

## **Mexican-American Transnational Junior/High School Students: Crossing Borders through New Media Literacies**

Lasisi Ajayi, Ph.D.  
California State University San Bernardino  
[lajayi@csusb.edu](mailto:lajayi@csusb.edu)

### **Abstract**

A few literacy researchers have called for an examination of the kinds of literacy practices of transnational youths because such individuals have family members and different social relations in multiple countries and use literacy to maintain their relationships. Some scholars suggest a need for schools and teachers to embrace and build upon students' language, transnational, and media literacies. This research reports on a mixed method study on the use of language and new media literacies in a sample of Mexican-American transnational students living on a US-Mexican border. Data for the study were collected from 103 junior and high school students in Southern California, using a four-point Likert-type attitudinal scale, interview, and printouts from electronic communications. The findings suggest that the transnational youth employ new media literacies to build and maintain multiple social affiliations, use translanguaging to cross linguistic borders; and traverse between genres and between media to establish their identity on a local and global level. However, the findings indicate the participants' out-of-school literacies may not have been integrated into literacy instruction. The findings indicate that teachers of transnational and mono-national youths need to affirm and support the diverse literacy practices that students bring from their homes and cultural communities and use such resources to empower them in academic settings.

### **Key words**

New media literacies, translanguaging, transnationalism, literacy instruction

Research on literacy practices of Mexican-American transnational students suggests that they use new media literacies to traverse borders and become literate in both Spanish and English with new media (Sánchez & Salazar, 2012; Skerrett, 2012). New media literacies are the literacy practices associated with the Internet, social network media, websites, video games, and mobile devices that provide youths the ability to create, interpret, and manipulate all new media forms (New Media Consortium, 2005). Transnational students physically cross boundaries and use new media to stay within borders. Because Mexican-American youths function across multiple interactional contexts including the U.S., Mexico, classrooms, and social network sites, their literacy practices are highly situated and diverse. As a result, research indicates that teachers of Mexican-American transnational students can facilitate learning by drawing upon the youths' language, transnational, and new media literacies in ways that are both affirming and supportive for learning (de la Piedra, 2010; Jiménez, Smith & Teague, 2009; Sánchez & Kasun, 2012).

Indeed, researchers (e.g., de la Piedra & Araujo, 2012; Stockdill & Moje, 2013) have argued that rather than the deficit models of Mexican-American youths as unmotivated and disengaged from learning, schools and teachers should think of how to integrate their students' transnational and new media literacy practices into instruction. Transnational literacies is defined as the diverse literacy practices that migrants develop and enact to communicate and interact across local-global communities, multiple languages, media, and varied cultural locations (Hornberger 2012; Warriner, 2007). From this sociocultural perspective, transnational literacies are social and ideological ways of language use, self-expression, and meaning-making in diverse social and cultural worlds (Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2013).

A crucial advantage of integration of transnational literacy into instruction is that it will allow teachers to develop a greater understanding of “the life worlds of their students and to build more meaningful relations with them” (Jiménez et al, 2009, p. 16). The approach means that literacy teachers must understand the connections they can make between pedagogy and outside school literacies that motivate and engage Mexican-American transnational students such as texts, topics, discourses, and new media and how to capitalize on the resources to inform school curricula, materials, and pedagogy (Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2013; Stockdill & Moje, 2013). Hence, the metaphor of border crossing is used here to conceptualize Mexican-American transnational students’ literacies as fluid, relational, and situated within and between locality/globality, languages, genre, and media.

However, studies on the issues of movements of people and new media in creating opportunities for students’ learning suggest that “mobilities and their relations to learning within education are still understudied and undertheorized” (Leander, Phillips & Taylor, 2010, p. 329). Indeed, the relations of space and learning may not have been adequately theorized, as most existing literacy learning theories tend to offer little explanation on how students’ experiences across spaces, places, and times are resources for learning. Hence, there are limited theoretical perspectives on learning resources that youths access as they traverse multiple borders. There are also insufficient theoretical models of learning that account for how transnational youth capitalize on their language and new media literacies for learning (Gutiérrez, 2008). Leander et al (2010) use the term *geographies of learning* as a conceptual framework to address issues of place, space, and learning trajectories, and to ask how social systems such as people and resources for learning are configured across time and space to provide opportunities for learning.

Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of Domingo (2012), Lam and Warriner (2012), Leander et al (2010), and Gutiérrez, Bien, Seland and Pierce (2011), I investigate how Mexican-American transnational students use new media to traverse borders and examine whether their literacy practices are employed to create opportunities for learning. The following research questions guided the study:

- In what ways do Mexican-American transnational students use new media literacies to cross national and linguistic borders?
- What are the Mexican-American transnational students' attitudes toward literacy instruction in their schools?

This study is an important contribution to in/outside school literacies of Mexican-American transnational students from multiple perspectives around new media literacies. Students' outside school literacies are multiplex, substantive, and highly significant and have important links to and implications for their cognitive work and academic literacy. For many students, the traditional language-based, pencil-and-paper-bound English Language Arts (ELA) is not culturally relevant as they consequently reject schooling as a form of resistance (Valenzuela, 1999). If schools intend to prepare functionally literate students — who come to school with enthusiasm and literacies that they view as functional in their lives — teachers need to understand how learners use new media in their everyday lives (Schultz & Hull, 2008). ELA teachers must also use youths' knowledge of new media to empower them to be both critical thinkers and creative consumers/producers of multimedia texts. Youths need the knowledge to participate in semiotic economy where knowledges are produced and consumed as discourses, new genres, and digital texts (Fairclough, 2002). Furthermore, unlike most existing studies, this research surveys a large number of Mexican-American transnational youths in a single literacy study. As Mexican-American youths are the

fastest growing ethnic group in the U.S. they represent a new, moving frontier in literacy and economy, and hence, warrants a thorough investigation of their transnational and media literacies. Finally, this study corroborates existing research about how new media literacies assist transnational youths in maintain transnational identities, social affiliations and networks, and literacy and language practices.

### **New Media and Youths' Literacy Practices: A Theory**

What counts as youths' literacy is shifting due to the change in the relationship between existing new media technologies, markets, genres and audiences (Jenkins 2006). Scholars of adolescent literacies, including Donna Alvermann, Julie Coiro, and Kevin Leander, among others, have provided valuable insights into media literacies of both monolingual and multilingual youths. They theorize adolescents' literacies in terms of everyday social practices involving the use of new media and ways of thinking about and doing literacy in the 21st century.

Today's youths use new media to acquire literacy practices in relations to the dominant ideology, influence, and power in the broader society and to push back against the dominant print-based, unimodal definitions of literacy that structure their everyday lives (Ito et al, 2008). For example, schools often consider youths' literacies threatening to the school-sanctioned literacy and are reluctant to recognize the educational values of outside school literacies that have potential for transfer to school literacy. Indeed, youths' literacy practices have expanded from reading and writing to include how they use new media to produce innovative and varied literacies (Jenkins, 2006), create and interpret text meanings to reflect their identities (Moje & van Helden, 2005); remix to create hybridized texts to suit audiences and purposes (Ito et al, 2008); use new media to forge transnational affiliations (Lam, 2009); and bridge the gap between out/in-school literacies (Livingstone, 2008; Yardi, 2008).

Youths' knowledge of new media literacies calls into question the deficit lenses with which schools view their literacies and the traditional print-based literacy approaches for literacy instruction. For most Mexican-American transnational students, border-crossing experiences constitute the funds of knowledge they bring to their communities within school and outside of school contexts (Sánchez, 2007). For example, transnational youths employ translanguaging as a discursive practice to access two languages and maximize communicative potential as they traverse across multiple nations (Garcia, 2009). Mignolo (2000) argued that languaging is "thinking and writing between languages" and "speech and writing are strategies for orienting and manipulating social domains of interaction" (p. 226). Translanguaging allows transnational youths to flexibly use linguistic resources from multiple languages in the process of becoming themselves and of their language practices as they interact and make meaning in the world (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Therefore, the value for how transnational youths engage with and think about language and literacy practices provides a compelling argument for ELA teachers to think of how they can build upon their students' outside school literacies to enhance motivation, engagement, and learning (Author, 2015).

### **Transnationalism and Social Networking**

Transnationalism refers to the processes by which immigrants forge multiple social relations that link together their native countries and the nations where they reside (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc, 1995). While transnational immigrants usually settle and become embedded in the social structure of host nations, they are simultaneously connected with their native countries. For example, Mexican-origin individuals in Chicago used translanguaging to bring people together via the shared valuing of linguistic resources (Farr, 2006). Such Mexican-American bilinguals

creatively draw upon Spanish and English for communication and socialization depending on the contexts, purposes, and audiences (Bailey & Orellana, 2015).

