Analyzing Literacy Practice: Grounded Theory to Model

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An understanding of literacy requires detailed, in-depth accounts of actual
practice in different cultural settings. It is not sufficient, however, to extol
simply the richness and variety of literacy practices made accessible through
such ethnographic detail: We also need bold theoretical models that recognize
the central role of power relations in literacy practices. (Street, 2001a, p. 430)

The Cultural Practices of Literacy Study

The Cultural Practices of Literacy Study (CPLS) is a large umbrella study located at the University of British Columbia under the direction of Victoria Purcell-Gates and Kristen H. Perry. This project (see http://HYPERLINK "http://www.cpls.educ.ubc.ca"www.cpls.educ.ubc.ca) consists of three main branches: (1) the collection of ethnographic case study data on the ways that literacy is practiced within specified cultural contexts; (2) the creation of an expanding database using these data for future cross-case analyses of literacy practice and for further development of theories of literacy as social practice; and (3) the design of models of literacy instruction that reflect these data and that provide links between the literacy worlds of students and literacy instruction within formal educational contexts. This last focus has recently been expanded to the beginning of clinical field trials to measure the impact of this type of instruction on reading and writing achievement in schools. Overlaying the CPLS project is the primary focus on students and communities that have been historically marginalized in society and in mainstream schools.

Literacy researchers have been studying literacy through a socio-cultural, social practice lens for quite some time (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Purcell-Gates, 1995; 2007; Street, 1984). Using this lens, literacy is seen as more than a collection of technical, a-contextual skills, but rather as mediating people's lives, reflecting social practices, historical and macro-level (Brandt & Clinton, 2002) influences on literacy practice, and on-going and shifting power relationships. With its emphasis on close study of literacy in use, this body of work has also come to be known as the New Literacy Studies (NLS).

The NLS has spawned numerous ethnographic accounts of literacy practice within specific socio-cultural contexts (e.g. Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Purcell-Gates, 2007; Street, 2001b). Powerful insights have come from these studies regarding the ways in which literacy is defined, instantiated, interpreted and 'taken hold of' by diverse populations (Kulick & Stroud; 1993).

Recently, however, there have been calls for moving beyond these accounts of literacy *in situ,* to begin to look across such studies through analyses that are systematic and, at the same time, sensitive to the ethnographic accounts that use lenses that account for social, linguistic, and cultural contexts within relationships of power (Purcell-Gates, 2007; Street & Leung, in press). This paper is our report on how we, through the Cultural Practices of Literacy Study, have been working on this challenge.

In this paper, we present our methodology as it has evolved over the last six years. We will describe a theoretically-based coding scheme for literacy practice data and our conception for a large database that can encompass both ethnographic and individual literacy events. We will also share what we have learned about the technical aspects of lifting literacy event and some other aspects of literacy practice data into a large Excel/Access database that will allow the types of cross-case analyses that can be done with databases and that can be used in conjunction with the interpretive, ethnographic case studies that constitute the rest of the larger database. Within this, we will provide a brief summary of a 'pilot' cross-case analysis (Perry & Purcell-Gates, 2005). Finally, we will offer a provisional model of 'a literacy practice' that has evolved from our data and our methodology for analyzing the data. With this, we hope to contribute to the work of other literacy researchers who are looking for theoretically grounded ways to analyze and interpret ethnographic accounts of literacy practice on a larger scale and to answer questions about literacy practice across studies.

CPLS Procedures

The procedures that we have established for the Cultural Practices of Literacy Study allow any researcher who has contributed data to the CPLS database permission access to the database for cross-case analyses. We have not established pre-designed research questions for these analyses; rather we consider the database to be a collection of ethnographic case studies of literacy in practice with literacy practice data collected using a shared methodology and a shared coding scheme for literacy event data. Along with this, we guarantee sole authorship for each study as well as attribution when data from any one study is used as part of a cross-case analysis. Many of the CPLS case studies that are either finished, or in process, have been conducted by researchers working directly under our directorship – students or one of the primary CPLS researchers. Others are conducted by researchers and students who have chosen to affiliate with CPLS. These case studies may not be primarily focused on the practices of literacy but, as condition of affiliation, would include this data (we provide examples below). All CPLS case studies share a common methodology regarding literacy practice: (a) field and participant observation of the ways that people within the specified context engage with literacy, defined primarily as print literacy events and the social, cultural, and political contexts within which they occur; (b) semi-structured interviews of participants that represent the range of participants

specified in the research question/focus and design; (c) photo documentation of what we refer to as 'public texts', e.g. store signs, political signs, texts found in stores, advertisements on bus stops, etc.; and textual artifacts, e.g. newspapers, catalogues, public announcements, etc. It is important to note that, in documenting the literacy events and practices of a given community, CPLS researchers do not count instances of a given text or event, such as reading a novel or writing an email. Rather, we seek to catalogue or provide an overview of the myriad practices available in a community. We are not, for example, interested in the total number of novels read by a person or the number of times they send an email each day; instead, we seek to document the fact that they read novels and write emails in general. More information about the CPLS project, including downloadable PDFs of Working Papers, can be found at http://www. HYPERLINK "http://cpls.educ.ubc.ca" cpls.educ.ubc.ca.

