her page and sharing daily photos. She also initiates contact with people in other parts of the U.S. that moved away from her hometown in Mexico before her. Celia says of a friend on Facebook: "Ella está aquí, pero era mi vecina en México"[She is here (in the U.S.), but she was my neighbor en Mexico]. This former neighbor does not currently live in the same state, but was able to reconnect once Celia began her Facebook page upon arrival in the U.S. Similarly, through Facebook Alejandra, Valeria, and Miguel have also reconnected with former neighbors, friends, and family who left to move to "el norte" before them. These communities of diaspora support each other in the immigrant experience through Facebook as they rekindle relationships begun in the home countries.

Maintain their latina/o identities: "soy puro chaplin".

One of Miguel's posts is a picture of him in a Guatemalan soccer jersey with the caption "soy puro chaplin" [I am pure Guatemalan]. The students' information page contains an array of images associated with Latin America or their specific country such as Alejandra's profile picture of the words "El Salvador" in flames. Pictures of Latin American music artists fill their "likes" section along with soccer teams and Spanish television programs.

They also have many digitally mastered pictures featuring themselves juxtaposed against their countries' name, flag, or Spanish words. One picture on Miguel's page created by a friend in Guatemala features a collage of people with the caption: "si tas aqui es xk TQM" [if you are here it is because I love you a lot]. In addition to the visual images, using the nontraditional spelling and codes in Spanish gives the students an avenue to maintain their identities as Latin American youth while beginning new lives in another country. For example, the participants write "tqm" for "te quiero mucho" [I love you a lot], "x" for "por" [for], and "xk" for "porque"

Stewart: Living Here, yet Being Here   37

[because] or "porqué" [why]. The students' information pages as well as their walls and pictures demonstrate that they are Latinas/os who are proud of their roots and identities.

English acquisition: "I really don't have American friends, so I have them on Facebook."

Even though three of the participants were in their fourth semester in a U.S. school of predominantly native English-speakers, they rarely talked to "americanos." Valeria states matter of factly: "Aquí en la escuela casi no tengo amigos de americano, así que los tengo en Facebook" [Here in school I really don't have American friends, so I have them on Facebook]. She accepts that she does not acquire much English at school in her English-only classes. She goes through most of the school day hardly speaking a word in English, speaking Spanish in her ESL classes and choosing not to speak at all in her mainstream classes. She is shy and lacks confidence to use enough language in order for effective second language acquisition to occur. However, she has almost 300 Facebook friends, some of whom she knows from work and communicates with in English. Some of the phrases she tries out as she responds to other people's posts are: "i love," "me too," and "what up."

Like with Valeria, Facebook has become a primary space in which Alejandra can safely develop her English. She practices using every English code she learns and regularly posts "omg!" (oh my god) and "lol!" (laughing out loud) on others' pages. She explains how she learns what the codes mean in English: "Cuando yo leo, yo pregunto que es esto, y ellos me dicen" [When I read it, I ask what is this, and they (co-workers) tell me]. She also writes longer phrases in English such as "yes i know >>they are Hilda's baby" about her friend's children.

Although Miguel is only at the beginning stages of acquiring English, he often receives posts in English from relatives who have lived in the U.S. for many years. His cousin sent him a message saying "Having a pre-thanksgiving celebration with the in laws :)." In this example, Miguel could not fully explain the meaning of the English message to me, but used context to try to understand the main idea.

When I asked Celia why she did not post much, she replied: "Es que quiero escribir en inglés, pero no puedo"[It's because I want to write in English, but I can't]. She asked Alejandra to post messages to her in English so she can learn. Alejandra posted "omg!!!!!" on Celia's wall and I asked her if she knew what it meant. Celia responded, "omg? Hola mi amiga?"[Hello my friend?], trying to find a Spanish phrase that would fit the popular English code. Alejandra and I explained to Celia that "omg" was actually a popular English code. A week later Celia gained the confidence to use "omg" on her page posting "omg tomorrow i have test."

Transnational Facebook Use Challenging At-Risk Label

Research question two states: How does their transnational Facebook use challenge their label as at-risk students? Each of the four students is labeled at-risk for not graduating high school due to their socio-economic status, short amount of time in the U. S., and label as Limited English Proficient. Three are classified as Beginning English Learners by the state English acquisition assessment, and only Alejandra has shown improvement by scoring Intermediate. The state places further requirements on them to pass high stakes tests in core subject areas while receiving content area instruction that is not sheltered and therefore, not highly accessible. Their ESL teacher explained to me that it is unlikely they will all pass the necessary tests before

turning 21 in order to graduate from high school. However, their Facebook literacies demonstrate that they possess highly sophisticated transnational skills that many high school and even college graduates do not possess. Despite the challenges they face, they expect to achieve goals in the U.S. they never thought were possible in their home countries: graduate high school, receive a college degree, and have a professional career that adequately provides for them and their families. Each student has a specific dream to become a pediatrician, bilingual teacher, detective, and defense attorney in the U.S.

