"I Don't Want to Write for Them":

An At-Risk Latino Youth's Out-of-School Literacy Practices

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Abstract

This single-case study demonstrates one bilingual Latino youth's out-of-school literacy practices and how he has learned to disconnect them from his academic work. Qualitative data taken from interviews, the participant's social networking sites, poetry journal, and observations of him in community organizations demonstrate the frequency and purposes of his out-of-school literacy practices of writing poetry, language brokering, reading, technology use, and activism. The findings suggest that the participant has many sophisticated and bilingual literacy practices that were never viewed as funds of knowledge in his linguistically and culturally subtractive schooling environment, contributing to his lack of educational success.

Keywords: adolescent literacy, Latino youth, at-risk, bilingualism

"I Don't Want to Write for Them":

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Studies show that Latino youth engage in a wide range of sophisticated literacy practices

outside of school (Godina, 2004; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2004, 2006, 2007) that are often

transnational (Bruna, 2007; de la Piedra, 2010; Sánchez, 2007), crossing various linguistic,

cultural, and social spaces. Furthermore, many Latino youth develop very refined translating

abilities, or "language brokering", at very young ages (Dorner, Orellana, & Jiménez, 2008), and

further develop this skill throughout their lifetimes. However, these students' abilities are not

being appropriately harnessed by the U.S. educational system (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, &

Todorova, 2008), as Latinos are more likely to drop out of high school than any other ethnic

groups (Gándara, 2010). Furthermore, the deficit perspective (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005)

that educators and society in general might have of Latino youth is that their culture possesses

substandard cultural practices, leading to their educational failure. This lens is extremely harmful

because it overlooks the vast linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005) and funds of knowledge (Moll,

Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992) these youth possess.

Stereotypes that view Latino students embody deficit views often move stealthily into

educational policy and research frameworks. We must reframe our perspective (Kiyama, 2010)

by understanding who these students are and the many resources they bring with them into the

academic environment. Moje (2002) claims that there is a need for research to examine youth's

everyday literacy practices and how these connect to the academic literacy taught in school. She

states that "popular assumptions, rather than careful research or well-articulated theoretical

arguments tend to dominate perceptions about young people and their literacies" (p. 212). She

challenges the notion of solely studying in-school literacies because it masks the immense potential that exists to build on students' vast literacy experiences.

Although there is renewed research interest in taking a broader perspective of youth's literacies (New London Group, 1996; Street, 2003), most of the studies of adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices exclude students from non-dominant communities (Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007; Yi, 2010). This exclusion increases the gap of knowledge we have about particular populations of students, the very students who are not receiving an equitable education (Olsen, 2010) and that drop out of high school at high rates (Gándara, 2010). The editors of the *Handbook of Adolescent Literacy Research* (Christenbury, Bomer, & Smagorinsky, 2009) call for imagination and courage from researchers to better understand marginalized youth's literacy practices as precursor or side by side the construction of alternative practices that offer them a more effective and just education. Alvermann (2009) builds upon their exhortation by stating that the adolescent literacy field is in need of more research on multiliteracies and New Literacy Studies, those that move beyond the in-school reading and writing practices of youth, and include the many ways they make meaning outside of school.

In heeding these recommendations, the present study seeks to add to a notable gap in the literature about Latino youth's out-of-school literacy practices in order to make practical recommendations for teachers, schools, and policy-makers to provide a more just education for such students. The questions guiding this study with an at-risk Latino high school student are:

1) What are the out-of-school literacy practices of the participant?

2) How does the participant view the relationship between his out-of-school literacy practices and in-school tasks?

For the present study I will use the constructs of literacy practices, out-of-school and in-school, in specific ways relevant to the research purposes and grounded in previous scholarship.

1) Literacy Practices: I use the construct *literacy practices* to mean the multiple forms one uses to make and represent meaning such as dress, body, written, audio, and oral discourses (Gee, 2008). This definition embraces the New Literacy Studies as explained by Gee (2008) and researchers interested in the culturally and socially bound ways one uses literacy (New London Group, 1996; Street, 1995).

2) Out-of-school: The term *out-of-school* designates all literacy practices that are not part of the academic curriculum, regardless of whether they are deemed formal or informal, sanctioned or unsanctioned. An out-of-school literacy might even take place in the classroom, hallways, or cafeteria, yet not be part of in-school literacy practices. This might include a student texting in the hallway or drawing in a notebook during class.

3) In-school**:** The term *in-school* literacy practices represents all literacy practices valued, recognized, taught, and sanctioned in the classroom by teachers, administrators and policy-makers. This includes translating or the use of technology that the students are encouraged to use in order to accomplish academic tasks.