Before the rise of new media in the early 2000s, old media enabled migrants to communicate globally. Immigrants used international telephone and camera to reinforce ties with families at home (Smith, 2006). However, new media are more efficient in helping youths stay connected to their home countries. The Pew Hispanic Center (2013) states that foreign-born Latinos make up 46% of all Latino social networking site users and that 55% of them say that they mostly or only use Spanish when posting Facebook updates or tweets.

### **Transnational New Media Literacies: A Review of Related Studies**

In this section, I review relevant studies for the important implications they have for the design, conduct, analysis, and interpretation of data in the current study. A relevant literature review contributes to the design and provides important argument that explains and justifies a new study (Maxwell, 2006). Researchers of transnationalism have examined new media literacies, global-local connections, and new media that sustained transnational networks. Lam (2009) explored how one adolescent girl from China used digital media to create networks and noted that the student employed new media to develop affiliations with different communities within the U.S. and China. Yi (2009) studied the literacy of two Korean transnational adolescents and suggested that they used multiple literacies to forge transnational identities through online interactions. McLean (2010) examined how a student used digital literacies to support her Trinidad-Tobago-Caribbean heritage and urged teachers to embrace the global-local dimensions of funds of knowledge that immigrants use for transnationalism. The findings in these studies raise new questions about the new media literacies of Mexican-American transnational youths such as: why is knowing about how the youths use new media to stay connected across borders matters to how teachers teach

ELA? In addition, there is a need to build on the findings by using a mixed methods that allows for an analytic approach involving triangulation of multiple data sources and multiple types of analysis to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions than the previous mono-method studies (Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2014; Maxwell, 2006).

Other researchers have explored how students become multiliterate in transnational contexts. In an ethnographic study of three Latino immigrants, Sánchez and Salazar (2012) suggested that the students used computers to develop related linguistic repertoires for translating English to Spanish. de la Piedra and Araujo (2012) explored how Mexican-American transnational students in Texas border use *transfronterizo* (cross-border) vernacular and English in school. The study collected data through classroom observations, tape-recorded interactions, and artifacts and concluded that the students use *transfronterizo* to “establish an identity as members of their transnational families” (p. 582). However, there is a need for more studies that collect data from students regarding their views about school literacy practices and provide analysis that can offer a more complete understanding of the school structures and practices that facilitate or hinder conversion of students’ cultural capital into legitimate learning resources.

Skerrett (2012) explored how an English teacher of a Mexican-American student fostered and created the use of multiple languages and transnational understandings in school writing assignments. The findings showed that the student used the opportunities created by the teacher to bring her outside school life, languages, and literacies into school. The findings suggest a need for large sample size studies so that researchers can ask new questions, develop new hypotheses, or generate new theories about new media literacies of transnational youths (Maxwell, 2006).

Collectively, the literature review helps me to build on how transnational students draw on new media literacies for border crossing. Using mixed methods approach in this study allows me

to provide a more comprehensive study of the research problems than either qualitative or quantitative approach alone. The approach allows me to (a) triangulate the findings from students' interview and new media data with survey data and (b) offer pertinent answers to the research questions (Johnson et al, 2007).

### **The Border Context of the Study**

Many people in the county (site of the study) tend not to migrate permanently to the U.S.; instead, they cross the border on a daily basis because they live on one side and have jobs and/or families on the other. The 2013 U.S. Census data show that 81.8% and 12.8% of the people were Latino or White, respectively. Also, 32.3% of the residents were foreign born while 74.5% speak a language other than English at home. Per capital income in the county in 2013 was \$16,763 (as against state average of \$29,527). Also, 32.3% of the people live below the poverty level.

There is an overwhelming presence of Mexican culture. Residents have roots in both the U.S. and Mexico. Billboards are in Spanish or blends of English and Spanish. Popular Mexican musical ensembles such as *mariachis* and *tamboras* play different genres including *corridos*, *cumbias*, and *rancheras* at public ceremonies.

### **Method**

The qualitative dominant mixed methods approach is used for this study. The approach allows researchers to collect qualitative data while simultaneously add quantitative information for the purposes of depth and breadth of understanding (Denzin, 2010; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). The approach does not only allow me to simultaneously address the broad range of questions associated with the students' media and textual practices, it also provides the opportunity to give divergent conclusions and inferences due to the complexity of the data sources and analyses (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2010). The method further affords the opportunity for a cyclical approach

which allows me to move back and forth between the five qualitative categories in the survey and the five themes in the data analysis in a way that the research design influences data collection and the data collected is used to refine data analysis. The cyclical approach allows me to provide a structured survey and theoretically derived recruitment of study participants (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2010).

As a language and literacy professor in a university in the Southern California/Mexico border, I have observed the globalization of communicative practices of youths resulting from the exchanges of people, cultures, languages, and texts in the U.S.-Mexico border. As I work with teachers in the community and learn to speak Spanish, I am intrigued by the youths' literacy practices: the tendency to use new media to re-territorialize communication by shifting among English, Spanish, and translanguaging, depending on whether they are speaking with a friend in the U.S. or Mexico. This study allows me to investigate how the students use new media to construct networks across U.S.-Mexico border. Also, youths' transnational literacy practices in the community have forced me to rethink whether the school values and supports students' transnationalism and translanguaging to enhance motivation, engagement, and learning. I think of the consequences if schools do not build on students' resources for learning: opportunities for learning are lost and work and life futures are potentially constrained.

### **Participants**

The county had a total of eight junior and high schools. The demographic data of the schools showed student populations were similar as Mexican-American students ranged from 89% to 96%. Letters were sent to school principals to seek permission for the study. Four principals agreed to participate while four declined because students were preparing for the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE). The students were drawn from two junior high schools and two high

schools. The four principals distributed the information about the study to ELA teachers. The conditions for participation in the study were that: teachers would (a) distribute permission forms to parents, (b) provide time in class to administer the survey and interviews, and (c) sign a consent form. A teacher from each school volunteered and were given the consent forms to distribute to their students for their parents or guardians' signatures.

Each teacher selected one of his/her classes to participate in the study. The classes were made up of Mexican-American students like other classes that did not participate in the study. The teachers and I used four criteria to select the classes: students must (a) be of Mexican origin, (b) have social network accounts, (c) be willing to complete the survey, and (d) be ready to participate in a follow-up interview. The school-based study allowed the survey and interview questions to be administered to a class of students at once and collected the same day.

In all, 103 students from four junior/high schools participated in the study. The schools were coded A, B (high schools) and C and D (junior high schools) for anonymity. Thirty (29.13%) participants came from school A, 25 (24.27%) from school B, 28 (27.18%) from school C, and 20 (19.42%) from school D. The students' age ranged from 13 to 18, 53 (54.08%) females, and 45 (45.92%) males. Also, 10% and 68% identified themselves as "first-" and "second-generation" Mexican-American (Levitt, 2009) while 22% indicated they were recent immigrants. While first-generation refers to individuals who were foreign-born even though they might now be U.S. citizens and live in the country, second-generation means individuals who were born in the U.S. with at least one first-generation parent (Levitt, 2009).

Seventy-seven percent of the students came from the Baja California Peninsula region and speak Northern Mexican Spanish, while 23% came from mainland Mexico and speak other varieties of Mexican Spanish. Also, 93% indicated they speak Spanglish (a hybrid of English and

Spanish's words and expressions). Moreover, 71% of them were classified as English language learners and 29% as English proficient. The students live along the U.S.-border towns which simultaneously provide them experiences of life in the U.S. and experiences of events that connect them to Mexico. Many of the students live in California on weekdays but spend their weekends and holidays in Mexico. The students are geographically located in both the U.S. and Mexico and their experiences traverse the two nations.