Creating a Database of Literacy Practice

Is it possible to analyze literacy practice data across contexts, or ethnographic case studies? As Brian Street (2003) warns, "Literacy comes ... loaded with ideological and policy presuppositions that make it hard to do ethnographic studies of the variety of literacies across contexts" (pg. 78). We agree; yet we have pursued this challenge for several reasons, in common with other qualitative/ethnographic researchers (Miles & Huberman, 1994): (a) the desire to reach for greater *generalizability* than that afforded by a single case and (b) to deepen understanding and explanation. This last is the more fundamental reason, according to Miles and Huberman, for attempting cross-case analyses. "Multiple cases not only pin down the specific conditions under which a finding will occur but also help us form the more general categories of how those conditions may be related" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 173). Bourdieu approached method with a healthy respect for the ways that the subjective (or 'local') are never totally free of objective frames and systems. He sought to describe these frames and systems without losing the specificity of individual fields—to identify structure without reducing the individual to the larger, "...or to treat everything as if it were a mere epiphenomenon..." (Thomson, 1991). This approach to social-linguistic method can be seen in our attempt at cross-case analysis, seeking larger frames without losing the essence of the contextually-rich case studies.

Responding to the need in cross-case analysis to maintain the layered complexity for each case as well as the requirement that each case be understood on its own terms, we are attempting to build a database that will allow this as well as allow principled cross-case analyses. From the beginning we began to play with the *how* of this. Using our first attempt at a meta-matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Purcell-Gates, 2007), we realized that we could not do much more than 'count instances' across contexts without bringing to bear deep knowledge of each case within which the instances were actualized and imbued with meaning. This resulted in our decision to include in our definition of *database* the qualitative data that informed each case study as well as the

researcher interpretations of that data. As a multi-dimensional database, this would be used by future researchers with the 'flat database' (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 127) of theoretically coded literacy events.

Thus, the CPLS Literacy Practice Database consists of two types of data: (a) The case study data; and the (b) Flat database. The case study data is contained digitally within *Atlas.ti* Hermeneutic Units. *Atlas.ti* (2008) is a qualitative data analysis software program that is designed for, or allows, coding, search and retrieval, database management, memoing, data linking, matrix building, network displays, and theory building. For each study, researchers load into an *Atlas.ti* Hermeneutic Unit their field notes, interview transcripts, scanned artifacts, photos, memos, etc – all of their collected data. They can also load (and this is our next step) final reports, conference presentations, drafts of articles, etc. – all accounts of researcher interpretation of the data. The data, itself, is then coded iteratively according to (a) researcher interest/questions; and (b) common literacy event codes used across the CPLS cases.

The flat database begins as a meta-matrix/Excel spreadsheet that can be straightforwardly imported to SPSS software, for data mining and statistical analysis. This flat database contains codes that serve data management and descriptive purposes as well as conceptual purposes with theoretically-based codes. The data management and descriptive codes are contained within a sub-database and include: researcher name; participant ID; study country; date when the study was conducted; participant pseudonym (if used in the case study write-ups); participant's age, gender, occupation(s), country of birth, nationality, legal status, and marginalized status; type of participant (e.g. focal or non-focal participant); participant's native language(s), language(s) spoken at home, other spoken language(s), and language(s) read or written; participant's level of schooling completed; participant's status as student; participant's parents' level of schooling and occupation(s); whether participant lives in urban, rural, or suburban area; number of people and minors in participant's household; and computer and internet availability.

Within the main part of the flat database, we have used a code string with nine code types for each identified literacy event. Among these nine codes, four are conceptually-based and related to our emerging model of a literacy practice while the others are considered more descriptive. The descriptive codes attached to each literacy event include (a) study/participant ID (Id:); (b) mode of literacy engagement: reading, writing, listening to, copying language of the text read or written (Md:); (c) language(s) of the text read or written (Lg:); (d) whether the event occurred in participant's childhood or adulthood (CUR), (Tm:); and (e) whether the event coded involved observed or reported literacy engagement (LE:) or was observed in the environment without the presence of a person reading or writing it. (In an effort to document the "literacy ecology" of a community, we have developed a separate coding scheme for texts observed in the community, but we will not discuss it in this paper, as it has evolved from a slightly different theoretical framework.) Theoretically based codes include: (a) social activity domain in which the

literacy event takes place (Dm:); (b) text type (Tx:); (c) communicative function of literacy event (Fn:); and (d) social purpose of literacy event (Pr:).