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural theory forms the guiding assumption of this study: that each literacy practice is social in nature as it affects and is affected by other beings who also exist in fluid cultural spaces. A sociocultural view of literacy is useful to unmask "the education of people whose language, literacy, and very being have traditionally been marginalized or disenfranchised in schools and societies" in order to remove the deficit perspective (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007, p. 3). In his "funds of knowledge" research, Luis Moll (1992) uses sociocultural theory to

assert that Hispanic children's cultural and social resources are not employed in academic

learning, contributing to greater instances of educational failure. The Funds of Knowledge

Project is based on the principle that students, their families, and their communities possess rich

knowledge that can be used in the academic environment. Using ethnographic methods to

research the community and home lives of Mexican children in the U.S., teacher-researchers

have capitalized on their students' Spanish-language abilities, family literacy practices, and

cultural values in order for more effective learning to occur in the classroom (González, Moll, et

al., 2005). By using the funds of knowledge principle to frame this study, I contend that there is

much value in all youth's out-of-school literacy practices for the academic classroom, as they can

support in-school learning if they are understood and brought into the classroom.

Secondly, the New Literacy Studies (Gee, 2008; Street, 1995) framework provides the

basis for the theoretical study of literacy practices, as I emphasize the political, social, cultural,

and the plural nature of literacy. Street (1997) claims that the implications of the New Literacy

Studies (NLS) for literacy teaching demands that we reevaluate what counts as literacy in order

to re-envision teaching that includes a richer and more complex curriculum. The concept of

multiliteracies, which builds on Gee's (2008) work of multiple discourses and Street's (1995)

work of literacy's link to culture, was coined by the New London Group (1996) as they grew

concerned over 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 two primary areas in order to give all students equitable access in society. First, the

definition of literacy needs to recognize the many multimodal ways of making meaning where

the written word is part and parcel of a bigger whole, which includes visual, audio, and spacial

patterns. Second, cultural and linguistic variety resulting from local diversity and global

connectedness further adds to the complexity of literacy today. Therefore, literacy is indeed multiple, varies within cultural groups, and is a dynamic concept that transforms with the advancement of technology and the fluidity of culture.

Using the NLS framework to conceptualize what counts as a literacy practice, this study purposes to understand the adolescent's full range of out-of-school literacy practices in order to explore ways in which they might be harnessed for academic learning.

Research on the Out-of-School Literacy Practices of Latino Youth

A growing body of scholarship of Latino first- and second-generation immigrant students suggests that there is much the field of bilingual education has to gain by understanding these students' literacy practices because they are often unrecognized or devalued in school. Bruna (2007) focuses on three informal literacies newcomer Mexican high school youth used while in school: tagging, writing their names or their place of origin in a stylized manner on a public space; branding, wearing clothes and accessories that reference their culture; and shouting out, giving a verbal recognition of their home country. They used these unsanctioned literacies to reinforce their group identity, honor their homeland, and seek the assistance they needed in the school environment, yet rarely received. De la Piedra (2010) examined the broad multilingual literacy practices of Latino youth living on the U.S./Mexican border including their letter writing, translating, religious literacy, helping siblings with homework, and discussing telenovelas. However, she found that these practices were either ignored or not valued in school because the literacy practice most central to their school was passing the state's high stakes standardized test.

Similarly, Godina (2004) and Ma'ayan (2010) demonstrate how Latino youth's bilingual abilities and life experiences were completely unrecognized or unsanctioned by their teachers.

These literacies were viewed as inferior, irrelevant, and inappropriate, consequently relegating these students to silent spaces in the classroom. Rubinstein-Ávila (2004, 2006, 2007) further demonstrates that the participants of her studies, first-generation Latino adolescent immigrants, possessed many bilingual and transnational literacy skills such as reading the Bible, novels, and popular teenage magazines. These students also engaged in translating for their families and negotiated meaning across different cultural contexts. Other studies illustrate that how Latino youth express their cultural identity is very tied to their literacy practices that take place out-of-school. This cultural identity is expressed through their reading practices (Moje, 2000; Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, & Morris, 2008), digital social networking (Author, 2013; McGinnis, Goodstein-Stolzenberg, & Saliani, 2007), and writing a counter narrative to the dominant view of Mexican American people (Sánchez, 2007). These practices were largely ignored in schools and educators were often unaware of these students' array of literacy practices. The act of not considering youth's full range of literacy practices in the classroom is a subtle way of adopting the deficit perspective. Yet, we propose that if these literacy practices were recognized and included in the curriculum this would have the potential of helping students to successfully achieve academically.

