Introduction

Transnational literacies: Immigration, language learning, and identity

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In recent years, New Literacy Studies (NLS) scholars have called for more ethnographies of literacy that not only describe cultural forms and situated literacy practices but also illuminate how these situated local practices are connected to larger sociohistorical influences, political processes, ideological questions, and power dimensions (e.g. Auerbach, 2005; Bartlett & Holland, 2002; Baynham, 2004; Blackburn & Clark, 2007; Duff, 2005; Luke, 2004; Street, 2004). Specifically, there has been a call for more empirical research that investigates the various ways that 'distant' (global) literacies are embedded in the local (Street, 2004, p. 328), as well as how "dominant, universalizing literacies can be seen on closer inspection, as profoundly local" (Baynham, 2004, p. 289). Bartlett (in press) argues for a more nuanced exploration of the complicated relationship between what people do with literacy, the amount of power and prestige afforded by different literacy practices across contexts, and the social, material and ideological consequences of those practices in specific situations. Bartlett observes that ideological accounts of literacy (as opposed to "autonomous" ones) are what allow the "careful study of the complex social and cultural interactions that influence what kind of 'outcomes' will result from schooling."

On a different theoretical front but reflecting similar preoccupations with global–local connections, work coming out of anthropology and cultural studies explores "how everyday practices of ordinary people produce cultural meanings that sustain transnational networks and make possible enduring translocal ties" (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994, p. 7). Here, transnationalism is understood to be "the condition of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across space" (Ong, 1999) as well as "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multistranded social

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relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Basch et al., 1994, p. 7); and transmigrants are described as those immigrants and refugees that "take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities and identities embedded in networks of relationships that connect them simultaneously to two or more nation-states" (Basch et al., 1994, p. 7). By examining every-day practices and cultural logics (and the ideological influences on such practices and logics), anthropological investigations of migration and globalization have enhanced our discussions – and representations – of the specific "social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders" (Basch et al., 1994, p. 7).

This special issue on "Transnational literacies: immigration, language learning and identity" brings together these two areas of inquiry in order to complicate discussions of local literacy practices on the one hand and questions of transnationalism on the other. Highlighting the lived experiences, human practices, and "cultural logics" of people whose everyday lives are dramatically shaped by large-scale global and transnational processes, the authors explore the different social, cultural, political, ideological, and material consequences of literacy. In so doing, they provide specific accounts of the relationship between globalization, immigration, and educational access—particularly with regard to "the vicissitudes of identity formation" experienced by immigrants and refugees trying to manage "the complexities of belonging both 'here' and 'there' simultaneously" (Suarez-Orozco, 2001). As such, this volume both builds on and extends the insights of those who have examined language and literacy learning among newer immigrants living in Canada (e.g. Duff, 2005; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton, 2000), in the U.S. (e.g. Auerbach, 2000; González & Arnot-Hopffer, 2003; Hornberger, 1996; Rymes, 2003; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002), and in the U.K. (e.g. Gregory, 2000; Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000; Pahl & Rowsell, 2006; Rampton, 2005, 2006) as well as those studies of transnationalism that theorize the relationship between globalization, immigration, nation-building, and identity formation (e.g. Aleinikoff & Klusmeyer, 2001; Appadurai, 1996/2003; Basch et al., 1994; Bernal, 2004; Bosniak, 2001; Glick Schiller, 1997, 1999; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc Szanton, 1995; Gupta, 2003; Kearney, 1995; Kivisto, 2001; Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996; Low & Lawrence-Zuniga, 2003; Smith, 2003; Portes, 2001; Rouse, 1995; Soysal, 1998; Trueba, 2004).

While various social fields are examined in the work featured in this volume, the social field that is of primary interest is the arena of language learning and literacy—particularly for historically marginalized immigrant groups living in the U.S. context. The authors explore questions like: what literacy practices do transmigrants develop while adapting to new contexts and what resources are used in doing so?; how do individuals and communities use literacy practices to maintain and transform transnational social relations? and in what ways do new literacy practices index (and contribute to) shifting local–global connections, shifting relations, and the transformation of identities—particularly in this era of increased global flows and connections? The contributors to this special issue explore these questions and concerns by examining how transnational processes and transmigrant experiences might be mediated by linguistic, interactional, and language learning phenomena. With this focus on language learning and literacy practices, the ethnographic portraits provided here illuminate the complex role of social practice in reflecting, transforming, and re-constituting processes and relationships that are often described with sweeping generalizations and all-inclusive terms.