Their transnational abilities that are being refined through Facebook are skills needed in each of the four sectors they would like to work. They are learning how to use technology to communicate in multimodal ways in two languages and multiple registers with people of different backgrounds across multiple borders, challenging the at-risk label.

Discussion

More than a decade ago, the New London Group (1996) asked us to consider how the notion of literacy and literacy pedagogy must change in response to two phenomena that have only escalated since: 1) the increasing local diversity through global connectedness; and 2) the development of new technologies. Despite their warning, inequitable education still exists because of an unwillingness to make a radical change is our view of literacy. As demonstrated in this study, the assessment-driven, monolingual culture of many U.S. schools has only steered us further away from exploring the aforementioned areas that affect the definition of literacy and what it means to be literate. Although the four participants demonstrate sophisticated transnational and multimodal literacies through their Facebook use, they are being pushed to the lower echelons of society by a state that makes it nearly impossible for them to graduate.

Nevertheless, I contend that these students have much to offer society. Within the social and transcultural component of their literacies are layers of multilingualism. Not only do they post and receive messages in English and Spanish, but they also use codes in both languages to communicate with their friends such as "tqm" in Spanish (te quiero mucho/I love you a lot) and "lol" in English (laughing out loud). Furthermore, their multilingual postings are also multimodal with the inclusion of visual and audio elements including photographs enhanced with digital effects and videos of their favorite music artists.

Although their Facebook use is deemed an out-of-school literacy, the school environment greatly affects students' success in not only school, but society as well, by how the institution responds to such literacies. In a recent review of the current research on transnationalism and literacy, Lam and Warriner (2012) conclude:

> As a social field that is fraught with ideological values, schools can make invisible students' language abilities and binational affiliations, which may contribute to their sense of alienation from learning experiences in the classroom, or schools can seek to recognize and leverage the existing linguistic resources and migratory experiences of students to promote their biliteracy development and learning. (p. 205)

Currently, the transnational digital literacies the students in this study possess are not recognized, valued, nor leveraged in the school environment where they are labeled as at-risk. The literacy of value at the school is one that exists on Valeria's two-dimensional chemistry test,

The Tapestry Journal *5*(1)

a thick packet of test preparation materials, and monolingual canonical literature in English. Reminiscent of de la Piedra's (2010) study with similar students, the literacy prevalent in this school is one concerned with passing the state's monolingual, monocultural, and monomodal high stakes tests.   The participants' transnational literacies that take place regularly on Facebook are at best invisible in the academic environment if not unsanctioned in a school that had blocked Facebook from its network at the time of the study.

As educators, we must consider how to leverage, rather than conceal, the sophisticated transnational digital literacies immigrant students possess in order to give them an equitable education. Building upon the suggestions of previous scholarship to incorporate transnational literacies into the classroom (Jiménez et al., 2009), I add the dimension of digital spaces that have become central to fostering students' transnational identities. The following are recommendations of how that might be accomplished building upon the findings of this study as well as past research.

In the same vein as the immigrant student in Lam's (2000) study used online pen pals to acquire English, these students are acquiring English through Facebook because of how it facilitates their English acquisition more effectively than their school environment. Facebook is a safe space where students can interact socially for authentic purposes in English, all essential components of effective second language acquisition (Krashen, 1994). They are not required to post complete sentences, but are able to post individual words, codes, or short phrases that better reflect their stage of second language development. Schools could use Facebook, Twitter, or other social networking platforms as a space for students to develop their English while in class and outside of class with other members of the English-speaking student body. Despite one to two years in a school of approximately 2,000 "americanos," the participants do not interact with them. They long for interaction with their English-speaking classmates who they sit by in many classes, but do not know how to initiate and maintain those relationships. As used at the college level (Lampe, Wohn, Vitak, Ellison, & Wash, 2011; Lang, 2010), Facebook can be used as a space for community development within a class. Social networking sites could act as a bridge for immigrant and mainstream students on that campus to enrich each other's lives and literacies. The students in the ESL classes desperately want to learn English and the American culture while many other students are in foreign language classes and need to learn transnational skills for their futures. I advocate for what Paris (2010) describes as "shared funds of knowledge" as each cultural and linguistic group has an equally high status and can facilitate each other's learning through community. The participants in this study are proud Latinas/os who retreat to Facebook to demonstrate their cultural identity; however, they would become less invisible in their large school if the academic environment provided a way for them to maintain and share their Latina/o identities with others.