Methodology

As past scholarship notes, Latino students do engage in sophisticated literacy practices, yet they are often not successful in tests within academic settings. Therefore, using purposive sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994), the participant was selected because I deemed him an "extreme case" where the phenomenon, out-of-school literacy practices remaining unrecognized in school, would be most apparent. A single-case study approach was used with this participant because case studies are helpful to investigate a particular instance of the phenomenon

(Swanborn, 2010); in this case, the out-of-school literacy practices of one adolescent. Swanborn (2010) explains that "if the impetus for our research project lies in some broad, familiarizing questions about a social process, doing a case study seems to be a fitting approach" (p. 25). Using a focused qualitative lens in this case study allowed me to more fully understand the depth, breadth, and nuances of the participant's out-of-school literacy practices and his unique perception of their relationship to his in-school work.

I was acquainted with Pablo, the participant, through our mutual involvement in the same church. Although I did not know him well, through mutual friendships, I was aware of his difficult academic history, his past involvement in crime, and the struggles he was facing in-school at the moment. I also knew that he had a reputation for being a gifted translator and a strong leader. My experience as a teacher of Latino youth and my studies about educational models that often fail these very youth led to genuine curiosity about the apparent dichotomy of Pablo's genius in one setting, yet struggle in another. I entered this study with the bias that Pablo did, in fact, possess "funds of knowledge" that were not appropriately used for his academic achievement. Although I did not know the many details of his story that I present in this paper, I had made the assumption that he was a very intelligent young man who had not received an equitable education that recognized his potential and built upon his strengths. I am a Caucasian, native-English speaker, but speak Spanish as a second language and was one of the few people at the church who could easily communicate with Pablo's aunt. By seeing me interact with his aunt and extended family, he knew I could speak Spanish and appreciated his culture. When I approached him to participate in this study, he was eager to share his life with me and trusted me in the process probably due to the relationship I had built with his extended family.

Data Collection

Three forms of data informed this study: four semi-structured interviews approximately one hour each, actual and digital artifacts, and observations across two out-of-school settings. I purposefully wanted to know *his* perspective on the relationship his out-of-school literacy practices had or did not have on his academic success. I privileged his discernment of his schooling experience because most studies about education privilege the teachers', researchers', and other adults' perspectives or the assessments created by similar people. His literacy practices and his view of the relationship they have to his academic work were the focus of this study; therefore, I wanted to privilege his unique view regarding his own education.

The four semi-structured interviews occurred over five months in 2010. They took place in English, mine and Pablo's dominant language, and lasted from 45 to 90 minutes each. I first asked the participant about his educational history and his life experiences while growing up. (For example: Tell me about visiting your father in Mexico. Did you ever complete a school assignment in Spanish?) Once I understood the context, I asked deeper questions about salient life experiences in- and out-of-school. (How did you become interested in reading during your time in the detention center? What did your teacher in "juvy" say about your poetry?) Then, I asked the participant about his current literacy practices, the unique purposes they serve in his life, and the meaning each one has to him and others. (Why do you stage silent protests? How do you prepare for these? What impact do you think the protests have?) Lastly, I asked him how he perceived the connection between these literacy practices and his schooling experiences. (Do you ever use your knowledge of Spanish in school? Why don't you like to write for school assignments?) Each interview was informed by previous interviews, informal interactions, observations, or artifacts I collected from the participant. I determined the appropriateness of

ending data collection after four interviews because I felt I was at the saturation point and had

sufficient data to answer the research questions.

The artifacts I collected include data from the participant's two social networking sites

and copies of his poetry journal. Pablo granted me access to his MySpace and Facebook

accounts and I was able to view everything he had posted as well as messages posted to him

since he created the accounts two years prior. He also kept a journal with him in which he

regularly wrote poetry and I photocopied a total of 11 poems to include in my data analysis.

Although his social networking was digitally documented, he had lost all of his previous poetry

due to his transient lifestyle. I only had access to the 11 poems in his current notebook.

Additionally, I was a participant-observer of his language brokering in two community

organizations where he functioned as a translator, a church and a home for recovering drug

addicts that his uncle directed. I observed him interacting with English- and Spanish-speaking

people in the recovery ministry on three occasions and at church on ten occasions during the data

collection period. After these events, I wrote down field notes that documented what I saw and

heard that corroborated his self-assessment of being an adept translator. I also wrote down notes

regarding questions that I thought of that I wanted to address with him in our next interview.

These observations all occurred during the five months of time in which in the interviews were

conducted.

Data Analysis

Using qualitative research software, I transcribed each interview and entered copies of

the artifacts and observational notes for coding. I used an ongoing constant-comparative method

data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1968), recursively comparing each incident or artifact against

others to identify similarities and differences. I determined a code for a group of like data and

then redefined the properties of each individual code during the analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Near the end of the analysis, I had developed five axial codes that cut across each data source to demonstrate the range, form, and purpose of the participant's most salient out-of-school literacy practices.