Collectively, the accounts gathered here complicate the ways we might theorize and investigate immigration, displacement, and globalization processes by calling into question a number of often-made juxtapositions, including the local and the global, the center and periphery, and the micro and macro. Focusing on the individual experiences of immigrants and refugees from a range of language and national backgrounds across school, community, and family contexts, each article

in this volume illuminates how difficult it has become to distinguish the imagined ends of various continua from each other. By providing us a glimpse into the multilayered, multilingual, and multimodal worlds of individual actors living in specific contexts, the contributors provide richly textured and nuanced accounts of the complicated – often contradictory – experiences of recent immigrants living in the U.S. context as well as the ways that global events, local processes, and language use are intimately connected across both time and space.

1. Theorizing literacy, transnationalism, and "transnational literacies"

With regard to their definitions of literacy, the authors subscribe to a broad understanding of literacy that is intended to capture not only more conventional uses of the term (one's ability to read and write) but also the ideological, social, historical, political, and cultural forces that influence how "reading skills," "writing skills" and language "proficiency" are defined, classified, and operationalized in any particular context. Questions of access and opportunity, as well as power and privilege, are considered as centrally important as questions about how, where, when and for what purpose one learns to decode the meaning of any particular "text."[1] With an understanding of literacy as a social practice with historically infused meanings attached, we view literacy practices as a reflection, instantiation – indeed manifestation – of social relations, political trends, and ideological leanings.[2]

Aware of the challenges involved with defining and theorizing transnational migration and transnationalism – or what has been described as "the pitfalls and promise of an emergent research field" (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999) – the contributors to this collection have proceeded cautiously in their use of terms and theories, recognizing how imperfect and contested they often are. Portes et al. (1999), for instance, note that

> The growing number of ties linking persons across countries and the fluidity and diversity of these exchanges has given rise to many contradicting claims. In some writings, the phenomenon of transnationalism is portrayed as novel and emergent, whereas in others it is said to be as old as labour immigration itself. In some cases, transnational entrepreneurs are depicted as a new and still exceptional breed, whereas in others all immigrants are said to be participants in the transnational community. Finally, these activities are sometimes described as a reflection and natural accompaniment of the globalization of capital, whereas in others they are seen as a grass–roots reaction to this very process (Basch et al., 1994; Glick Schiller, Basch, & Szanton Blanc, 1992; Guarnizo, 1994; Smith, 1995). (p. 218)

This description captures not only the multifaceted nature of transnationalism itself but also the problems associated with trying to "pin down" the meaning of the term. It also raises questions about claims that we need new terms to describe "new" phenomenon. Highlighting the particulars of various kinds of transnational processes, Portes et al. (1999) ask for more representative and descriptive accounts of "the reality of the transnational field" as well as "its internal heterogeneity" (p. 233). In so doing, they inspire us to re-examine the utility of various terms (and the theoretical constructs they index) for capturing both the essence of those processes and the experiences of the individuals participating in them.

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[1] Additionally, conventional understandings of the term "text" are considered suspect, as the ethnographic accounts of Richardson Bruna, McGinnis, and Sanchez powerfully demonstrate.

[2] For a more extensive discussion of recent and current work in this vein, see also Baynham (2004), Collins and Blot (2003), Hull and Schultz (2002), Luke (2004) and Street (2003, 2004).

Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004) also raise questions about the meaning of the term "transnationalism":

> what immigration scholars describe as transnationalism is usually its opposite: highly particularlistic attachments antithetical to those by-products of globalization denoted by the concept of 'transnational civil society.' Moreover, migrants do not make their communities alone: states and state politics shape the options for migrant and ethnic trans-state social action. (p. 1177)

Here, we are provided with a critique of theories and arguments that posit a "de-territorialized" relationship between an individual and the nation-state. This is reminiscent of Guarnizo and Smith's (1998) claim that transnational actions – including transnational literacy practices – are bounded (rather than deterritorialized or "unbounded") in two senses – because understandings are "socially constructed within the transnational networks that people form and move from;" and because transnational actions are bounded "by the policies and practices of territorially based sending and receiving local and national states and communities" (p. 10).