Theoretically-Based Analysis

Larger Theoretical Frame

Literacy as socially situated. As stated above, the Cultural Practices of Literacy Study project is framed by the theory that literacy is always situated within social and cultural contexts and within relationships of power and ideology (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1984). Brian Street (1984), in his book *Literacy in Theory and Practice*, challenged the dominant view of literacy as singular and autonomous. Street, working through an anthropological lens, challenged the assertions of language theorists (Hildyard & Olson, 1978; Olson, 1977) and social anthropologists (Goody, 1968 & 1977) that literacy, itself, was responsible for such cognitive development as the development of rationality and the ability to think in decontextualized ways. Drawing on his work with nonwestern cultures, Street argued that literacy, itself, does not possess isolable qualities nor confer isolable, decontextualized, abilities. Rather, literacy is always embedded within social institutions and, as such, is only knowable as it is defined and practiced by social and cultural groups. As such, literacy is best considered an *ideological* construct as opposed to an *autonomous* skill, separable from contexts of use. Its ideological nature, according to this view, reflects the fact that literacy is always constructed and enacted within social and political contexts and subject to the implications of differing power relationships. It is best, Street suggested, to think of *literacies* rather than *literacy*. Being ideologically-bound, different literacies are recognized by the established institutions of time and place as more and less 'legitimate'. Some literacies provide access to power and material well-being; others are 'marked' as substandard and deficient.

Within this frame, there are many literacies – discursive literacy practices inferred from texts and purposes for reading and writing those texts – and each of these is shaped by and interpreted within the sociocultural/sociolinguistic contexts within which they occur (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1984, 1995). This highlights the fact that texts are written and read for varied purposes and with shifting meanings within specific sociocultural/sociolinguistic contexts by literate people. Meaning in written language, as for oral, is never autonomous, free of contextual constraints (Bakhtin, 1981). From this perspective, literacy development is not seen as linear, building in skill and fluency toward one type of literacy, nor as hierarchical (e.g. low, functional literacy to high, educated literacy). Rather, it is seen as multiple, occurring across the complex plane of life, itself.

Within this frame of literacy as multiple, and socially and culturally-situated, school literacy, or academic literacy, is but one of many literacies. The forms and functions of academic literacy are shaped by the social and cultural suppositions and beliefs of the academic community. The

academic community is intricately linked to state dictates, composed by the powerful and enfranchised, who decide which literacy is to be valued, taught, and assessed. By nature of the social and political power wielded by this community, the manners and modes for how literacy is to be defined and assessed throughout sanctioned society is decided within the frame of literacy as autonomous and academic, rendering this practice of literacy (academic, schooled, literacy) perhaps the clearest example of the ideological nature of all literacies.

The subtext of much of this work is the clear implication that the ideology of privileging academic literacy is used by those in power to continue the persistent academic underachievement of students marginalized by language, gender, ethnicity, and race. In this way, power is maintained and threats to that power by 'underclass' groups can be fended off under the guise of academic failure. Many of the literacy researchers cited above explicitly work to resist this hegemony and to find ways to 'legitimate' the literacies of marginalized groups within academic settings.

Social and Cultural Reproduction. Theories of social and cultural reproduction, epitomized by the writings of Bourdieu (1991; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) frame much of the theorizing and research by literacy researchers working from a multiple/social literacies perspective. As briefly noted previously, Bourdieu holds that dominant discourses are perpetuated and reproduced through official institutions of schooling which control access to cultural and social capital. Schools commit 'symbolic violence' by disallowing marginalized discourses as capital and convincing even those marginalized that dominant discourses of the privileged, to which they will have no real access, are legitimate. This position, in the eyes of many, represents a frustratingly closed discourse/power loop.

Literacy practices and literacy events. Studying literacy *in use* reflects the theoretical lens of language as social and situated. This post-structuralist lens rejects the Saussurean assumption that language is best studied as a formal system (*Langue)*, decontextualized from contexts of actual use by real people (*Parole*) (Culler, 1976). Language in use is always incomplete, according to this structuralist perspective, and changing, rendering it unproductive as an object of linguistic analysis. Bakhtin, working within the Vygotskian frame and Soviet psychology current at the time, argued, in response, that language outside of contexts of use never exists (1986). He disagreed with Saussure that language in use is not capable of being studied. Saussure's construct *parole* assumes that individual language users are completely free agents, picking and choosing linguistic units at will and creating uncountable language combination. Bakhtin's beginning assumption is that the basic unit of language is *the utterance* (speech units used by people in dialogue), and the only data source for linguistic analysis. The formal language systems studied by formalists like Saussure, Chomsky, and others are inventions of the linguists and, thus, not worthy (or productive) of linguistic analysis, according to this view. This 'social turn' (Street & Leung, in press, p. 9) in the study of language lay the foundation for the study of literacy – not as an autonomous collection of skills – but as *social practice* – literacy *in situ*, mediating the social and cultural lives of people.