The students live in neighborhoods in California where Spanish is mainly spoken, and thus have fewer opportunities to interact with English speakers. They often display cultural representations of Mexico through their preferences for clothing, music, and language. Living in-between two cultures, two languages, and two nations, the students use literacy practices characterized by heterogeneity and border-crossing dynamics by switching between English and Spanish and between Mexican and American cultures (Kostogriz, & Tsolidis, 2008). Living in-between languages means that the students may face increased challenges in learning English. The data from the CAHSEE show that only 31% of ELLs pass the ELA in grade 10. Moreover, 98% of the students stated that they participated in the federal-government subsidized lunch program which suggested the learners came from families of lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data for this study were collected between September and December 2011 and consisted of a survey, open-ended questions, and samples of the students' electronic communications. Because of the language characteristics of the schools, Spanish and English versions of the survey were administered (see Note A & B<sup>1</sup>). While both versions were distributed, the teachers directed the students to respond in English. The school discourses of English-only (e.g., emphasis on English language and literacy development) in junior/middle schools in California might have influenced

the teachers and most students' preference to respond to the English version. In all, 115 surveys were distributed but only 103 students returned completed copies, representing 89.56% response rate of the total pool. Five students responded to the Spanish version while 12 students (11%) did not complete the survey as they did not respond to several items, perhaps due to the fact that they are Spanish dominant. The teachers provided translation for students to mitigate the impact of the directive that learners fill out the English version of the survey.

The survey is guided by a theoretical framework which suggests that new media (a) reshape literacy practices and (b) allow for reading across media and genres (Domingo 2012; Sánchez & Kasun, 2012; Leander et al, 2006). The survey consisted of 73 statements. In Section A (items 1–13) the students answered questions about biographical data. In sections B, C, D, E and F, a four-point Likert attitudinal scale was used to collect data. In section B (items 14–22) the students responded to statements about the frequency of using new media (“Frequently” means 5–6 times a day; “occasional” equals 2–3 times a week; “rarely” means 1–2 times a week; and “never” means less than one time a week). In Section C (items 23–30), the students responded to questions about their language use. In Section D (items 31– 42) the students answered questions on the types of texts they read/write. In Section E (items 43– 52) they indicated how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements about what they use new media for. In Section F (items 53–73) students responded to statements about literacy instruction. Finally, the students who had more to say did so in the informational box at the end of each section. (For the survey and interview questions, see Appendixes B, C, & D at

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/49arsyvnazwtawp/MexicanAmerican%20Transnational%20APPENDICES.doc?oref=e&n=315543918>).

Likert-type attitudinal scale for data collection allowed me to cover a broad range of data with which to explore the different literacies that youth mobilize to cross border. However, the method had some limitations; each statement offered only a few options with which the students might not fully agree. The open-ended interview questions were used to address the problem.

Eighteen students who completed the survey responded to face-to-face, one-on-one, audio-recorded, and open-ended interview questions. They were selected based on their availability for a follow-up interview and willingness to provide samples of electronic communications. Ten (55.56%) participants were drawn from high schools while eight (44.44%) were drawn from junior high schools. There were 9 (50%) female and 9 (50%) male students. Also, 15 (83.33%) identified themselves as first- and second generation Mexican-American, and three (16.67%) said they were recent immigrants. The students were similar to the overall group.

The interviews took place during lunchtime in the students' classrooms with the assistance of the class teachers. The interviews were conducted the following day after the students filled out the survey. Altogether, 18 interviews were conducted and each lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were mainly in English; however, a bilingual teacher translated the interviews for one student. The interviews were later transcribed. The limited knowledge of English by some students did not make a difference in their responses to the survey because the answers of those who completed the questionnaire in Spanish were similar to those who responded in English. This might be due to (a) the students having learned the terms used in the survey when they hung out with friends in chat rooms and had face-to-face conversations, and (b) many of new media terms had English-Spanish cognates, including chatroom (*sala de chat*), website (*sitio web*), text message (*mensaje de texto*), and cell phone (*teléfono móvil*) that allowed students to figure out the meanings of words on their own (see

Appendix 2 for the interview questions)

The open-ended interview questions allowed the students to explain the significance of and motivation for using new media to cross borders. The students submitted samples of their 15 most recent (the last two weeks) electronic communications (texting, email, Facebook messages). To print the messages, the students logged into the “Contacts” on their cell phones and created a new contact with their names and e-mail addresses. Then a message was selected for printing. The students clicked “Forward” to send the message to their e-mail addresses. The message then appeared in the students’ email inbox. The students opened their email accounts in the computer lab, deleted their names and addresses, and selected the “print” option to print the message. My research assistant (a Mexican-American, high school bilingual teacher) translated the Spanish aspects of the messages into English. The printouts were examined to provide deeper understanding of how the students used new media for communication across multiple contexts.

### **Content Validation of the Instrument**

We subjected the interview and survey responses to reliability and validity analyses. For content validity, a class in one middle school (not part of the main study) in the county responded to the two versions of the survey and interview questions during a pilot study. The same survey was re-administered to the same class one week later. A test-retest reliability was conducted and scores from both tests were correlated. The obtained correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.9$  and  $0.8$ ) indicated the scores were stable over time. Pilot testing is used to establish the content validity of a survey and improve the questions, format, and scales (Creswell, 2009). For sampling validity, the survey and interview questions were given to two literacy professors to assess their relevancy and coverage of the broad range of areas within new media literacies. The use of expert panel ensured that the survey was grounded in literature and that the topic was adequately sampled

(Creswell, 2009). The professors' suggestions were used to revise and refine the survey.

To conduct a factor analysis, Kaiser's (1974) recommendation of Eigenvalues over 1 and Scree plot were used. The factor analysis yielded five factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1, which indicated that a five factor solution was used for the study. Because the factors were not likely to be related, direct oblimin rotation was used. Only questionnaire items with loadings of 0.40 or higher on a factor were accepted based on the assumptions of factorability from Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy. A five-factor solution was used by examining (a) factor loadings greater than 0.40, (b) Eigenvalues greater than 1.0, and (c) the scree plot of Eigenvalues (see Appendix A). Internal reliability for each of the factors was examined using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability coefficients in Table 1 show high internal reliability within each cluster of items: frequency of using new media .92; language use for communication .91; types of texts read/written .92; social media .90; and literacy instruction .94. The survey was revised and the final version was used for the main study.

Table 1: Factor Loadings

Factor	Item loadings	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha	% common variance
Frequency of using new media	.42-.86	9	.92	56.54
Language use for communication	.40-.88	8	.91	52.62
Types of texts read/written	.57-.87	12	.92	55.88
Social media for literacy practices	.40-.86	10	.90	51.82
Literacy instruction	.42-.86	21	.94	58.48

## Data Analysis

The qualitative procedures of inductive and interpretative coding, cross-comparison of codes, and triangulation across data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) were adopted for data analysis. Coding involves construction of categories that capture important features of data (Merriam, 1998). For initial coding, both the interview and social media data were read many times word-by-word to identify key ideas that were pertinent to the research questions. To track the type of new media used by the participants, I developed the following categories: (a) new media (e.g., texting, Facebook), (b) literacy function (e.g., critiquing), (c) languages (e.g., English, Spanish), and (d) spatial-temporal distance (e.g., local, global).

I looked for themes that were relevant to the research questions across the qualitative data. The students' self-identified text showed that they read within and across genres and integrated diverse media. I tabulated and organized the texts into genres and provided a summary of the content of each category: Spanish-based texts (e.g., Latino cultures, histories), magazines (e.g., teen culture, lifestyles), and literary books (e.g., romance, fantasy). To code the qualitative data, I focused on critical interpretation of how the students use new media to construct or critique messages. A student wrote on his Facebook wall: "I feel bad for kids as they are suffering in Egypt because of the dictator government. It is better if the government stop corruption and give young people job. I like that young people come together to fight to have a voice in their society." The message was coded as "critical awareness of global issues." Another student wrote: "I like to read from different genres and media so that I can learn information from many sources." The student's message was classified as "crossing genres and new media." Using the qualitative coding procedures, all parts of the data were assigned labels that simultaneously summarized, categorized, and accounted for each segment (Charmaz, 2006).

The constant comparison method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) was used to establish analytic distinctions by comparing data from one student with data from another, messages from Facebook walls to interviews, and differences and similarities between different interviews. The coded analytic categories within and across the data were grouped conceptually into five categories in relation to the research questions: new media, multiple world communities, translanguaging, genres, and out/in school literacies. Based on the cyclical nature of the study, I made links between the research design (e.g., five qualitative categories/factors in the survey and the five qualitative themes of the interview questions) and data analysis (e.g. the five themes in data analysis section). Hence, there are similarities between the five quantitative categories in the survey and the five qualitative themes in the data analysis. The convergence of the themes was planned at the beginning as part of the MMA approach which allowed me to analyze diverse data simultaneously and merge them for an in-depth analysis (Creswell, 2009).