In contrast, others have argued that the "bounded" nature of certain territorially defined policies, practices, and understandings does not prohibit individuals (or groups) from also claiming allegiance to or identifying with something "unbound" (e.g. a diasporic identity). When moving across borders, people create new spaces as well as new relationships. As Low and Lawrence-Zuniga (2003, p. 25) observe:

> Globalization also radically changes social relations and local places due to interventions of electronic media and migration, and the consequent breakdown in the isomorphism of space, place, and culture. This process of cultural globalization creates new translocal spaces and forms of public culture embedded in the imaginings of people that dissolves notions of state-based territoriality (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Appadurai, 1996).

This notion of space being deterritorialized, detached from local places, and "embedded in the imaginings of people" is one that that the contributors to this issue both subscribe to and contest. Our analyses of ethnographic data demonstrate that there are many situations in which immigration (and the global forces that contribute to it) serves to break down "notions of state-based territoriality" and create new "translocal spaces." However, we have also found that movement over national borders often serves to solidify one's territorially defined identity. For instance, for immigrants and refugees alike, processes of self-identification in the "receiving" nation are largely if not primarily influenced by their prior affiliations with a particular geopolitical context—and this is true even when that territory no longer has the same political status and even when people are no longer moving regularly between two or more nation-states. For political refugees in particular, we are reminded that they are only able to exert claims to a particular identity (and the rights that accompany that identity) *because* they are former citizens of a particular territorially defined nation-state (e.g. Yugoslavia, the Congo, or the Sudan). As a result, the identities of many political and religious refugees are simultaneously territorialized and deterritorialized as they attempt to establish new lives in the U.S. context.

According to Smith (2003), the terms we use and the meanings attached to them are historically influenced in a variety of ways. He argues that, because a lot of the literature on transnationalism has emerged out of economic sociology, it has emphasized the economic factors that influence the movement of people, goods, technology, and information across national borders—or the "macroeconomic driving forces of global migration" (p. 468). In such work, transnationalism has been characterized as a conscious effort (achieved through individual-level microeconomic

practices) to challenge the hegemonic forces of global capitalism as enacted and dispersed by the state and its institutions. In contrast, Smith argues, the approach of anthropologists and cultural studies scholars "[contributes] to our understanding of how everyday practices of ordinary people produce cultural meanings that sustain transnational networks and make possible enduring translocal ties" (Smith, 2003).

In order to arrive at more specificity in our accounts and representations of globalization, immigration, and transnational processes – especially as evident in language learning and literacy practices – the contributors to this volume have turned to work in anthropology, New Literacy Studies (NLS) scholarship, and/or cultural studies for theoretical frameworks that foreground a view of language and literacy as a social practice. Following other anthropological studies of language and literacy (e.g. Baynham, 2004; Blommaert, 2002; Collins & Blot, 2003; Rampton, 2005, 2006; Street, 2003, 2004; Wortham, 2006), we examine linguistic and interactional data from individual actors living in situated contexts in order to make sense out of the cultural logics, ideological influences, and sociohistorical processes at work.

2. Dismantling binaries and nuancing representations

Recent work in linguistic anthropology critiques the constraints inherent in theoretical orientations that dichotomize the local and the global, the micro and the macro, the ideological and material, or structure and agency. Collins (1996), for instance, investigates how ideologies broadly circulating might inform interpretations of both texts and practices in ways that influence individual orientations towards reading, literacy and learning. Arguing that these orientations are "effects and constituents of a system of stratified literacy," Collins observes that "poor readers" have very different experiences with (and opinions about) the purposes of decoding texts than the "good readers" do. His analysis demonstrates the complicated, nested, indeed reciprocal relationship between "large-scale ideological formations and institutional practices" on the one hand and "the social and the textual" on the other (Collins, 1996, p. 225).

With a similar interest in expanding what might be meant by the terms "local" and "interactional", Rampton's recent work (2005, 2006) illuminates how classroom interaction not only represents but also influences global and transnational processes. Rampton (2006) notes that, nowadays, many global cities provide unique contexts for studying processes of linguistic innovation or improvisation, cultural "mixing", and ultimately transnational identity formation:

> World cities of this kind are not merely 'nodes in networks'. . . They are also places in themselves, settings for the juxtaposition and mixing of different cultural traditions in a range of different and distinctive combinations. Ethnic and cultural differences are highly salient, and subculturally specific resources – food, dress, music, speech – can be aestheticised and/or commodified, used in artistic production or sold commercially to a wide range of different consumers and not just to tourists and the transnational elite. As a point where a plurality of different transnational and diaspora flows intersect, this is an environment that generates high levels of local meta-cultural learning and awareness (cf. Hannerz, 1996, pp. 135–137; Portes, 1997), and although there will be different combinations and processes in different locations, this produces a post-colonial experience "defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity ' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*" (Hall, 1990, pp. 235–236). (Rampton, 2006, p. 8)

Rampton asks that we re-examine what we *think* we know about processes of globalization and other "macro-level" phenomema—especially in relation to what transpires interactionally "day-in-day-out" for students in schools.