Within this, theorists and researchers have differentiated between *literacy practices* and *literacy events* (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1984)*. Literacy practices* are seen as larger than acts of print-based reading and writing (*literacy events*) and reflect the sociocultural contexts within which individual literacy events occur. Literacy practices are not observable like literacy events in that they include values, beliefs, feelings, social and power relations. Literacy practices are inferred from observable literacy events, but a focus simply on literacy events cannot lead to an

understanding of literacy as social practice. Contexts of use give meaning to individual literacy events, which have no meaning in and of themselves.

Literacy as socially semiotic, dialogic, and communicative. Within the sociocultural frame for literacy use, literacy is viewed as socially semiotic (Halliday, 1976). Literacy, as well as oral language, is structured to meet or perform social purposes, structured socially into social forms, often referred to as 'genres' (Bakhtin, 1986; Halliday, Askehave & Swales, 2001; Freedman & Medway, 1994; Frow, 2006). These genres are not static forms to be learned and reproduced, as may be concluded by a more formalist approach to language study, but are socially created to get things done with language. At the same time, they structure meaning making as part of meaning making systems. Genres are learned culturally-specific cultural forms that are meaningful only in terms of the evolving and mutually defining relationship among genres and the sociocultural worlds. Literacy in use is always dialogic and communicative, functioning within a multi-voiced landscape and incorporating genres and voices from the past and projecting those of the future (Norton, in press).

The Cultural Practices of Literacy Study project operates within this frame. We study literacy within sociocultural contexts, documenting larger structures such as political, economic, historical, religious, linguistic, and power systems; we focus on individuals engaging with print through individual literacy events or event types within these contexts; we collect data about the texts that mediate bounded socio-cultural contexts; and we analyze these case study data within a system of code dimensions that reflect the theories of literacy as socially situated, socially semiotic, multiple, and as mediating social lives.

Contextualized Case Study Data

As stated previously, the larger database that is used for cross-case analysis includes two types of data: (a) Data that informed Flat Database that includes codes lifted from the case study data analysis into an Excel/Access database. We will first describe the case study data.

The studies under the umbrella of the CPLS project all focus on marginalized peoples such as migrant workers, refugees and other immigrants, First Nations peoples in Canada, and people of low socioeconomic status. These studies represent communities and participants from countries including the U.S., Canada, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Cuba, Sudan, and Uganda. Each case study of literacy practice is designed to answer study-specific research questions, in addition to collecting literacy practices data. Descriptions of these studies can be found on the CPLS website (HYPERLINK "http://www.cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/projects" http://www.cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/projects.html). In the following paragraphs, we describe some of the studies included in the project, as well as the ways in which individual researchers have explored their own research questions within the larger project.

Migrant farm worker community. This study, conducted by Victoria Purcell-Gates, examines literacy practices of a migrant farm worker community in southern Michigan and those of the Migrant Head Start program for pre-school children from the community (Purcell-Gates, http://www. HYPERLINK "http://www.cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/ongoing_migrant.html" cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/ongoing_migrant.html). Approximately 30% of migrant farm workers in this community cannot read or write in either Spanish or English. The ongoing

analysis focuses on ways that reading and writing for these families are patterned by their social lives as marginalized from mainstream U.S. life, yet as central to U.S. economics.

Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica. Purcell-Gates also investigated the literacy practices of a Nicaraguan immigrant community in Costa Rica and those of the schools attended by the children from this community (Purcell-Gates, in press; 2007; http://www. HYPERLINK "http://cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/ongoing_costarica.html" cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/ongoing_costarica.html). In cooperation with officials from the Ministry of Public Education in Costa Rica, this 6-month study explored factors that may account for many of the difficulties that are experienced by poor and marginalized children in the Costa Rican Schools, particularly those of Nicaraguan immigrants. The researcher focused exclusively on the early literacy learning of the children primarily because high rates of first-grade retention is considered to be a problem in the schools and because the success in first stages of learning to read and write determines the level of success at learning in other subjects and in the later grades. Within this, she explored interactions between the children's experiences with reading and writing in their lives outside of school - in their homes and communities - and those within their classrooms. Results of this study were used to develop curriculum materials to be used in Costa Rican schools.