The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSSPC + statistical software for descriptive statistics and reliability analysis. Descriptive statistics allowed for data summary in numerical form such as mean, median, mode.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The research objectives of this study are to find out how the Mexican-American transnational students use new media literacies to cross borders and examine whether their transnational literacy practices are integrated into literacy instruction. The students that are quoted in the qualitative data are assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities and ensure that the data on the participants can be tracked back to their sources. This section presents the findings.

#### **New Media**

Data from the survey, interviews and samples of electronic communications showed that the students employed new media literacies to build networks and affiliations in Mexico and U.S. Table 1 showed that the students expressed high frequency rates of using new media literacies with mean scores ranging from 3.01 to 3.62 on a four point Likert scale. The students expressed a high frequency rate with regard to the statements that they talked on cell phones with family members in Mexico with a mean of 3.62; sent e-mail to people in U.S. with a mean of 3.10; surfed websites with a mean of 3.25; blogged for people to read their ideas with a mean of 3.32; and shared experiences in the U.S. with friends in Mexico with a mean of 3.35.

Table 2: The Participants' Literacy Practices (N = 103)

Items: What I do after school	Mean	Median	Std. statistics
14. I watch news on my cell phone	3.42	3.00	.87
15. I blog for people to read.	3.32	3.00	.94
16. Talk on cell phone.	3.62	3.00	.82
17. I read/sent text message to people.	3.49	3.00	.86
18. I surf the web	3.32	3.00	.82
19. I sent e-mail to people to people.	3.10	3.00	.65
20. I sent instant messages	3.35	3.00	.94
21. I surf the websites to read	3.25	2.00	.91
22. I post messages on social network sites	3.41	4.00	.70

The students used new media to share their interests locally and globally. Samples of the students' electronic communications suggested that new media afforded them opportunities to use transnational literacies and translanguaging for border crossing. For example, Mario talked about

his admiration for a sleek car with a friend in Mexico on his Facebook page: “The thing that *yo admiro* [I admire] is a car Mustang Leonora 76s. *Yo* [I] admire that car because Mustang Leonora is [a] very powerful car and is very fast. I like the car because [it] has 850hp V8, *doble arbol de leva* [double overhead camshaft and cross-flow cylinder head] and one vtec. The car no *gasta* [doesn’t waste] too much gasoline *aunque sea* [even though it has a] v8.”

The Internet allows transnational youths in different nations to interact on a person-to-person basis. Maria fondly wrote about her grandfather to her friend in Mexico in an e-mail: “Sergio — is the best grandpa in the planet. He is a nice person, respectful, hardworking, and responsible. All this [these] values its [are] so hard to found [find] in a man in the world. *El es un hombre muy respetuoso* [He is a very respectable man] because *cuando yo tengo una opinión sobre cualquier punto de vista* [when I have an opinion with a different point of view] he respects my opinion.”

New media provide youths the space for expressing their views on family and community issues. Claudia discussed her love, admiration, and respect for her mother on her Facebook page: “My mom is everything to me she is the best person in my life because she is good with me I don’t get in trouble a lot only when I do things really bad. She make[s] Mexican food such as *tortillas*, *champurrado*, *enchiladas*, *tostadas* and *sopes* really good the best one in the world. I will never be bad with her *o faltarle el respeto porque la quiero mucho* [or disrespect her because I love her very much] that’s why *yo nunca lo haría*” [I would never do it].

The students used new media resources to develop social conscience — an important step in navigating the complex American society. The students used new media to develop social awareness, showed concerns for the problems in the society, and made conscious choices about how to shape their communities according to their values. During an interview, Jorge stated: “I

feel free to talk about any issues without the fear of intimidation.” Adriana added her voice to the political debate regarding the DREAM Act<sup>ii</sup> bill by stating in an interview: “I think all people should come out and support the DREAM Act bill. It is a good thing [policy] because it will allow young people to apply for help for tuition and go to community colleges and state universities and contribute to this country.” The data showed that the students discussed diverse social issues including an immigration reform bill in the U.S. Senate, support for same-sex marriage, deportation of undocumented immigrants, and the DREAM Act bill.

*Discussion.* Data analysis around new media indicates that the students use the technology to build transnational social networks and discuss social issues that are of interest to them. The finding suggests that new media and the associated literacies are crucial tools in the trajectories of transnational youths. The availability of new media such as cell phones with Internet capabilities such as weblog, texting, e-mail, and web surfing ensures that the students maintain social affiliations across the U.S.-Mexico borders. This finding adds to previous work that suggests border-crossing is important as transnational students use new media to develop expansive and diverse relational social networks and transnational connections within the U.S. and across Mexico (see, for example, Domingo, 2012; Lam & Warriner, 2012).

Another important finding is that new media affords the participants opportunities to express their views on social issues. Currently, limited studies have examined how Mexican-American transnational students use new media to engage in literacies that increase their social awareness. The participants use new media to develop social consciousness by engaging in social dialogues that make them explicitly aware of and discuss factors that shape their experiences in the U.S. The independence and autonomy, creative expression, and an investigative approach afforded by new media might have provided a space for the students to increase their social

awareness. Indeed, today's youths are "more skeptical and analytical, more inclined toward critical thinking, and more likely to challenge and question established authorities than previous generations" (Buckingham, 2006, p. 7). If an important goal of literacy instruction is to prepare youths to be agents of positive change in the community, teachers need to build on and support students' outside school literacies for in-school literacy learning. New media literacies offer transnational students opportunities to explore local community issues and concerns, promote social and civic knowledge, and enhance personal knowledge of the world.

### **Multiple World Communities**

The transnational youths took up sociopolitical conversations and perspectives through new media literacies. The students developed a sense of global citizenship and critical awareness of global issues as shown by their curiosity about international events. In Table 1, the students expressed high frequency rates about watching news on cell phones to know what is happening in the world with a mean score of 3.42; read and sent text messages about topical issues to people in other countries with a mean score of 3.49; sent instant messages to communicate with people in other countries with a mean score of 3.35; and post messages on social network media to communicate with people in the U.S. and other nations with a mean score of 3.41.

The students' postings and interview indicated that new media afforded them opportunities to act as transnationals who expressed their concerns about the plights of people around the world in social network sites. For example, 76 (73.78%) of the students expressed solidarity with youths that led the Arab Spring (the protests and uprisings that toppled some dictators in the Arab world beginning in 2010). Diane wrote in her Facebook: "I feel bad for children as they are suffering in Egypt because of the bad government. It is better if the government stops corruption and gives people work." Donna also wrote on Twitter: "I like that young people come together to fight to

have a voice in their society.” These comments indicated that the students view the youths in the Arab countries as agents of change — who want to use their voices and actions to create change and transform the society.

Eighty-two (79.61%) of the students showed a sense of understanding beyond the U.S. borders as they critiqued Arab countries for unequal economic opportunities and political status quo. In an interview, Jorge argued that: “The youths are doing the right thing. They are fighting to force the governments to end corruption and change the [political and economic] systems so that everybody can have equal opportunities and live a better life.” Esmeralda stated: “Young people are engines of change and they are trying to create a better tomorrow for themselves and others.” The comments suggest that the students recognize the struggle of their peers in foreign countries to alleviate human suffering and work to promote social justice and human dignity.

The students rose above local concerns and expressed sympathies and critical perspectives on social justice issues on their social network sites. The students questioned the wisdom of the war in Afghanistan and Iraq. Clemente wrote on Facebook: “The war is bad for young people in the countries. They are starving and dying from bombs. Nations cannot solve their problems through wars. People should come together to figure out how to solve problems.” Adriana, in the interview, argued: “I don’t like how innocent people are dying. I see pictures of people who are dying on the Internet daily and this makes me sick to my stomach. People in the world should find peaceful ways to solve problem [conflicts].” The comments indicated that the students sympathized with others and offered a vision of what “the world could be” while the U.S. media and political discourse of the wars focused on Taliban, Al Qaeda, and Bin Laden.

The students envisioned themselves as part of increasingly interconnected multiple world communities and indicated their interests in civic responsibility on the international stage. Benitez,

in a conversation on the FIFA World Cup in South Africa with a friend in Mexico, wrote on his Facebook page: “I enjoy the World Cup. It is good for South Africa. I like that the game brings positive attitudes from many countries around the world for South Africa.” Jazmine, in another conversation with a friend outside the U.S., questioned whether the government should have spent billions of dollars to host the World Cup in the face of massive unemployment in South Africa. Jazmine, during the interview, argued: “It is not right that the government spends several billions of dollars on soccer matches in a country with high unemployment and poverty. The government needs to create jobs for people.”