Wortham (2006) too presents a nuanced portrayal of the relationship between interactional phenomena and social, historical, political events. Focusing on intersecting timescales (Lemke, 2000) and "nested spaces," he calls for a more accurate account of situated cognition, social identification, and academic learning and demonstrates the value of moving beyond the many dichotomies that haunt our theorizing, our analysis of data, and our representation of findings:

> All social identification involves the contingent use of heterogeneous resources from many potentially relevant timescales. In order to understand how such contingent sets of resources solidify into durable, apparently natural social identities, we must do more than create theories that rely on a fixed set of timescales. The relevant question is not whether a general social theory is right or wrong or whether a particular case represents the correct general theory. We must ask instead how the sociohistorical categories proposed by such a theory interconnect with processes at other timescales to take effect in various types of cases. (p. 281)

Wortham's framework provides a lens through which to examine the various, situated ways that cognitive processes (e.g. those involved with academic learning) not only overlap with and dramatically shape the ways that students identify (and vice versa) but are also influenced by an indeterminate number of events and processes, including those from the past, present, and future. His book-length examination of interactional data collected from one classroom over the course of a year illustrates how an analysis of empirical data might productively move beyond dichotomous contrasts to reveal "how academic and non-academic processes from various timescales [come] together to constitute both social identification and academic learning in this classroom" (p. 283). With regard to discussions of educational access, opportunity, and equity, this approach highlights how our theoretical lenses might inform both our analysis of data and our representation of findings, while demonstrating the need for more empirical research on "how subject matter, argument, evidence and academic learning mesh with social identification, power relations and interpersonal struggles" across educational contexts (p. 287).

Through these ethnographic accounts, Collins, Rampton and Wortham each demonstrate how a careful, nuanced examination of language used in specific contexts by individual actors might reveal processes both structured and improvised, simultaneously beyond a speaker's control and within their control, and distinct from but still implicated in global events and transnational influences. In each case, blurred dichotomies and nuanced theoretical constructs inform the ethnographer's collection and analysis of textual and interactional data such that their interpretations – contextualized though they are – manage to reach far beyond a "local" account of experience.

Taking up and building upon the theoretical concerns and priorities of the aforementioned scholars, the contributors to this volume actively work to break down often-invoked binaries and bridge previously unconnected intellectual inquiries by coupling the examination of transnationalism on the one hand with the investigation of specific literacy practices that have transnational influences and implications on the other. Reminded of the distinctions and claims often made during earlier debates about the value of a "micro"-level analysis of interaction as compared to a more "macro" account of sociohistorical influences, we argue that it is crucial to move

beyond such dichotomies in our efforts to explain how ideological processes influence social and interactional practices (and vice versa), how hegemony works in specific "local" contexts, and how individual actors and their practices are not only interpolated by but further act upon larger historical, political, cultural, and social relations and events. By moving beyond a purely theoretical discussion of the "local-versus-the-global" to a more complex but accurate account of the specific ways that individual actors experience transnationalism "day-in-day-out," the articles included here compliment, extend, and solidify the insights of both the transnational literature and our understanding of literacy as a social–historical–political practice. Collectively, we argue – and demonstrate – that it is both important and necessary to move to a more fluid representation of the socio-historical interconnections or "flows" that are so intimately wrapped up in both transnational processes and literacy practices. It is important for questions of educational access and opportunity, especially during times of unprecedented movement of people, goods and ideas across geopolitical borders and with anti-immigration sentiment on the rise in the U.S. context; and it is necessary to nuance our research-based portraits of individual experiences, for without complexity in our theories and representations, we fail to capture in our ethnographic accounts the intimate connections between social practices, ideological influences, and historical events.