Additionally, through the students' web of networks across many countries on Facebook, they are able to get news and information from a variety of sources, giving them a richer perspective on world events. I echo researchers' (Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009) call to use this as a resource for immigrant students as well as other students in the class. The transnational flow of information through digital spaces affords many opportunities to engage in critical literacy and gain cultural consciousness in the classroom. Educators should recognize, value, and use immigrant students' literacies to not only their benefit, but to the benefit of all students.

Further Research

Foremost, the field needs more studies that illustrate the powerful literacies that immigrant youth *do* possess, countering the deficit perspective that often follows them. This study also shows that we need to understand the effect on student learning of using online social networking spaces in the classroom, specifically secondary immigrant students. Furthermore, we need to explore how to change the classroom space to mirror more of students' digital spaces that foster transnationalism, second language acquisition, multimodal communication, and social interaction. In a culture of accountability, specifically in states that still have high stakes testing requirements for graduation, we need to understand how to value at-risk students' sophisticated literacies and leverage them for academic success.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that Valeria, Alejandra, Celia, and Miguel already possess transnational 21st century literacies, literacies needed in our society, yet rare in mainstream populations (Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008). They expertly use Facebook to connect to their home countries, maintain their Latina/o identities, and acquire English. While they face many obstacles to become the well-educated professionals they desire to be, their counterparts who do not possess sophisticated transnational abilities, graduate from high school, go to college, and become productive members of society. The newcomer Latina/o adolescents in this study are transnational, emergent bilinguals who engage in sophisticated multimodal ways of communication, yet struggle academically and are labeled at-risk. We must begin to question the taboo of social networking and see its potential to nurture and validate students' transnational skills that are needed increasingly more in our globalized society.

References

Black, R. W. (2006). Language, culture, and identity in online fanfiction. *E-Learning, 3*(2), 170-184.

Brenner, M. E. (2006). Interviewing in educational research. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli & P. B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 357-370). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates.

Bruna, K. R. (2007). Traveling tags: The informal literacies of Mexican newcomers in and out of the classroom. *Linguistics and Education, 18*, 232-257.

Buck, A. (2012). Examining digital literacy practices on social network sites. *Research in the Teaching of English, 47*(1), 9-38.

Charmaz, K. (2003). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (pp. 311-330). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Stewart: Living Here, yet Being Here   41

DePew, K. E. (2011). Social media at academia's periphery: Studying multilingual developmental writers' Facebook composing strategies. *Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal, 11*(1), 54-75.

Flores, J. (2009). Forward: What's all the noise about? In R. Z. Rivera, W. Marshall & D. P. Hernandez (Eds.), *Reggaeton*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

García Canclini, N. (1995). *Hybrid cultures: Strategies for entering and leaving modernity*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Hornberger, N. H. (2007). Biliteracy, transnationalism, multimodality, and identity: Trajectories across time and space. *Linguistics and Education, 18*(3-4), 325-334.

Jiménez, R. T. (2003). Literacy and Latino students in the United States: Some considerations, questions, and new directions. *Reading Research Quarterly, 38*(1), 122-128.

Jiménez, R. T., Smith, P. H., & Teague, B. L. (2009).Transnational and community literacies for teachers. *Journal of Adolescent &Adult Literacy, 53*(1), 16-26.

Junco, R. (2012).The relationship between frequency of Facebook use, participation in Facebook activities, and student engagement. *Computers & Education, 58*(1), 162-171.

Krutka, D.G. & Milton, M.K. (2013). The Enlightenment meets Twitter: Using social media in the social studies classroom. Ohio Social Studies Review, 50(2), 22-29.

Lam, W. S. E. (2000). L2 literacy and the design of the self: A case study of a teenager writing on the internet. *TESOL Quarterly, 34*(3), 457-482.

Lam, W. S. E. (2004). Second language socialization in a bilingual chat room: Global and local considerations. *Language Learning & Technology, 8*(3), 44-65.

Lam, W. S. E., & Rosario-Ramos, E. (2009). Multilingual literacies in transnational digitally mediated contexts: An exploratory study of immigrant teens in the United States. *Language and Education, 23*(2), 171-190.

Lam, W. S. E., & Warriner, D. S. (2012). Transnationalism and literacy: Investigating the mobility of people, languages, texts, and practices in contexts of migration. *Reading Research Quarterly, 47*(2), 191-215.

Lampe, C., Wohn, D. Y., Vitak, J., Ellison, N. B., & Wash, R. (2011).Student use of facebook for organizing collaborative classroom activities. *International Journal of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning, 6*(3), 329-347.