The students, across the data, connected new media literacies to their communities by sharing local news with people in the U.S. and the world. The students’ postings suggested that they were interested in building on their familiar knowledge of local community and then extending their understanding to world communities. In their self-identified literacy practices, as much as 100.00% of the students stated that they video recorded Mexican festivities such as baptism of babies, Christmas, weddings, *quinceañeras*, *Cinco de Mayo*, *Día de la Calendaria* and posted them on social media. Also, 100.00% of the students indicated they shared photos of historic sites in their communities on social media including the National Wildlife Refuge, Algodones Sand Dunes, Anza Borrego Desert State Park, *Palenque*, *Chichen Itzá*, Great Pyramid of Cholula (the ancient Mayan civilization), and Church of Guadalupe.

The students also wrote in the commentary box that they like to watch news on cell phones. For example, 94 (91.26%) of them stated that they watched Telemundo, Univision, and Galavision to learn about events in Mexico. Rachel wrote: “I like to visit different websites to learn about the impact of the wars on Iraqis and Afghanis.” Clemente noted that he surfed websites: [www.fifa.com/](http://www.fifa.com/) to “know which nations are going to the next stage and which are going home from

the World Cup”. Unlike depersonalized and abstract textbooks that students generally consider boring, chatrooms such as [www.spanishchat.com](http://www.spanishchat.com) and [www.amingo.chat](http://www.amingo.chat) allowed the students to hang out with their friends and read about issues that were of interest to them.

*Discussion.* Analysis of data regarding multiple world communities suggested that the students used new media as a resource to take up sociopolitical dialogues and perspectives that go beyond national borders. The students show the capacity to develop empathy and concerns for the plights of others. This finding is an important contribution to the literacy community because how transnational students use new media for engagement in sociopolitical conversations across geopolitical contexts that span multiple nations remains under-theorized despite the fact that literacy practices that youths develop from transnational spaces are important to their learning.

In today’s rapidly-changing and interconnected world, new media affords youth opportunities to participate in a new type of global citizenship that emphasizes inclusion and participation (Sánchez & Kasun, 2012). The participants’ experiences of living on the U.S.-Mexico border coupled with using new media to learn about other nations have shaped their notions of global citizenship. The students develop empathies toward the plights of people in Afghanistan, Iraq and South Africa. U.S.-Mexico border provides the youths with the knowledge and experiences to understand the meaning of a global citizen as “someone with empathies and insights about membership in a community that transcends local and national boundaries” (Sánchez, 2007, p.505). Equally important, the issues affecting global community such as climate change, poverty, and inequalities demand the attention of innovative youths who can use a broad range of literacy practices to create a better, fairer society in the increasingly interdependent and globalised world (Canagarajah, 2013). The findings suggest, first, that transnational students have multiple abilities they are now able to express with new media and second, that schools need to be better at validating

and supporting these abilities as part of students' literate identities and using them as a legitimate tool of learning in the increasingly interdependent and globalised world where multiple communicative resources are highly valued.

### **Translanguaging**

Results across data suggested that the students employed translanguaging as a communicative tool to engage in social mobility talk and interactions in the U.S. and Mexico with their Mexican friends. Table 2 showed that the students expressed high frequency rates, with high mean scores ranging from 3.09 to 3.74 for using translanguaging to communicate across the U.S.-Mexico border. The students expressed high frequency rates with statements that they watched news in Mexico in Spanish, with a mean of 3.74; alternated between English and Spanish when speaking, with a mean of 3.69; and read for pleasure in English, with a mean of 3.63.

Table 3: The Participants Use Translanguaging to Communicate (N = 103)

Items: Languages I use in school and at home.	Mean	Median	Std. Statistics
23. I watch news in Spanish.	3.74	4.00	.71
24. I read Spanish texts at home.	3.39	3.00	.65
25. I read for pleasure in English.	3.42	3.00	.82
26. I watch Spanish channels.	3.63	2.00	.91
27. I alternate between English & Spanish at home.	3.69	3.00	.94
28. I translate from the English to Spanish language.	3.09	3.00	.65
29. I post messages on my social network pages in Spanish.	3.42	3.00	.72
30. I read Spanish websites to know what happens in Mexico.	3.77	3.00	.80

The students' printouts from social media indicated that they valued transnational literacies and translanguaging as tools for maintaining affiliations in a globalized world. Rather than viewing Spanish as a deficit, 100% of the participants embraced translanguaging as a resource in their global and local interactions. For example, Laura used translanguaging to describe what she liked in America in a text message to a friend in Mexico: "My cousin Lorena buy[s] everything she want[s]. If she want[s] something *ella lo compra. Si mira una ropa o algo que le gusta ella lo compraría*" [she buys it. If she sees clothing or something she likes, she will buy it]. Sandra texted about her expectations in her new country: "I want to get my Diploma for get a good job and *para ser una persona importante*" [to be an important person] in the future." These students used translanguaging to perform important social functions: an expression of familiarity and affiliation with friends in Mexico. The students accessed the linguistic databases of English and Spanish to express their ideas. Also, translanguaging becomes a sign of social bilingual identity and an affirmation of affiliations with friends and family members in Mexico.

The participants used translanguaging as a crucial linguistic resource for sharing life experiences in the U.S. with friends in Mexico. Eva expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to attend a school in the U.S.: "I am happy in my new school because I have the opportunity to finish high school *gracias a ustedes tender un mejor trabajo y seré una mejor persona*" [thanks to you all I will have a better job and will be a better person]. Marc emailed a friend in Mexico his understanding of what he needed to do in order to be a good worker in the U.S. economy: "I want to get [an] education. That will get me [a] good job. When I get [a] job I need to study *para ser una persona más eficiente* [to be efficient] at my work."

These students used translanguaging as a linguistic innovation for sharing ideas rather than depending on Spanish or English. The new reality is that the knowledge of one language may be

insufficient to meet the multiple languages required to participate at the intersection of global and local contexts. Marc, during the interview, explained: “I don’t worry about which language I speak. My concern is that I can communicate with my friends.” The students’ comments suggested that used translanguaging to maneuver through multiple languages without alienating their friends as translanguaging offers them opportunities to access two languages and feel comfortable in using them to interact online with friends in Mexico.

Translanguaging allowed the participants to engage in flexible though complex language practices to communicate across borders and express their new realities in the U.S. Adriana sent an e-mail to a friend in Mexico to discuss her hope for the future: “I am glad *que finalmente voy a ser importante* [that finally I will be important] for myself.”

The students employed translanguaging to maintain a web of social relations across U.S.-Mexico borders. During a follow-up interview, Guzman explained that he did not make a clear cut distinction between Spanish and English: “I use Spanish or English depending on what I want to say and the person I am talking to at that moment. I even go back and forth between the languages so that I can express myself clearly.” In local/global interactions, bilinguals access translanguaging to communicate efficiently rather than focusing on language itself.

*Discussion.* The data analysis regarding translanguaging indicates that the students use translanguaging to maintain affiliations with friends and family members across national borders. The students employ translanguaging to describe their new experiences in the U.S., including what they like and what is important to them. The findings show that translanguaging is a crucial linguistic resource that the students use to express their knowledge of Spanish and English and communicate in different ways, to different audiences, and for different purposes (Bailey & Orellana, 2015). For the participants, translanguaging is a reflection of new realities that they live

in two worlds, two cultures, and two languages, and “in between” or “middle ground” between U.S.-Mexico borders. The findings indicate that the fluidity of the contemporary world requires youths to use translanguaging as a linguistic innovation for border crossing even as they learn English. The findings add to existing studies that show transnational students use new media, bilingual contexts, bilingual knowledge, and bilingual literacies to build networks across local/global communities (see, for example, García, 2009; Hornberger & Link, 2012).

What is important is that the youths develop translanguaging resources in multiple crevasses and networked ensembles of contexts that are reflective of their multiple linguistic backgrounds. Youths develop complex linguistic practices to function in multiple, co-present, and overlapping communicative contexts and to triangulate languages, social relationships, and communicative patterns that more frequently cross linguistic and geographical borders (Blommaert, 2010; Domingo, 2012). Translanguaging is crucial in understanding the micro-politics of local/global interactions as it is not just an in-between zone “where global/local power relations are neutralized . . . but as a zone of symbolic ferment where power relations are surreptitiously re-inscribed” (Kraidy 1999, p. 460). Literacy teachers must envision pedagogy that affirms and leverages students’ translanguaging as a legitimate resource that youths develop and use for border crossing and traversing boundaries between genres and between media.