3. Summary and overview

The contributors to this issue examine how specific literacy practices create or break down the boundaries (literal and figurative) between chains of communicative events and moments in time (Bartlett); how the sustained transnational movement between the U.S. and Mexico provides particular linguistic and cultural resources for U.S. immigrant children (Bartlett, Richardson Bruna, & Sánchez); the creative use of multimodal literacy practices by immigrant youth in the construction and performance of identity in local contexts but influenced by global processes (Richardson Bruna, McGinnis, et al.); and the different ways in which the "ideological consequences of literacy" are realized both locally and globally (Warriner). Each of these contributions is described in more detail below.

In "Bilingual literacies, social identification, and educational trajectories," Lesley Bartlett examines how a Dominican transmigrant student's bilingual literacies and educational trajectory might be shaped by social interactions across classroom contexts such that the student's opportunity to acquire English language and literacy depended, in large part, on the "thickening" of her identity as a failing or successful student. Bartlett shows not only how the young woman, Maria, was positioned by others as succeeding or failing in ways that came to shape her opportunities for learning both the English language and the content of the lesson but – also – how she positioned herself in ways that challenged the status quo and increased her opportunities. Following Wortham (2006), Bartlett examines the role of positioning in interaction as the mediating force between processes of social identification and academic learning.

Bartlett's analysis of this thickening process in one notably hopeful school context deepens our understanding of the relationship between bilingual literacies and bilingual identities for transnational youth as well as our representations of school-based notions of "success." By calling into question what it means to perform the "good student identity" in this context while complicating notions of how access to those cultural models might be provided to students like Maria, Bartlett encourages us to pay attention to not only the details but the contradictions of the "local" to understand more fully the consequences of the global and the transnational.

Katherine Richardson Bruna, in "Traveling tags: The informal literacies of Mexican newcomers in and out of the classroom," explores the situated ways in which Mexican newcomer adolescents use available linguistic and other semiotic resources as "literacies of display" to enact their transnational identities. She documents, using interactional ethnography, how one particular act of transcultural repositioning, "tagging," travels into a science classroom context. Comparing the different social positionings that a "tagging trio" of girls (Gabriela, Aalia, and Rosa) construct through unsanctioned literacy practices as well as the positionings they come to inhabit through sanctioned classroom activity, Richardson Bruna argues that when informal "literacies of display" travel into the classroom context, they may constitute "literacies of assistance," or proactive requests by transnational youth for the help they need in developing fluency between their transnational identity and the classroom context. She argues that Mexican newcomer students' use of these informal literacies in the classroom is not always (as often described) evidence of defiantly oppositional behavior but rather indicative of the structures of feeling that construe transnational identity and students' attempts to gain its affirmation in their schooling. As such, her contribution not only draws needed attention to informal literacy practices that are often relegated to our "peripheral vision" but, also, "provides an interactional ethnographic account of the informal literacy practices newcomer Mexican youth employ to reflect and reproduce their transnational identities."

In "Cultural authenticity and transnational Latina youth: Constructing a metanarrative across borders," Patricia Sánchez examines the transnational immigrant lives of second-generation Latina youth who live in northern California but maintain ties with families and communities in rural Mexico. Through a collaborative out-of-school literacy project (writing and illustrating a children's book), Sánchez finds that the students used a variety of different language and literacy practices to represent themselves and author a metanarrative about Mexican immigrant families and children who make annual pilgrimages to their country of origin. Arguing that sustained transnational contact with communities in Mexico provides linguistic and cultural resources for U.S. immigrant children, Sánchez provides insightful commentary on processes of authoring a culturally "authentic" experience that complicates static views of national identity, illuminates the power of counternarratives in immigrant transnational communities, and suggests directions for change in academic contexts as well.

Sánchez argues that "the retelling of the transnational experience through the medium of an illustrated children's book helps to produce, reproduce and transform the tellers' and the readers' identities, even when the teller and the reader are drawing on different histories, memories and experiences." In a time of increased fear of immigration and policing of U.S.–Mexico border, her analysis brings into sharp relief the importance of providing spaces for youth to create counterstories to dominant discourses that devalue Spanish, Spanish speakers, and border-crossing as a phenomenon. Pedagogically, the implications are vast. As Sánchez writes,

> For transnational immigrant students, dialogue and research can be powerful vehicles to access the 'in-between' spaces they negotiate and the ties they maintain to their countries of origin. As bicultural, bilingual transnationals, they are afforded an entirely different host of socio-cultural resources from which to draw, including but not limited to the ways they speak, construct identity and develop their worldviews.

Sánchez recommendations remind us to value not only the linguistic and cultural resources that immigrant youth bring with them, but also their unique perspectives and ways of being in the world. To see "in-between" spaces as sources of knowledge, strength, and power is one critical first step in this process.