Pablo

The participant is a 19-year-old self-proclaimed Chicano from a border town in Arizona. Although Pablo (pseudonym) was born in the U.S. along with his older brother, both of his parents are from Mexico. His mother came to Arizona when she was 19 to find work and has since maintained permanent residency. His father has lived in Mexico for most of Pablo's life, but migrated back back-and-forth across the border in previous years when it was easier to do so without the proper documentation. Pablo spoke only Spanish when he entered preschool in a Head Start program, yet received English-only instruction that was often interrupted due to his mother's migrant work in agriculture. He stayed at the school in Arizona for the fall and winter, but would go to California with his mother every year through fifth grade for two months in the spring where he received more English-only education. He describes his elementary schooling experience as very boring and says he spent most recesses on the fence due to his behavior.

Once he began middle school, his mother made arrangements for him to stay with other family members during the spring because she thought the interruption was not good for his precarious grades; he was barely passing. He did the necessary school work to get by and stay out of trouble with his mother, but never put forth much effort. His effort was invested in an intricate organized crime ring that he led, stealing thousands of dollars of merchandise from local stores. He explains that he developed a system where he would successfully lead others in sneaking out of the stores with other families while hiding merchandise on their person. In high

school he began playing football and naturally excelled due to his strong, solid build which made him focus more on school and less on criminal activity. However, when a female friend of his was threatened by her boyfriend, he brought a knife to school in March of his freshman year, making threats in public. This eventually led to a rotation from an alternative school and juvenile prison 22 times over the next two years. When he realized he had not received any of his high school credits during that time since he never actually completed any courses, he dropped out of high school and spent the next year in Mexico with his father where he did not attend school. After being sent to jail in Mexico for drug involvement, his family intervened and sent him to another border state, where the study takes place, to live with an aunt and reenroll in school. With a new resolve to succeed, he pursued his high school degree for two more years, taking after-school and summer classes to make up for all of the credits he lacked. At the time of the study he was enrolled in the final courses he needed to graduate. Showing much resilience, hard work, and leadership, he was respected in his family, church, and community.

Results and Discussion

The data were grouped into categories that demonstrate the range and most prominent forms of his out-of-school literacy practices: Poetry Writing, Language Brokering, Book Reading, Technology Use, and Activism. I asked Pablo questions to better understand if each practice was any part of his past or current in-school learning and how he perceived the role of each literacy practice in his academic success. In every instance Pablo saw a complete disconnect between his out-of-school literate life and his in-school learning. More so, he sometimes defensively stated that he would not bring these out-of-school literacies into his academic world because he perceived them to be overtly unwanted by the school. Overall, the

data illustrate a young man who is an intelligent, bilingual, sophisticated user of multiple literacy practices out-of-school, yet a disengaged at-risk student in school.

Poetry Writing: "I'm an Open Poet."

Pablo began writing poetry in the seventh grade when he wrote his first poem for a girl. His writing flourished as he began high school, but lost his cherished writing notebook in his football locker when it was cleaned out after the season. From ages 15 to 16 during his time in a juvenile detention center, he began writing poetry as a means to deal with the emotions he was feeling. A young English teacher for the center identified his talent and used his poems as examples for other students, yet Pablo states he never wrote poetry for an academic assignment. Nevertheless, during the time he lived in juvenile detention he wrote prolifically: "I wrote poetry about being locked up….Everyday different emotions. Everyday I'd be writing" (interview, August 8, 2010).

He continues to write regularly, but views his poetry writing as a strictly out-of-school activity. When I asked him about a poem he shared with me that had visible teacher's comments on it, he explained that it was something he had already written and just turned it in because he needed a poem to complete the assignment. "If they tell me to write a poem for a school assignment, I'll pull one of these out just cause I don't want to write for them" (interview, November 3, 2010). I further probed to find out if he planned to follow the teacher's written suggestions to change the poem and he responded in laughter. He would not, nor had ever allowed the teacher, representing the school, to make any changes to his out-of-school writing.

His motivation for writing is for self-expression, something he says he is not allowed in school, and a way to deal with strong emotions:

It's a way to relieve it [anger]. Like some people eat out of anger, some people do stupid

> things out of anger, I write. It's a positive way to not get hurt or nothing and this was
>
> what you get out of it. You get poetry. (interview, November 3, 2010)

He also uses his poetry to express his frustration at the injustices he sees in the world:

> We have the human capacity, technology, to end famine yet we cause it. We throw away
>
> food when people in Africa don't know what a hamburger is. And they get to me. A lot of
>
> things get to me so I write them down. (interview, November 3, 2010)

He enjoys sharing his poetry with others and was eager to have me read his poems. He regularly participated in after-school poetry readings at a former high school and had recently given one of his poems to his new school's librarian. With much pride, he told me that she put his poem on a bulletin board, and it had stayed up longer than any of the others. Although this activity took place in the school, Pablo did not perceive this to have any effect on his in-school assignments. According to him, this had no impact on his English courses, which he considered irrelevant and boring.