### **Crossing Genres and New Media**

Data from the survey suggested that the transnational youths cross borders between genres and between media to maintain networks spread across nations. Reading across genres and media provided youths opportunities to learn life lessons as such texts generally address topical issues. The students expressed high frequency rates with statements that they read Spanish texts, with a mean of 3.84; read English and Spanish texts for pleasure, with a mean of 3.67; read newspapers

in Spanish and English, with a mean of 3.69; read cartoons and comics in English and Spanish, with a mean of 3.71; and read magazines in Spanish and English, with a mean of 3.67.

The interview and Facebook postings indicated that the students read a wide variety of materials for diverse purposes. The students' self-identified reading materials on the survey indicated that 91 (87%) of them read Spanish texts dealing with the richness of Latino/Mexican histories and cultures, including *Pedro Paramo* (hopes and dreams), *Los de abajo* (Mexican revolution), *Los cinco soles de Mexico* (experience of the ancient millennium in Mexico), and *Terra nostra (Hispanic civilization)*. These texts affirmed, celebrated, and supported their Latino cultural experiences and highlighted the different aspects of Latino cultures, hopes, dreams, family/community bonds, and history.

The self-identified reading materials on the survey also indicated that 87 (84.46%) of the students read English and Spanish newspapers and magazines because the materials use language and content that make a social statement on issues that youths care for such as teen pregnancy, self-esteem, lifestyles, education, relationships, self-improvement, depressions, and bullying. In particular, digital magazines give youths a space to be critical as they often critique what they see as "fake" images of beauty and write back to the editor to argue that the perfect image of beauty in a magazine is photoshopped and does not represent a real person.

The diverse genres that the students read expose them to literature types that reflect youths' life experiences. The students read materials that are engaging and credible in giving them a voice, portraying teens as protagonists (who move fluidly across national and linguistic borders), depicting experiences of border crossing, reflecting teens' struggle to resolve the coming-of-age issues such as sex, sexuality, relationships, and identity. In the students' self-identified texts on the survey, 88 (85.43%) of them wrote that they read diverse genres, including texts *Harry Potter*

(fantasy); *Twilight* (romance, fantasy, and action); *Los Tres Osos* (fables, folktales, and myths); and *Glamour* (photography — where youths are portrayed in romantic or sexually alluring ways).

Also, 100% of the students indicated they used new media such as Facebook, YouTube, Google, Websites, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, and Twitter (see Table 4).

Table 4: The Participants’ Self-Identified Genres/Media (N = 103).

	Items	Names	Respondent	Percentage
<b>Print-based Texts</b>	<b>Books</b>	Harry Potter	87	89.69%
		Twilight	77	79.38%
		Los Tres Osos	68	70.10%
		Los cinco soles de Mexico	76.	78.35%
		Pedro Paramo	65	77.01%
		Diary of Anne Frank	78	80.41%
		Los de abajo	78.	80.41%
		Terra Nostra	76	78.35%
	<b>Magazines</b>	Low Rider	64	65.97%
		Sports Illustrated	76	78.35%
		Crepusculo	64	65.97%
		Seventeen	87	89.69%
		Glamour	83	85.57%
		Cosmopolitan en Español	87	89.69%
		Vogue	73	75.25%
		J-14 Magazine	92	94.85%
		Vanidades	83	85.57%
		Siempre Mujer	74	76.29%
		CosmoGirl Magazine	68	70.10%
		Alma	87	89.69%
People en Español	76	78.35%		
<b>New Media</b>	<b>Web sites</b>	YouTube.com	89	91.75%
		Photobucket	83	85.57%
		Extremesports.com	64	65.97%
		Tumblr	67	81.95%
		FaceBook.com	89	91.75%
		Instagram	89	91.75%
		Snapchat	92	94.85%
		Twitter	87	89.69%
	Google	100	100%	

		Yahoo	74	76.29%
		AOL	72	79.17%
	media	Cable network news	97	100%
		Video cassettes	90	92.78%
		Electronic games	95	97.94%
		Videogames	90	92.78%
		websites	100	100%
		Computer games	100	100%

Jorge, during an interview, argued that he read multiple genres to learn diverse views on an issue. Jorge stated: “I like to read from different genres and media so that I can learn information from many sources. As I read from different genres I see that many things that are not related on the surface are actually related.” Maria wrote in the commentary box on the survey that whenever she read an interesting book, she was always eager to share it with friends: “I tell my friends the book I enjoy because it makes sense to me. That means I learn some ideas from the book about how to do things.” The students’ comment suggests that crossing genre and media provided the students opportunities to read diverse texts, reflect on them, talk about the texts with friends, and apply new understandings in ways that could extend their learning. Unlike school texts that are typically geared toward passing high-stakes tests, the participants crossed genre and media borders to read materials that were interesting and relatable to their experiences.

*Discussion.* The data analysis suggests that the students read across media and genres. The participants’ reading practices reflect their multiple identities as Mexican-Americans, bi-nationals, bilinguals, adolescents, and on- and offline readers. The students’ reading interests and preferences are complex as they read Spanish texts dealing with the richness of Latino/Mexican histories and

cultures. They also read English media texts dealing with the general U.S. youth populations. The diversity shows that the students' reading interests and preferences are eclectic.

The important finding here is that the students read within and across genres and integrate new media to acquire knowledge from on- and off-line sources. Adolescents live in a complex, shifting and unpredictable social and media environment. Hence, youths have developed skills in reading across new media as well as newspapers, magazines, fictional and non-fictional texts, and photography. Youths' learning and everyday social and cultural activities "often rely on a convergence of digital and online media with print, analog, and non-interactive media types" (Ito et al, 2008, p. 8). Such eclectic textual practices allow youths to integrate ideas across multiple media and genres to learn and share information (Jenkins, 2006). The diverse genres, media, and content also reflect youths' multiple layers of identity and the diverse dimensions of their being (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). The students' literacy practices call into question the mono-cultural, single context-, and print-based literacy that schools teach. The findings suggest that literacy instruction that recognizes and affirms students' everyday authentic literacies is critical to their learning, interest, motivation, and orientation toward school literacy.

### **Outside School and In-School Literacies**

Literacy instruction may not have built on the students' social networks, textual artifacts, linguistic resources, and distributed knowledge networks they use as frames of reference for learning and cognitive development. Table 5 indicated that the students showed a low rate of agreement with statements that their teachers prepare them to combine different modes to show their understanding of what they learned, at a mean of 1.08; access websites to find additional information to supplement what they read, at 2.03; and teach them to use social network sites to share ideas with larger audiences, at a mean of 1.64.

Table 5: The Participants' Views of Literacy Instruction (N = 103).

Items: Literacy Instruction:	Mean	SE	Mdn
53. Teaches me how to combine different modes.	1.08	.07	2.00
54. Teaches me to access websites.	2.03	.06	3.00
55. Teaches me to how to upload texts & images.	1.61	.06	3.00
56. Teaches me how to use iPhone and iPad.	2.38	.06	3.00
57. Teaches me how to use search engines.	1.41	.07	3.00
58. Teaches me how to use the computer.	2.45	.06	3.00
59. My teacher assesses my knowledge of new media.	1.08	.07	2.00
60. My teacher teaches me how to use iPhone.	1.61	.06	3.00
61. My teacher teaches me to use educational websites.	2.48	.06	3.00
62. My teacher allows me to use social network sites.	1.64	.07	3.00
63. My teacher teaches me how to use weblog.	1.82	.06	3.00
64. My teacher creates a website for me to interact.	1.05	.07	2.00
65. My teacher uses online/computer games to teach.	1.81	.06	3.00
66. My teacher allows me to use interactive whiteboard.	2.18	.06	3.00
67. My teacher teaches me to use Student Response System.	1.08	.07	2.00
68. My teacher teaches me how to use podcasts.	1.04	.07	2.00
69. My teacher teaches me how to use chatroom.	2.03	.06	3.00
70. My teacher teaches me to create multimedia presentations.	2.48	.06	3.00
71. My teacher teaches me to use video clips.	1.25	.06	3.00
72. My teacher teaches me to use WebQuest.	1.04	.07	3.00
73. My teacher teaches me to use Wikis.	1.06	.07	2.00

Teaching transnational students to read and write requires teachers to link literary instruction to their lives and life-world—the world as directly experienced in the subjectivity of

their everyday lives. When I asked the 18 interview participants' their views about literacy instruction, 14 (77.78%) noted that they wanted teachers to tap into their outside school literacies for teaching. Ana stated that she wanted her "teachers to allow students to use chatrooms, blogs, and Facebook to do their assignments." Jasmine argued that teachers should integrate new media such as texting, Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook into "English lessons to motivate students to write about topics that are relevant to their lives and interests." The students' comments suggest that the students want avenues to use new media as additional resources for learning. The student argued that unlike school literacy, social network sites "allow people to use any language in their profile. You don't have to use a language if you don't want to. You can post your photos and videos to tell your story." The profile section is the individual home page where youths use multiple modes including multiple languages, photos, and video clips to express themselves.