Lost Boys of Sudan. A community of orphaned Sudanese refugee youth (a.k.a. the "Lost Boys of Sudan") in Michigan was the focus of this study by Kristen Perry. Participants in this study spoke a variety of languages, including Dinka, English, KiSwahili, and some Arabic, yet most were only literate in English and KiSwahili, the languages taught in the Kakuma Refugee Camp where they had lived. In her chapter, "Sharing Stories, Linking Lives: Literacy Practices among Sudanese Refugees" (Perry, 2007a), Perry examined differences between participants' reported literacy practices in Africa, including their memories of literate practices during their early childhoods in Sudan and the practices in which they engaged in Kakuma, in order to understand how participants' practices had changed over time. Another specific analysis explored the ways in which these orphaned youth have transformed their traditional practice of oral storytelling into a written practice (Perry, in press).

Sudanese refugee families. In contrast to the study of the Lost Boys, Perry's second case study focused on intact Sudanese refugee families with young children in Michigan. Adults in this study had been educated in the Sudan, although with different levels of completion, and all spoke Arabic at home, in addition to various Sudanese local languages. The parents also spoke, read, and wrote English to varying degrees of fluency, and their young children were emerging into English literacy. In addition to documenting the ways in which the families' literacy practices changed as they moved to new contexts, the study also focused on the ways in which these refugees used literacy brokering to make sense of the texts and practices they encounter in their new context in Michigan (Perry, 2007b, 2007c; http://www. HYPERLINK "http://cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/ongoing_sudanese.html"

cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/ongoing_sudanese.html). Results of this study help illustrate what individuals must know in order to effectively engage in the literacy practices of a given context.

Bolivian Fey y Alegria school. Tracy Gates' study, entitled "Preparing Teachers to teach in culturally responsive ways: A Case study of a Fe y Alegria school in Bolivia," examined the ways in which a Fey y Alegria school, self-described as community-based and as working within the cultures of marginalized groups in Latin America, prepares teachers and instantiates their culturally-based literacy curriculum. Case-specific research questions explored (a) the ways in which the literacy practices of the school aligned with those of the community, and (b) how the teacher preparation procedures and processes at the Fey y Alegria school in Cochabamba, Bolivia, prepared teachers to work with the community culture and literacy practices of their students during the teaching of literacy (Gates, HYPERLINK "http://www.cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/working.html" http://www.cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/working.html)

Indigenous Oaxacan families. An ongoing case study entitled "Cultural Literacy Practices and Imagined Futures of Parents with No or Low Levels of Formal Schooling: Parents and Children's Perspectives" is examining Indigenous families in Oaxaca, Mexico, who move from rural communities to low-SES urban neighborhoods in order to provide their children with more schooling opportunities. The study explores the ways in which the parents in these families construct "imagined" futures for their children. The purpose of this research is two-fold: (1) to document the cultural literacy practices of parents with no or low-levels (first grade of elementary school) of formal schooling from both the parents' and their children's perspectives; (2) and to relate these cultural literacy practices to the imagined futures for/of the children constructed by the parents and the children (Lopez, http://www. HYPERLINK "http://www.cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/projects_mario.html" cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/projects_mario.html).

Indigenous students at the Universidad Autónoma Benito Juarez de Oaxaca. The researcher's aim in the study "Students from Indigenous Communities at the State University of Oaxaca: Literacy Practices in their Second Language" is to describe the literacy practices of students from indigenous communities studying at a university level and the way they cope with reading and writing in their second language (Spanish). Indigenous students learn local, indigenous languages at home, but are instructed in Spanish when they begin elementary school, which becomes their second language. Thus, these students are expected to develop reading and writing skills in a language with which they have little, or no, prior contact. However successful they are in their academic life (to the extent that they enter the university to get a degree), some have been reported to have academic problems when asked to read academic texts or to produce them (Hernández, http://www. HYPERLINK "http://cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/projects_rangel.html" cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/projects_rangel.html).

Each of the CPLS studies are analyzed for answers to the research questions, using codes that emerge from the data and employing constant comparative methods for analyzing qualitative and ethnographic data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Within this, the literacy events documented in the data are coded with a common string of codes that apply across case studies.

The case study data in the larger database thus includes both raw data and coded data. It also includes the final write-ups by the researcher for each study, including conference presentations, published papers, working papers, and PowerPoint presentations. These documents and data are meant to be used by cross-case analyzers to give localized meanings to the data contained in the flat database.