Theresa McGinnis et al.'s article – "*indnpride*: Online spaces of transnational youth as sites of creative and sophisticated literacy and identity work" – provides a portrait of the complicated, contested kinds of identity work being accomplished through online literacy practices among youth. Examining the ways these youth present particular identities, including transnational identities, through the hybrid textual practices of online communication sites, McGinnis et al. analyze how the youth maintain multileveled social relations, create transnational communities of practice, and utilize multimodal designs as part of these communication practices. Observing that these technological sites are important and dynamic representational spaces for youth to engage in transformative literacy practices and identity work, the authors argue that the technology itself permits youth to engage in trans-border and multilingual literacies, and to construct identities beyond bounded national identities. Their analysis demonstrates how "online sights serve as critical spaces for these youth to reflect upon, describe, and struggle with the social and cultural contexts of their offline lives" and highlights the ways that "their multiple identifications are a result of their positioning within this transnational context.." Also, by examining the role of this online work in establishing valuable social networks and affiliations, McGinnis et al. provide a hopeful glimpse into the possibilities and potentials of technology for facilitating, indeed making possible, transnational connections for future generations.

Doris Warriner, in "'It is just the nature of the beast': Re-imagining the literacies of schooling in adult ESL education," investigates classroom teaching and testing norms in an adult ESL program as a set of literacy practices that are simultaneously local, global, and transnational. She describes the specific ways that testing, as a bureaucratic mechanism, receives, sorts, arranges, and classifies students in ways that foster identities desired by the new global economy (e.g. the passive recipient of information who follows rules, obeys orders, and dutifully follows them). She argues that, "although the tests appear to provide a uniform standard as well as fair access to the workplace, they actually prohibit learners from engaging in the kinds of authentic language learning opportunities or meaningful communication that would serve them well during the job search, in the workplace, while communicating with teachers of their children, or while advocating for their rights with potential landlords or employers." Warriner's analysis of the literacy practices prominent in an adult ESL program has implications for how we might re-conceptualize theories of language learning and language teaching in communities across the developed world, particularly when economic conditions are driven by rapid technological advancements, the continued movement of goods and people across borders, and growing distinctions between the rich and poor.

4. Implications

In the literature on transnationalism, a number of questions remain with regard to what counts as a "transnational" person, relationship, connection, or cultural logic. While we might agree that a transmigrant is an individual who moves regularly across national borders, it is also true that the term "transnational" can be used productively (e.g. as an adjective) to accurately depict social practices, political processes, and cultural phenomena among individuals who do cross geopolitical borders regularly as well as those who do not. We acknowledge that the specific ways that individual people, families and communities engage in transnational processes and practices (including transnational literacy practices) differs according to a large number of factors, including one's national background, one's legal status, the length of time one has lived in the U.S., the frequency of trips "home," and the emotional pull of a community or homeland that may or may

not actually exist. Above all, we understand that how researchers define relationships – including imagined relationships, connections, and flows (cf. Anderson, 1983; Appadurai, 1996/2003; Hannerz, 1996) – is crucially important to their theorizing.

We have found that the literacy practices we have called "transnational" are just as likely to contribute to – or exacerbate – existing inequities and injustices experienced by outsiders/newcomers/transmigrants as they are to help them reach their emancipatory or resistant potential. It is not the literacy practice per se that has consequences or effects, it is how those literacy practices are valued, elevated, and devalued – or their currency – in particular contexts that promotes emancipation or resistance. Although we have demonstrated that transnational processes and practices are not always emancipatory, resistant, or transformative, we also believe that our accounts suggest possible directions for positive change in a variety of ways that have profound educational and social consequences for individuals participating in and experiencing the effects of globalization and transnational processes. In these ways, the articles in this issue demonstrate the importance of looking locally to understand the global, the situated implications of transnational processes and relationships, and the complicated relationship between language learning, immigration, and identity.