Lang, A. (2010). Exploring the potential of social network sites in relation to intercultural communication. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education, 11*(1-2), 120-139.

Lee, V.R., Shelton, B.R., Walker, A., Caswell, T., & Jensen, M. (2012). Retweeting history: Exploring the intersection of microblogging and problem-based learning for historical reenactments. In K.K. Seo& D.A. Pellegrino (Eds.) Designing problem-driven instruction with online social media, (pp. 23-40). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Leu, D. J., McVerry, J. G., O'Byrne, W. I., Kiili, C., Zawilinski, L., Everett-Cacopardo, H., et al. (2011). The new literacies of online reading comprehension: Expanding the literacy and learning curriculum. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 55*(1), 5-14.

McGinnis, T., Goodstein-Stolzenberg, A., & Saliani, E. C. (2007)."indnpride": Online spaces of transnational youth as sites of creative and sophisticated literacy and identity work. *Linguistics and Education, 18*(3-4), 283-304.

McLean, C. A. (2010). A space called home: An immigrant adolescent's digital literacy practices. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 54*(1), 13-22.

Moje, E. B. (2004). Powerful spaces: Tracing the out-of-school literacy spaces of Latino/a youth. In K. M. Leander & M. Sheehy (Eds.), *Spatializing literacy research and practice* (pp. 15-38). New York: Peter Lang.

New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review, 66*(1), 60-92.

New London Group. (2000). A pedagogy of multiliteracies. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures*. London: Routledge.

Ortiz, F. (2002). *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar: Advertencia de sus contrastes agrarios, económicos, históricos y sociales, su etnografía y su transculturación* (1a ed.). Madrid: Cátedra.

Paris, D. (2010). "The second language of the United States": Youth perspectives on Spanish in a changing multiethnic community. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education, 9*(2), 139-155.

Poveda, D. (2012). Literacy artifacts and the semiotic landscape of a Spanish secondary school. *Reading Research Quarterly, 47*(1), 61-88.

Reid, J. (2011). "We don't twitter, we facebook": An alternative pedagogical space that enables critical practices in relation to writing. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 10*(1), 58-80.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (1995).*Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rubinstein-Ávila, E. (2004). Conversing with Miguel: An adolescent English language learner struggling with later literacy development. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 47*(4), 290-301.

Rubinstein-Ávila, E. (2007). From the Dominican Republic to Drew High: What counts as literacy for Yanira Lara? *Reading Research Quarterly, 42*(4), 568-589.

Sánchez, P. (2007). Cultural authenticity and transnational Latina youth: Constructing a meta-narrative across borders. *Linguistics and Education, 18*(3-4), 258-282.

Sánchez, P., & Kasum, G. S. (2012).Connecting transnationalism to the classroom and to theories of immigrant student adaptation. *Berkeley Review of Education, 3*(1), 71-93.

Stewart: Living Here, yet Being Here   43

Seidman, I. E. (1991).*Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Skerrett, A. (2010). Lolita, Facebook, and the third space of literacy teacher education. *Educational Studies: Journal of the American Educational Studies Association, 46*(1), 67-84.

Steinfield, C., Ellison, N. B., & Lampe, C. (2008). Social capital, self-esteem, and use of online social network sites: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 29*(6), 434-445.

Stewart, M. A. (2014). "I don't want to write for them": An at-risk Latino youth's out-of-school literacy practices. *NABE Journal of Research and Practice*, *5*(1).

Suárez-Orozco, C., Suárez-Orozco, M. M., & Todorova, I. (2008).*Learning a new land: Immigrant students in American society* (1st ed.). Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

United States Census Bureau.(2010). *U. S. Census Bureau at a glance*. Retrieved from http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data/.

Warriner, D. S. (2007). Transnational literacies: Immigration, language learning, and identity. *Linguistics and Education, 18*(3-4), 201-214.

Warschauer, M. (2009). Digital literacy studies: Progress and prospects. In M. Baynham & M. Prinsloo (Eds.), *The future of literacy studies* (pp. 123-140). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Yi, Y. (2007). Engaging literacy: A biliterate student's composing practices beyond school. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 16*(1), 23-39.

Yi, Y. (2010). Adolescent multilingual writers' transitions across in- and out-of-school writing contexts. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 19*(1), 17-32.

About the Authors

Mary Amanda (Mandy) Stewart is an Assistant Professor of Bilingual and English and a Second Language Education at Texas Woman's University where she pursues her research agenda of understanding adolescent immigrants' out-of-school literacies to create more relevant curriculum and teaching methods that build upon their unique strengths.