Jasmine, in the commentary box, noted that ELA instruction was too restricted to school-based topics instead of encouraging students to use their broad experiences of life for learning. She wrote: "I like websites and chatrooms because they allow people to talk about their lives, their feelings, and what they want to become." Ana stated: "I photoshop online and send photos of people like celebrities to my friends. Sometimes I create many photos [collage] on my profile page." The students' comments suggested that ELA teachers should connect instruction to new media so that learning could be fun, interesting, and engaging.

*Discussion.* Data analysis around literacy instruction suggests that the students' new media literacy practices are not integrated into school literacy instruction. Few studies have investigated the participants' views on how transnational and new media literacies have been integrated into literacy instruction to empower them to learn. The findings suggest that the students bring transnational and new media literacies to classrooms that can serve as additional (or compensatory)

resources for learning in ELA. Hence, it is important for teachers to consider how they might build on youths' literacy practices to help them to be successful in even more life contexts. More specifically, teachers must capitalize on students' experiences in ways that are affirming, supportive, and empowering for learning and interaction in increasingly connected and interdependent local/global worlds (Harper, et al, 2010).

The findings suggest that if teachers recognize their students' new media knowledge, educators will have a better chance of making learning worthwhile for the learners. ELA teachers can show that they value the transnational and media literacies that students bring to classrooms as resources for learning. In U.S.-Mexico border, literacy practices of youths are embedded in distributed networks where youths develop literacy practices within multiple communities of peers, virtual worlds, and local and distant worlds (Jacquemet, 2005). Hence, ELA teachers need to consider their students' trans-border experiences as they design literacy instruction.

### **Implications**

The research objectives of this paper were to examine how the participants use new media literacies to cross borders and find out if their outside literacies are integrated into literacy instruction. The findings suggest that the students employ new media to cross borders, develop global awareness, and use translanguaging to read across genres; however, teachers do not build upon these literacy practices for student learning. The findings suggest a need to reexamine the assumptions that youths struggle with reading and writing because they are "unmotivated." Youths who are positioned as lacking in language facility or motivation or cognitive skills might be seen differently through access to their social media conversations. The findings also challenge educators to consider the role that text-types offered in school might play in students' engagement and learning. Schools need to (a) recognize that youths can do powerful things with text outside

of school and (b) confront the fact that lack of motivation to learn does not lie in the child but might be a matter of instructional practices (i.e., what are the opportunities to learn and scaffolds offered to support those opportunities?) or the quality of the texts being read in school.

### **Implications for ELA Teachers**

Students' literacy repertoires arising from transnationalism and new media literacies are important functional and cultural assets that teachers should affirm and support as additional resources for literacy learning. ELA teachers need to recognize the funds of knowledge that youth acquire through engagement with sociopolitical conversations and make lessons relevant by drawing upon the topics (content of conversations), discourses, texts, and social interests that capture youths' attention and engagement. The participants read and wrote about specific issues and topics directly relevant to ELA classes such as their concerns about the plights of the young people in other nations, the DREAM Act bill, the role of the youth in fighting social injustices, and their views about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The students' engagements with these issues show that they drew upon their diverse funds of knowledge they have acquired outside the school through social network interactions, readings, and experiences (Stockdill & Moje, 2013).

ELA teachers can make their lessons relevant to their students' lives by connecting topics to real life problems. Teachers can design activities that require students to use critical thinking skills and empathy to write about global issues. Such activities will provide safe spaces for students to develop their voices, empathize with people globally, and potentially contribute to building an equitable world.

Teachers can make ELA instruction engaging for students by understanding their motivating for writing: understanding and engaging with others across cultural borders rather than persuasion (Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2014). Hull and Stornaiuolo (2014) theorized that youths'

purposes for writing shifted from persuasion to understanding because their audiences are global, heterogeneous, and interactive. A deep analysis of the conversations that youths engage in as they negotiate understanding across cultures is extremely powerful and can help educators think differently about what and how they teach writing, especially in the era of the Common Core's focus on "evidence-based argument." ELA teachers can prepare students to be strong citizens in an increasingly diverse society by focusing on helping them hone their writing-for-understanding skills or on learning when argument is more useful than understanding, and vice versa.

### **Implications for Literacy Researchers**

There is a need for literacy researchers to ask some fundamental questions regarding the literacy practices of youths: How can literacy education focus on "the local-global interface — the world in our classroom and the classroom in the world" (Harper et al, 2010, p. 9)? What texts/media do students find engaging and pertinent to their lives? How are students' home, school, and global literacies relationally connected? How can students' broad range of literacies acquired through new media be converted to cultural capital to inform instruction? How might teachers make the most of students' outside school literacies as scaffolds for learning? When instruction captures learners' trajectories across local, global, genre, linguistic, and media borders, learning would become "embodied cognitive activities [where] learning becomes situated, reciprocal, and distributed, leading to new forms of learning" (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 159). This is the kind of learning that should be happening in today's schools.

### **Limitations**

Because only 25% of students from each school participated, the pattern of new media literacies observed in this study may not automatically generalize to 75% of Mexican-American transnational students in the participating schools (or similar schools) who did not participate.

**Note**

1. Author, "Appendixes A & B: Questionnaire,"

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/r8kw4w30vtec5sx/mexican-american\\_transnational\\_student\\_survey.pdf](https://www.dropbox.com/s/r8kw4w30vtec5sx/mexican-american_transnational_student_survey.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> DREAM Act is an acronym for a bill in the U.S. Senate titled Development, Relief, Education for Alien Minors – a bill that will allow certain immigrant students who have grown up in the U.S. to apply for temporary legal status. For details, see the National Immigration Law Center at

<http://nilc.org/dreamsummary.html>.

### References

- Alvermann, D. (2006). Technology use and needed research in youth literacies. In M. McKenna, L. Labbo, R. Kieffer & D. Reinking (Eds.), *International handbook of literacy & technology*, Vol. II (327 – 333). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Alvermann, D. (2011). Popular culture and literacy practices. In M. Kamil, P. Pearson, E. Moje & P. Afflerbach (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research IV* (541–560) New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bailey, A. & Orellana, M. (2015). Adolescent development and everyday language practices: Implications for academic literacy and multilingual learners. In D. Molle, E. Sato, T. Boals, & C. Hedgspeth (Eds.), *Multilingual learners and academic literacies: Sociocultural contexts and literacy development in adolescents*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Beach, R. & O'Brien, D. (2008). Teaching popular-culture texts in the classroom. Using new media in the secondary English classroom. In J. Coiro, M. Knobel, C. Lankshear & D. Leu (Eds.), *Handbook of research on new literacies* (775–804). New York, NY: Erlbaum.
- Blommaert, J. (2003). Commentary: A sociolinguistics of globalization. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 7(4), 607–623.
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Buckingham, D. (2006). *Digital generations: Children, young people, and new media*. Mahwah: NJ; Erlbaum.
- Canagarajah, S. (2006). The place of world Englishes in composition: Pluralization continued. *College Composition & Communication*, 57(4), 586–619.