The systematic study of transnational literacies undertaken here provides insights into the specific ways that "local literacy practices" are infused with ideological purpose, institutional structure, and power. In examining the individual everyday experiences of immigrants and refugees, specifically in the realm of language and literacy, the authors raise questions about the many tensions that exist between so-called "micro-level" processes (e.g. face-to-face interactions, financial transactions, and individual actions) and global flows of information, people, resources, and technology. At the intersection between "the global" and "the local," the center and the periphery, the micro and the macro, and the ideological and material, the articles raise important and timely questions about what it means to be educated as well as what it means to be a "legitimate" member of a particular local, global or transnational community. The detailed and nuanced accounts of transnational literacy practices across contexts provided here demonstrates not only how all moments in time are interconnected – with the past, present, and future mutually influential (e.g. Agha, 2003; Lemke, 2000; Wortham, 2006) – but, also, how individual identities and institutional structures are mediated in large part through "contentious local practices" (Holland and Lave, 2001).

As educational anthropologists, the contributors to this issue apply their theoretical and methodological insights to practical questions of educational access and opportunity for immigrants and refugees in schools and communities across the U.S. As such, their work not only demonstrates the value of ethnographic research in the study of transnational processes but, also, indicate how particular theoretical insights might be taken up (or "applied") in practice. Informed by feminist approaches and engaged ethnography, the researchers utilize participant observation and the close analysis of the voices of participants and their 'storytelling practices' to make sense of literacies used, valued and promoted in both official (e.g. classroom) and "unofficial" spaces (e.g. home, community, or cyberspace) and to advance theoretical and methodological discussions of the complicated, contested terrain between social identity formation, literacy practices, and globalization processes.

The articles included here represent a continuation of the project initiated by New Literacy Studies scholarship more than two decades ago, while also charting new territory – conceptually and methodologically. By focusing on the various ways that all literacy practices – but particularly those influenced by transnational processes – are continually in flux and subject to change over time and in different contexts, this volume illuminates the complicated and consequential relationships

between global/transnational/local processes and individual literacy practices, including the use of language and semiotic resources in both written and multimodal forms to foster, maintain, or transform transnational relations and identities.

In these ways, this work constitutes a preliminary response to the recent call for more work on "the interaction between national ideologies and individual learner's identities on the one hand, and the influence of globalization and transnationalism on language learning and identity construction on the other" (Kanno and Norton, 2003, p. 248). Conceptually, in bringing together studies of literacy as a social–historical–political practice with explorations of transnationalism, transnational processes, and transnational relations, we chart new territory. First, our examination of individual, local – even contradictory – manifestations of global "flows" raises questions about the (over)use of dichotomies and binaries in the globalization literature. Second, we contribute clarifying insights to discussions of territorialization (and deterritorialization) which, again, often over-simplify the relationship between physical space, individual practices, and national identification. In the articles in this issue, we see examples of territorially influenced and locally "grounded" identities, practices, and relations – even when individuals no longer physically travel back and forth between their homeland and the receiving nation – such that local practices and identities are intimately connected (even defined to some extent) by affiliations with political entities elsewhere, including sending nations that no longer exist in their original form and must therefore exist only in "imagined" form. In these ways, identifications, allegiance, relations, and processes are simultaneously bounded (i.e. territorialized) and unbounded (i.e. deterritorialized); that is, "transnational processes are unavoidably 'anchored in' while also transcending the institutional and geographical boundaries of the nation-state" (Smith, 2003, p. 468).

Finally, while these ethnographic accounts offer detailed portraits of the lived experiences, human practices, and "cultural logics" (Ong, 1999) of individuals currently living in the U.S., the analysis of those portraits has implications for discussions of globalization and immigration in many parts of the world, where the everyday lives of a growing number of people are dramatically shaped by globalization, immigration, and transnational processes. As such, the ethnographic portraits of transnational literacy practices presented here offer insights into how global and transnational processes influence (and are influenced by) the experiences of individual actors—both with regard to immigration and the resettlement process and also with regard to language learning and other educational endeavors. By examining the literacy practices of different immigrant learners across contexts of home, school and community through a transnational lens, the authors make visible the specific ways that literacy practices, as one type of "situated cultural practice," influence and mediate situated learning, social identity formation and transformation, and historically structured processes.

Methodologically, the authors bring to the discussion and examination of transnational literacies a distinctive ethnographic lens – one that reflects as much participation as observation, as much application as theory, and as much engagement as reflection – all within relationships that have been fostered carefully over time with the "participants" described in their ethnographic accounts. By providing "thick" descriptions of the situated and contested ways that local practices are influenced by global processes (economic, political and cultural), this collection responds to the call for more empirical research on the particulars of these local–global processes. By turning to theories of transnationalism and notions of literacy as social practice to understand the complicated interplay between globalization, learning, and identity formation (including national identity formation), their thick descriptions address questions about social mobility.

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