Example of cross-case analysis. After collecting a first round of case study data from various contexts in Michigan (see Purcell-Gates, 2007, for descriptions), we conducted an early analysis in order to explore the ways in which our data might be meaningfully analyzed across cases (Perry & Purcell-Gates, 2005). This analysis included data from cases of (a) Botswanan scholars studying in the U.S.; (b) farmers in Puerto Rico; (c) urban middle school students in an alternative school; (d) Chinese-American immigrants; (e) the "Lost Boys of Sudan"; (f) Cuban refugees; and (g) a young African-American girl. After observing that these cases were contextualized by obviously disproportionate power relationships in some form, we sought to understand the ways in which literacy practices could be agentic within these hegemonic situations. Our results showed that participants responded to power by resisting or appropriating various literacy practices, and these responses appeared to be patterned depending upon whether the hegemony structure was diffuse or direct.

This early analysis suggested to us that our database was, indeed, a useful tool for examining broader issues related to literacy practices across contexts. Our reliance upon all of the data in the project, and not just the actual literacy event codes, showed us that the flat database alone was not sufficient to understand the relationship among literacy events, literacy practices, and broader contexts. This early experience, thus, helped us not only refine our coding scheme for the flat database, but it also helped us realize the need for a multi-dimensional database that would include contextual data and researchers' interpretations.

The Flat Database of Literacy Event Codes

The data coded for the flat database is literacy event data – observable instances of reading and writing. However, the code types that we employ allow us to move from these data to the level of literacy practice. We derived these code types theoretically, using the lens of literacy as socially situated practice. Thus, our coding system is an example of the affordances of theory for methodology in research. Following, we will define, and theoretically situate, each of our theoretically-motivated codes. These include the codes for (a) social activity domains, (b) text type; (c) purpose; and (d) function. While all of our code types (see previous listing) come from our theoretical lens (e.g. language of the text, gender, age of participant, etc.), these four are the

ones that must be arrived at by considering the contexts within which the literacy event is situated. While the type of code is theoretically-based, each token code comes from the data we hold. Thus they are specific only to our data as it has evolved at any specific point in time. New token codes are always being added to the coding manual as new studies, reflecting different socio-cultural contexts, are completed.

Social Activity Domain. Each literacy event is first coded with this code. This code captures the social activity mediated by the particular literacy event for the participant. With this code, we are reflecting the Vygotskian notion of mediated social activity as the base unit of analysis for human behavior (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1981, 1998). According to Vygotsky, a human individual never reacts merely directly (or merely with inborn responses) to the environment. The relation between the human agent and the object (activity) is mediated by cultural means or artifacts. Human activity is always mediated by tools, according to activity theorists. By viewing literacy events within a mediated action frame, we can see texts being read or written as cultural tools used by humans to mediate their activities. We can also go beyond the primary focus on human agents and their mediational means to the other aspects of human activity such as the cultural, historical, and institutional contexts within which the action occurs (Wertsch, 1998). Thus, texts, as cultural tools, mediate human activity that is always situated socially and culturally.

For us, the theory of mediated social activity dictated that we would document the social activity that was being mediated by each coded literacy event, or engagement, in our data. In an attempt to name this mediated activity and reflect the textual mediating aspect of it, we originally settled on the term *sociotextual domain* (Purcell-Gates, 2007). However, this began to lead us astray to a primary focus on the mediational means – the text -- and away from the essential notion of *activity*. Thus, we returned to the notion of *social activity domain* for our primary unit of analysis for literacy practice, as inferred by literacy events.

The notion of *domain* has been used in most studies of literacy practice with varying definitions and meanings. David Barton and Mary Hamilton and their research group at Lancaster University in the UK have defined it as "the institutional spaces that organize particular social life and the literacy associated with them, e.g. work, religion, or health" (Hamilton, July 2004, pg. 1). These are inferred from the visible setting within which people can be seen to be interacting with written texts, e.g. in the kitchen, the store, on the train, or in school. This analytic use of 'domain' carries with it a sense of the institution, or of structures that come from outside and are imposed in some way on people and their activities.

Anne Haas Dyson has used the construct of *domain* with a focus on the place, or location, of different types of social activity. Actually, she tends to refer to them as *spaces* (Dyson, 2003), referencing the physical locations within which different types of social activity are traditionally assumed to occur, e.g. home, school). With this, she can address social worlds of children and

speak of *borders*, and *border crossings*.

While acknowledging the usefulness of these different ways of thinking of domains of social activity, we eschewed the notion of physical location in favor of one that reflects more essentially the nature of the activity. Included in this is the sense that human activity within a domain can cross physical spaces. For example, activity related to schooling can take place in a school, at home, or on a football field (if one is doing homework while sitting in the bleachers). Thus, working from our data, we arrived at such domains of human social activity as participating in spiritual life, working, participating in community life, participating in family life, and so on, each with their definitions of activity. We marked the activity aspect of the codes grammatically with the use of the present progressive (participating, working) and considered the nature of the activity, irrespective of where it occurred, in our selection and definitions of the different social activity codes. Table 1 depicts a sample of the Social Activity Domains descriptions from our coding manual.