- Canagarajah, S. (2013). Introduction. In Canagarajah, S. (Ed.), *Literacy as translingual practice: Between communities and classrooms* (pp. 1–10). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative Analysis*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Coiro, J. (2003). Exploring literacy on the Internet. *The Reading Teacher*, 56(5), 458–464.
- Coiro, J., Knobel, M., Lankshear, C & Leu, D. (2008). *Handbook of research on new literacies*. New York, NY: Erlbaum
- Connor, C., Goldman, S. & Fishman, B. (2014). Technologies that support students' literacy development. In J. Spector, M. Merrill, J. Elen & M. Bishop (Eds.), *Handbook of research on educational communications and technology* (4th edition) (pp. 591–604). New York, NY: Springer.
- Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE publications.
- Cope, B. & Kalantzis, M. (2000). *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures*. London, Routledge.
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (3rd edition). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- de la Piedra, M. & Araujo, B. (2012). Transfronterizo literacies and content in a dual language classroom. *International Journal of Bilingual Education & Bilingualism*, 15(6), 705–721.
- Denzin, N. (2010). Moments, mixed methods, and paradigm dialogs. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(6), 419–427.
- Domingo, M. (2012). Linguistic layering: social language development in the context of

- multimodal design and digital technologies. *Learning, Media & Technology*. Retrieved December 6, 2012 from: [steinhardt.nyu.edu/.../Domingo%20Linguistic%20Layering%2](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/.../Domingo%20Linguistic%20Layering%2).
- Fairclough, N. (2002). Language in new capitalism. *Discourse & Society*, 13(2), 163–166.
- Farr, M. (2006). *Rancheros in Chicagoacán*. Austin, TX: University of Texas.
- Garcia, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. New York: Blackwell/Wiley.
- Garcia, O. & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education*. London, UK: Palgrave.
- Glick Schiller, N; Basch, L.; & Szanton Blanc, C. (1995). From immigrant to transmigrant: Theorizing transnational migration. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 68(1), 48-63.
- Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. & Amanti, C. (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Mahwah, NY: Erlbaum.
- Gutiérrez, K. (2008). Developing a sociocritical literacy in the third space. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 43(2), 148–164.
- Gutiérrez, K., Bien, A., Seland, M. & Pierce, D. (2011). Polylingual and polycultural learning ecologies: Mediating emergent academic literacies for dual language learners. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 11(2), 232 – 261.
- Harper, H., Bean, T. & Dunkerly, J. (2010). Cosmopolitanism, globalization, and the field of adolescent literacy. *Canadian & International Education*, 39(3), 1 – 13.
- Hornberger, N. & Link, H. (2012). Translanguaging and transnational literacies in multilingual classrooms. *International Journal of Bilingual Education & Bilingualism*, 15(3), 261–278.
- Hull, G. & Stornaiuolo, A. (2010). Literacy arts in a global world: Reframing social networking as cosmopolitan practice. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 54(2), 85–97.

- Hull, G. & Stornaiuolo, A. (2014). Cosmopolitan literacies, social networks, and “proper distance”: Striving to understand in a global world. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 44(1), 15–44.
- Ito, M., Horst, H., Bittanti, M., Boyd, D., Herr-Stephenson, B., Lange, P., Pascoe, C. & Robinson, L. (2008). *Living and learning with new media: Summary of findings from the digital youth project*. Chicago, IL: The MacArthur Foundation.
- Jacquemet, M. (2005). Transidiomatic practices: Language and power in the age of globalization. *Language & Communication*, 25(3), 257–277.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century. An occasional paper on digital media and learning*. John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.
- Johnson, R., Onwuegbuzie, A. & Turner, L. (2007). Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(2) 112–133.
- Kirkland, D. & Hull, G. (2011). Literacy out of school. In M. Kamil, P. Pearson, E. Moje & P. Afflerbach (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research IV (711–725)*, New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kostogriz, A. & Tsolidis, G. (2008). Transcultural literacy: Between the global and the local. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 16(2), 125–136.
- Kraidy, M. (1999). The global, the local, and the hybrid: A native ethnography of globalization. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 16, 456–476.
- Kress, G. (2000). A curriculum for the future. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 30(1), p. 133–145.

- Lam, W. (2009). Multiliteracies on instant messaging in negotiating local, translocal, and transnational affiliations: A case of an adolescent immigrant. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 44(4), 377–397.
- Lam, W. & Rosario-Ramos, E. (2009). Multilingual literacies in transnational digitally mediated contexts: An exploratory study of immigrant teens in the United States. *Language & Education*, 23(2), 171–190.
- Lam, W. & Warriner, D. (2012). Transnationalism and literacy: Investigating the mobility of people, languages, texts, and practices in contexts of migration. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 47(2), 191–215.
- Leander, K., Phillips, N. & Taylor, K. (2010). The changing social spaces of learning: Mapping new mobilities. *Review of Research in Education*, 34, 329–394.
- Levitt, P. (2009). Roots and Routes: Understanding the Lives of the Second Generation Transnationally. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(7), 1225–1242.
- Livingstone, S. (2008). Internet literacy: Young people's negotiation of new online opportunities. In T. McPherson (Ed.), *Digital youth, innovation, and the unexpected* (101-122). (The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Maxwell, J. (2006). Literature reviews of, and for, educational research: A commentary on Boote and Beile's "Scholars Before Researchers." *Educational Researcher*, 35(9), 28–31.
- Mayer, R. (2014). Multimedia instruction. In J. Spector, M. Merrill, J. Elen & M. Bishop (Eds.), *Handbook of research on educational communications and technology* (4th ed.) (385–399). New York, NY: Springer.
- McLean, C. (2010). A space called home: An immigrant adolescent's digital literacy practices.

- Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 54(1), 13–22.
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley & Sons.
- Mignolo, W. (2000). *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Moje, E. B., & van Helden, C. (2005). Doing popular culture: Troubling discourses about youth. In J. A. Vadeboncoeur & L. P. Stevens (Ed.), *Re/constructing “the adolescent”*: Sign, symbol, and body (pp. 211-247). New York: Peter Lang.
- Moje, E., Overby, M., Tysvaer, N. & Morris, K. (2008). The complex world of adolescent literacy: Myths, motivations and mysteries. *Harvard Educational Review*, 78(1), 107–154.
- New Media Consortium. (2005). *A global imperative: The report of the 21st century literacy summit*. Retrieved March 23, 2014 from [http://www.nmc.org/pdf/Global\\_Imperative.pdf](http://www.nmc.org/pdf/Global_Imperative.pdf).
- Pew Hispanic Center (2013). *Closing the Digital Divide: Latino and technology adoption*. Retrieved October 31, 2013 from [http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2013/03/Latinos\\_Social\\_Media\\_and\\_Mobile\\_Tech\\_03-2013\\_final.pdf](http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2013/03/Latinos_Social_Media_and_Mobile_Tech_03-2013_final.pdf).
- Sánchez, P. (2007). Urban immigrant students: How transnationalism shapes their world learning. *The Urban Review*, 39(5), 489–517.
- Sánchez, P. & Kasun, S. (2012). Connecting transnationalism to the classroom and to theories of immigrant student adaptation. *Berkeley Review of Education*, 3(1), 71–93.
- Sánchez, P. & Salazar, M. (2012). Transnational computer use in urban Latino immigrant communities: Implications for schooling. *Urban Education*, 47(1), 90–116.
- Schultz, K. & Hull, G. (2008). Literacies in and out of school in the United States. In B. Street &

- N. H. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education*, 2nd Edition, Vol. 2: Literacy, 239–247. New York, NY: Springer.
- Skerrett, A. (2012). Languages and literacies in translocation: Experiences and perspectives of a transnational youth. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 44(4), 364–395.
- Smith, R. C. (2006). *Mexican New York: Transnational lives of new immigrants*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Snyder, I. & Bulfin, S. (2008). Using new media in the secondary English classroom. In J. Coiro, M. Knobel, C. Lankshear & D. Leu (Eds.), *Handbook of research on new literacies* (805–837). New York, NY: Erlbaum.
- Stockdill, D. & Moje, E. (2013). Adolescents as readers of social studies: Examining the relationship between youth's everyday and social studies literacies and learning. *Berkeley Review of Education*, 4(1), 35–68.
- Teddlie, C. & Tashakkori, A. (2010). Overview of contemporary issues in mixed methods research. In Tashakkori, A. & Teddlie, C. (Eds.), *SAGE Handbooks of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (2nd edition) (1–41). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). Imperial County quickfacts from US Census Bureau. Retrieved March, 2014 from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06025.html>.
- Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Vélez-Ibáñez, C. & Sampaio, A. (2002). Processes, new prospects, and approaches. In Vélez-Ibáñez, C. & Sampaio (Eds.), *Transnational Latina/o communities: Politics, processes, and culture* (p. 1 – 37). New York, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Yardi, S. (2008). Whispers in the classroom. In T. McPherson (Ed.), *Digital youth, innovation,*

and the unexpected (pp. 143-164). (The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Yi, Y. (2009). Adolescent literacy and identity construction among 1.5 generation students: From a transnational perspective. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 19(1), 100–129.