Similarly, the urban youth in Mahiri's (2004) and Moje's (2000) studies and the immigrant youth in Bruna's (2007) study wrote poetry outside of school that they did not perceive to have any connection to their academic learning. Although it was only his poetry writing that he blatantly told me was not part of school work, I believe that his attitude of not wanting "to write for them" provides a framework for how he perceives his other literacy practices and their relevance to in-school work.

Language Brokering: "I'm the Translator for the World."

Like many immigrant youth (Orellana, 2009), Pablo has extraordinary translation abilities that started from the time he was young that have made him adept at crossing cultural, linguistic, and social borders. He entered an English-only Head Start program as a monolingual Spanish-

speaker, but quickly learned English. He tells me he learned by watching the Power Rangers on TV and paying close attention to his English-speaking teachers. Since he has always been schooled in English-only programs, his Spanish language abilities were never developed at school, yet he continued speaking Spanish in his family and community, as he regularly translated for his mom. As a young child who often got into trouble at school, he learned to use this ability to his advantage, translating parent-teacher conferences to his benefit: "But when it'd be the principal calling me cause I got in trouble, then they'd get Spanish-speaking people to translate for her [my mom] because I would translate at my convenience " (interview, August 3, 2010).

Although he considers himself English-dominant, he can read and write in Spanish and is orally advanced in both languages. Upon returning to the U.S. after living in Mexico, he began a more formal translating role for his African American uncle in his ministry to recovering drug addicts.

When he [my uncle] wants to speak to someone in Spanish, I'm his voice in Spanish. If he speaks in first person, I speak in first person. I am his voice in Spanish. (interview, August 3, 2010)

During the time of the study he was translating live and simultaneously at a church where his translations were broadcast on a small AM radio station in which Spanish-speakers could listen to through headphones while in the service. He claims that he acquired this formal position because he has a large vocabulary in both English and Spanish, more comprehensive than the other bilingual youth and adults at the church. After multiple observations of this church service, I realized that these sermons usually included sophisticated vocabulary that one might assume a high school student, let alone a struggling student, could have difficulty comprehending. Pablo

not only comprehended, but immediately translated each phrase into Spanish. Since I am able to understand English and Spanish, I listened to Pablo translating on the AM station and recognized that his self-assessment of his language abilities was very true. With absolutely no prior preparations, he seamlessly translated a 30-minute sermon each week.

He also regularly translated for his Spanish-speaking aunt and English-speaking uncle with whom he lived. He has used both languages in his many jobs and even had recently translated on his short stints in local jails for panhandling.

Here in jail in [border state], if there's like a Mexican who can't speak no English and all the officers speak English, I'll be like he said this, this, and that. And I translate what he says to the cop. (interview, September 13, 2010)

Although Pablo tell me he has never been in a gifted, honors, or advanced class in school, Guadalupe Valdés (2003) asserts that students like him should be viewed as gifted due to their language brokering. Additionally, Orellana (2009) claims that we should recognize the great economic impact that youth's translating has in the U. S., evident in how Pablo was called on to translate in business, legal, educational, medical, and religious areas, all at no cost. At school, however, Pablo's states that these abilities were never acknowledged or used for academic work. Rubinstein-Ávila states that students involved in language brokering "may be viewed as 'at risk' in the school setting, [but] their role of cultural and linguistic brokers may turn them into 'saviors'" (2004, p. 299) in an out-of-school setting. This is illustrated in Pablo's story as he has perpetually been at-risk in school, yet viewed as one of great intelligence outside of school in his family and community due to his linguistic abilities. Denny Taylor (1997) remarks on the irony that being bilingual and biliterate is a social and intellectual resource, yet English-speaking cultures often view fluency in more than one language as a deficit. Pablo recognizes his

sophisticated bilingualism is an asset in his community, church, and in the job market; however, in his 14 years of monolingual education, he has never viewed it having any academic advantage.

Book Reading: "I Just Walk around School Reading Shakespeare."

During his free time Pablo is an avid reader, choosing texts that one might not expect a struggling student to read. He began reading for pleasure regularly while in juvenile prison to occupy his time: "In juvy you have nothing but time so you pick up a book and that's your imaginary world" (interview, August 3, 2010). He has read many John Grisham and young adult novels and even has to complete short book reports for his older cousin who wants to ensure he is progressing academically. He also reads religious material such as the Bible and other devotional books on his own accord. The only book he sometimes reads in Spanish is the Bible, which he can understand although not as well as in English. He mentioned that although he prefers modern day translations of the Bible, he appreciates the older King James English. "I can read King James. I like old languages. I understand thou shalt, thys, and thees. And I know what they're saying" (interview, August 3, 2010). He also reads a Bible in the "Reina Valera" version in Spanish, which uses the "vosotros" verb forms that are not commonly used in Latin America today. "I remember asking my tía [aunt] what is "vosotros" and she started explaining it to me and I was like, ok, it's like 'thou was'. It's like the King James version I'm reading" (interview, August 3, 2010).