Table 1. Sample of Social Activity Domains for youth and adults

SOCIAL ACTIVITY DOMAIN	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES OF LITERACY EVENTS WITHIN THIS DOMAIN
ART (Doing one's art)	Social activity for individuals that centers around creative/artistic activities and is engaged in for purposes of developing, improving, exploring, performing within one's creative/artistic area(s) of focus/interest/talent.	Writing short stories, participating in a poetry slam, reading to develop a quilt pattern, reading music while playing in a jazz group, directing a play, Writing in a journal to explore an idea for a novel;
CIV (Responding to civic rules and regulations)	Social activity that centers around responding to bureaucratic requirements of governmental (on all levels). 'Bureaucratic requirements' reflect: official procedures, red-tape, routines, rules that bind, hierarchical administrative systems	Filling in green card forms; reading instructions for filing taxes; rereading transcripts and other saved documents in order to fill in the forms for citizenship, filling out a form at the police to recover personal property, reading a parking ticket to decide whether to contest it, filling out a form to get special status to bypass strict

		security at national borders
COM (Participating in Community Life)	Social activity that centers around life in community, defined by the participants. This would include organizing, building, maintaining, or defining a community of people, visiting other members of one's community, relating to other members of one's community, defining oneself as part of one's community., "community" can be at different levels from local to global.	Reading newspapers from Botswana; writing a column for a refugee newsletter; participating in community discussion boards on the Internet; Writing a letter to the UNHCR about conditions in a refugee camp; taking notes at a community meeting; writing a letter to invite people to a community event, reading an invitation to a picnic for graduate students
SCH (Participating in formal schooling)	Social activity that centers around participation in formal schooling as a student	Writing an essay, filling in a worksheet, doing homework.

Once again, all of our codes come directly from our data. So the social activity codes that we have developed so far represent the domains of social activity engaged in by the participants across all of the CPLS studies. They do not represent the full range of possible activity types nor do they represent a priori, institutional and officially-recognized activity types.

Some of the cases included in the overall database, such as the case of Sudanese refugee families or the case of migrant workers in Michigan, focus on families that include young children who are just emerging into literacy in any language. In our initial attempts to code the literacy events in which these young children engaged, we found it difficult to categorize some of their domains of social activity with the codes we had developed by looking at youth and adults. Some of the domains were clearly the same, such as participating in formal schooling or participating in community life, but others appeared to be unique to young children. As a result, we developed a separate set of codes that emerged from our data from children under the age of eight. Table2 illustrates a sample of some of these social activity domains for young children.

Table 2. Domains of social activity (young children under age 8)

SOCIAL ACTIVITY DOMAIN	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES OF LITERACY EVENTS WITHIN THIS DOMAIN

PLU (Playing/ Unstructured)	Social activity for young children that involves spontaneous exploratory play—play that involves "figuring out how the world works" (or specifically figuring out how the literacy world works) and social activity for young children that involves imaginative play—playing "let's pretend" or other imaginative role-playing. This domain involves activities that are structured largely by the child, rather than the environment, and where there are not necessarily "right" answers.	Taking apart a pen to find where the ink comes from; finding as many rhyming words as possible; practicing writing letters, words, and numbers; pretend-reading a storybook; seeing a word/picture of an animal and pretending to be that animal; writing down a pretend phone message while playing "house"; using a magazine-insert postcard as a "ticket to the movies"
PLS (Playing/ Structured)	Social activity for young children that has to do with being entertained and having fun, including games or competitive play—play that is structured by the environment, often where there are structured rules, structured goals, and/or where someone "wins".	Looking at DVD covers to select a movie to watch; playing a computer game; playing a rhyming game in a literacy center; reading the rules in order to play a board game; organizing Yu-Gi-Oh cards.
SLL (Transacting with school-like learning practices)	Social activity for young children that centers around acquiring school-like information and knowledge in non-formal, out-of-school learning settings. In this domain, children are acting in an out-of-school environment that is designed to teach them something. Like school-based practices, these are often centered around learning where there is a "right" answer.	Looking at a map to find the states where people you know live; reading a book about the 5 senses. Some storybook read-aloud events might fit here, too.