He also reads Shakespeare's and Neruda's poetry because he is interested in the way they use words to express love and uses that to influence his own poetry. When asked what he got out of reading Shakespeare's sonnets he states: "The way love was expressed. The way Shakespeare compared a summer's day to his lover. Or maybe just a comparison of the words of love" (interview, November 3, 2010). Despite his love of reading, he cannot mention any texts that he

has read for a school assignment that he has enjoyed, nor does he think his prolific reading affects his academic performance. When I ask about his experiences in English and literature courses at school, his attitude is very negative and he describes them as boring and something you just have to do. He also tells me he has struggled with the writing portion of standardized English tests and sometimes receives failing scores.

Pablo reads canonical poetry for his love of language, bestsellers for entertainment, and religious material for his spiritual development. It is surprising that a student with such a wide range of literary interests has never engaged in in-school reading. Furthermore it almost seems counter-intuitive that he struggles with academic literacy, barely passing courses and state-mandated tests, yet is able to engage with a wide range of texts outside of school. Some of this phenomenon might be attributed to subtractive bilingualism (Cummins, 1976), a low level of academic literacy in both his L1, Spanish, and L2, English, resulting from English-only schooling. Pablo was never able to develop his Spanish literacy abilities at school since he was in a linguistically and culturally subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999) environment for the entirety of his education. This environment did not recognize his linguistic or cultural resources related to his identity. Despite his reading outside of school, the lack of access of L1 literacy development coupled with the lack of culturally relevant texts in school, have likely relegated this ardent out-of-school reader to a struggling and disengaged student.

Technology Use: "As Soon as I Get out of the Shower, I'll Have Like Four Texts Waiting."

Texting, gaming, social networking, and instant messaging are significant activities in Pablo's life although his availability of technology is limited due to the financial realities of his family. Technology is further limited because Pablo perceives technology use as an activity that is not available or encouraged in his low-level classes at school.

Despite the limits he feels, his technology use is active in his out-of- school contexts. During one interview Pablo texted the entire hour, yet always seemed to understand and respond to my questions as if he were giving me his undivided attention. He claims that when his aunt has not confiscated his phone for disciplinary reasons, he is on his phone every minute he is awake, the classroom being no deterrent. He texts primarily in English, but also uses Spanish and a hybrid of Spanish and English, depending on the person he is texting. His social networking pages, MySpace and Facebook, demonstrate a hybrid of English, Spanish, and youth languages in which he purposefully spells words nontraditionally. For example, he writes about himself on his MySpace homepage:

> i still love to cook, right poems, and play sports but the newist hobbi is band, choir, and JROTC im a JR. at [West Side] hi skool its kool so far so ohh ya and im 17 so good buy and God bless u. .. .. (retrieved August 10, 2010).

Furthermore, Pablo claims that he taught himself how to read and write in Spanish by using technology:

> What taught me was, um, mainly I went to Mexico for a couple of months and I started picking it up there. With my aunt I'd text my cousins. I'd get on his IM and start writing his friends so I'd learn. I taught myself. (interview, August 3, 2010)

Although technology has afforded him a space to explore his transnational identity (Lam, 2004), connect with friends, and develop his L1, he has very limited access, as what he has does not meet his desires to digitally engage his world. He shares one computer in his home with eight other people and states that he does not utilize technology very much at school to complete assignments. Godina (2004) similarly found that Mexican-American students did not use computers as much as mainstream students because they were often placed in lower-level classes

that employed a more traditional model of schooling. Sadly, this only adds to the technology divide that exists in students' homes. As Leu and colleagues (2011) explain, the misalignments of technology use in poor and rich schools or with mainstream and marginalized students only serve to hurt lower SES students even more. In Pablo's case, he wanted to use technology, was very adept at doing so, yet had limited access in- and out-of-school. In fact, he perceived technology to be an unapproved activity for academic learning, telling me he had slyly figured out how to text in class and update his social networking pages on school computers, both strictly unsanctioned activities.

Activism: "We Have a Voice That Needs to Be Heard for the Voices That Can't Be Heard."

In using the broad definition of a literacy practice as any way to make or receive meaning, the out-of-school literacy practices that I have coded activism include Pablo's protests against the discrimination he feels regarding the hotly debated immigration laws in Arizona, his home state. This entails reading, writing, viewing, saying, and doing combinations that are purposefully articulated. He proudly wore green shorts, a white T-shirt, and a solid red shirt draped over his shoulders to school for two days, signifying the colors of the Mexican flag. In addition to his attire, he resolutely remained silent these days as part of his protest. He explained:

> It just gets me mad that people won't do something, but people just don't want to. The number is growing of American citizens that are bilingual in Arizona, that are born there, that actually grow up there and they see their parents suffer every day. So I want to get a rally going and help out cause my mama's still working the fields and she's 47. And that's not right. (interview, September 13, 2010)

After completing this protest on his own in the spring of 2010, he conducted another one in the fall on September 16, Mexican Independence day. When explaining why he was doing it,

he said "Chicanos are protesting for the *paísanos*. We are their voice that can't be heard" (interview, August 3, 2010). He explained that Chicanos are the legal U.S. residents of Mexican origin like himself, but the *paísanos*, countrymen in Spanish, are the undocumented who are being persecuted. Both days he remained silent and although some teachers told him he might get in trouble, he told them, "I don't care" (interview, August 3, 2010).

He also used his leadership skills to try and get others to join him, albeit, rather unsuccessfully.

I showed them [peers] what they're doing just being normal students. Then I

showed them how me, a Mexican-American, showed them what we can do. We have a

voice that needs to be heard for the voices that can't be heard. So many illegals take

beatings. So many illegal women get raped cause what are they gonna do? Call the cops

and they get deported when they're just trying to fend for themselves and fend for their

families? Most Mexican dads cross the border, work really hard, bust their butts off so

they can send money to their family so they can live. (interview, November 3, 2010)

He possesses much of what Yosso (2005) refers to as resistant capital, which is the knowledge and skills that come from engaging in oppositional behavior. He learned and developed these skills through his leadership in organized crime during middle school, but now uses them to effect social change the only way he knows how. He believes in what he is doing, stating: "Hopefully it grows. Because it has to, no matter if we're in [border state], it has the capacity to reach all the way to Arizona" (interview, September 13, 2010). But similar to his other literacy practices, he did not see any connection between academic tasks and his activism; in fact, he thought the school and his protests were in direct opposition to one another.

Similar to the students of Mexican origin in Pacheco's (2009) study, Pablo has much

political knowledge and feels very strongly about issues related to immigration. He believes he can effect change and feels a personal responsibility to do so. Once again, though, according to Pablo, this was not harnessed in any social studies, government, or literacy class, and he did not view any connection from his activism to academic work.

Summary of Results

Research question one states: What are the out-of-school literacy practices of the participant? As previously discussed, the most frequently used out-of-school literacy practices Pablo discussed were writing poetry, language brokering, reading books, using a variety of technology, and the multiple literacy practices involved in his activism.

The second research question states: How does the participant view the relationship between his out-of-school literacy practices and in-school tasks? Although the data would suggest that Pablo surely must have had a good relationship with the English teacher in juvenile justice or the librarian at his new school, he will not admit to it. He further denies learning anything interesting in school or enjoying an in-school task. Even when I pressed him about his poetry writing, he tells me strongly: "I don't write for them." It is important to note that sixteen years in school, from four to 19-years-old, have contributed to a dichotomy Pablo has devised between himself and "them," anyone or anything associated with school. Rather than blaming him for what could be derived as a negative attitude, I believe it is necessary to value his view and take responsibility for the schooling environment's contribution to Pablo's attitude.

The Rest of the Story

At the end of data collection in November of 2010, Pablo was only two months away from completing the credits he needed to finally graduate high school, accomplishing a great feat considering he lost nearly three years of education due to a year in Mexico and the time he spent

in and out of the juvenile justice system. Shortly after our last interview, I took a seven-week

sabbatical from my research and the church we both attended in order to care for my newborn

daughter. Upon my return, I expected to find a recent graduate who was prepared to start school

at the nearby community college. However, I was surprised to learn from Pablo's aunt that he

had dropped out of high school again, just weeks away from graduation. For over a year he then

lived with a relative in another city in a home for recovering drug addicts and traveled the

country panhandling, an offense that sent him to jail previously. I saw him two times since he

dropped out of high school and he has never returned to school nor pursued his GED. However,

recently, my husband received a call late at night from Pablo stating that he had just completed

boot camp for a branch of the military where his multiple literacies might be better employed

than the school system.

Recommendations for Teaching: What Could Have Been

What strikes me about this young man is how incredibly intelligent, gifted, and skilled he

is, possessing a large and expanding repertoire of literacy practices. Additionally, he possesses

unique transnational and multilingual abilities that researchers (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008)

explain are common in immigrant populations, yet rare in the mainstream population. The

paradox is that these skills are greatly needed for the U.S. to be competitive in the 21st century of

global connectedness, but the students that possess them are not receiving an education that

values their abilities (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008).

Although this is a single-case study, other research indicates that Latino youth often enter

a similar subtractive schooling environment (Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999), which

divests them of their linguistic, cultural, and social resources. Therefore, in closing, I will

suggest "what could have been", or ideas of how schools could have used Pablo's out-of-school

literacy practices in order for him to reach his full academic potential.

First, viewing Pablo's language and culture as valuable resources from the beginning of his educational career could have given him greater academic literacy in both English and Spanish and decreased the animosity he felt toward the institution of the school. Studies show the positive effect of dual language bilingual education (Collier & Thomas, 2009) and instructional activities that purposefully teach students to use their multilingual abilities to improve literacy skills (Martínez, Orellana, Pacheco, & Carbone, 2008). At the broader cultural level, research demonstrates the potential for academic learning that comes from connecting students' funds of knowledge to academic tasks (González et al., 2005). Growing up, Pablo needed to view his language and culture as valuable for in-school learning, to fully develop his bilingual skills academically, and to believe that the educational system recognized his potential.

Second, even if he had not have an elementary school experience that did the former, I envision inquiry-based learning at the secondary level that could have allowed Pablo to research an issue he deemed relevant, such as the immigration debate. Through his personal inquiry, he could have read a variety of sources pertaining to the topic, conducted his own research in his community, and synthesized his findings to create a multi-genre project. In this project he could have written for different purposes, using different languages for a variety of audiences. The final product might have included his poetry, technology, and activism while drawing on his transnational identity and experiences. His unsanctioned protests could have even become a part of this project, as he learned more about how to effectively create change in society. Furthermore, his desire to engage on social networking sites could have been met in a sanctioned way in school as he disseminated his research and writing to others. He could have used his life experiences on both sides of the border to speak to audiences as broad as undocumented

immigrants, Mexican and U.S. politicians, and his peers about his strong views.

Although research (Guzzetti, 2009) does caution against misappropriating students' out-of-school spaces by bringing them into the classroom, teachers can allow students to bring their literacies into the classroom on their own terms while working to expand their repertoires of literacy. Pacheco (2009) successfully used Latino sixth graders political-historical knowledge to engage them in research and writing about the topic of Mexican immigration. Other studies show the benefits of using students' translating (Martínez et al., 2008), rap writing (Cooks, 2004), and hip hop culture (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2004) to value their out-of-school literacies and build on them to foster academic growth.

Limitations and Further Research

This study is limited in its generalizability due to it being a single-case study purposefully selected for its extreme instance of the phenomenon. Pablo is a very unique individual, but through his circumstances I believe we can more clearly see the need for education to embrace and build upon students' multiple literacy practices that occur outside of school. I hope this case especially notes the need for us to do that for our bilingual students.

The current study also purposefully focuses on Pablo's own perception about his schooling experiences and the relationship his out-of-school literacy practices had and currently have on his in-school learning. His view, although not corroborated with school observations, is powerful in and of itself, and concurs with the schooling experiences of other Latino youth. Further research would benefit from entering in bilingual students' classrooms to make changes to the curriculum that would honor their many literacy practices that often result from their cultural environments. There is a particular need for these instructional interventions to occur for at-risk Latino students like Pablo who have not fared well in the traditional classroom and face

many obstacles in order to graduate.

Conclusion

Outside-of-school-Pablo is a poet, translator, reader, user of technology, and activist. Pablo and other bilingual students deserve a curriculum that allows them to use their full repertoire of literacy practices for academic learning. I can only speculate what could have helped Pablo graduate from high school, pursue a college degree and reach his dream of working as a translator for the United Nations. However, if we want to give all students the opportunity to succeed, we must view all of their literacy practices, including their language and culture, as funds of knowledge that can be used for academic success. Then, maybe students like Pablo would not see a great distinction between them and the school, and the "I don't want to write for them" attitude could be transformed. We must not teach students to keep their out-of-school literacy practices out-of-school by adopting a narrow curriculum that privileges only certain types of literacy practices. It is incumbent upon educators to recognize, value, and utilize everything our bilingual students bring with them into the classroom. They have limitless potential to use their multiple literacy practices to create a better world for themselves and others. ¡Adelante, Pablo!

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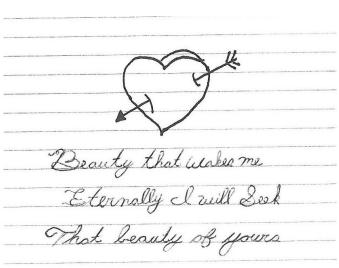   cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 8*(1), 69-91.

Appendix A

Beauty that wakes me
Eternally I will Seek
That beauty of yours

Figure 1. A haiku in Pablo's poetry journal that he recited from memory.