Text Type. Our codes for Text Type and Textual Form have evolved over time. In order

to understand what people do with texts, we must account for the texts themselves. Genre theories have shaped our understanding of the role of written texts in literacy practices. As with literacy practices in general, context plays an important role in shaping genres. Utterances can never be considered as completely free combinations of forms of language (Holquist, 1986). Rather they are always "forms of combination of forms" (Holquist, 1986, p. xvi). Bakhtin refers to these forms of combination of forms as *speech genres*. Genres, as Bakhtin (1986) notes, are recognizable patterns or repertoires of language-in-context. While we acknowledge that genres, in the Bakhtinian sense, encompass both oral and written forms, our work on literacy practices focuses on only written genres. Genre theorists increasingly view genres as socially-constructed practices (Askehave & Swales, 2001; Bakhtin, 1986; Bazerman, 1988; Bhatia, 1997; Freedman & Medway, 1994). Thus, we define written, or textual, genres as social constructions that represent specific purposes for reading and writing within different social activities, created by social groups who need them to perform certain things. Because genres meet specific social needs, they are not static and instead change over time, reflecting essential shifts in social function performed by that text.

In addition to representing a particular purpose within a given context, genres embody collections of specific textual attributes (Hasan, 1989). Thus, genres may be identified through both purpose, or social function, and structural or textual features that are essential to that genre. The purpose of a classified ad, for example, is to list items, services, personal relationships or anything else that is either desired or offered. Its essential features include commonly-understood abbreviations, personal contact information, and names of the items/services offered or desired. Similarly, the purpose of a recipe is to provide instructions on how to prepare food; its essential features include the name of the dish, a list of ingredients with measurements, and procedures that must be followed. The genre boundaries represented by these various features reflect the social function played by each text and shape the ways in which that genre is used in the world. The purpose of a phone book, for example, is very different from that of a novel, and although both can be embodied in book format, very different features structure each genre and its use.

Text Form. As we worked to delineate the various genres that existed in our case study data, we became aware of the fact that the same genre may be represented in a variety of physical forms. The genre of employment posting, in which job openings are listed, may be embodied by forms such as flyers, newspapers, or posters, or in the digital world in a webpage or online database. Similarly, menus may appear in the form of a folder, a blackboard, a placemat, and so on. Conversely, the opposite is also true: One textual form can be used by many genres. Books, for example, can contain a variety of genre types, including novels, phone books, dictionaries, textbooks, holy texts (e.g., Bible, Torah, Koran, etc), children's stories, plays, poetry, and recipes, among others. Thus, it became clear during our coding and other analyses that categorizing texts by broad

categories such as "book", "newspaper", and "online" did not adequately capture either the purpose or the specific features of genres. Yet, we did not want to lose these physical forms that represented the texts in our data. Accounting for the physical representations of genres allows us to represent the materiality, or ecology, of literacy in our analyses. For example, we have documented that the genre of *notice/announcement* appears in various forms, including signs, posters, and flyers, each of which represents a different level of permanence. Signs are (relatively) permanent; posters are not, but they certainly are more substantial than flyers, which tend to have a short existence.

Literacy Instructional Texts. As we applied our textual codes to our data, we realized that certain texts used for the purpose of teaching basic literacy skills did not fit with our definition of *genre.* These texts did not have an authentic social, communicative purpose in the same way that other genres in our data has. That is, these texts only served the purpose of teaching someone to read and/or write—they did not have a communicative function (see below for further discussion of function and purpose in literacy events). These types of texts do not provide students with authentic, communicative, purposes for which to read and write; they use printed texts to teach, or aid in the process, people to read and write. These texts were relevant to the third branch of the CPLS umbrella: The design of models of literacy instruction that reflect the literacy worlds of students. Thus, we named this genre of texts, those written for the primary purpose of teaching/learning how to read and write, "literacy instructional text," or LIT. Recognizing that a wide variety of different textual types would be included in this category, we also tracked these varieties by identifying text type and form, as we had with other genres. Examples of LIT codes include LIT, alphabet letters, notebook; LIT, basal reader, book; LIT skill practice text, workbook; and LIT, spelling list, chart. It is important to note, however, that not all instructional texts fall into this category. Many worksheets, charts, textbooks, and so forth are written to instruct, but not with the primary purpose of teaching students to read and/or write. Thus, a worksheet intended to help students identify organs of the body as part of a science lesson would not be coded as a literacy instructional text. These types of instructional texts are coded according to their own genres.

Purpose and Function Codes. Once the textual genre is identified within the social activity domain, we ask ourselves questions of function and purpose. Within genre theory, the terms *function* and *purpose* are often used interchangeably in discussions of the semiotic relations between of features and structures of texts (form) and the function, or social purposes, of genres. We originally began with this sense of the terms, using *purpose* as our code type. However, we found that we were vacillating between two different levels of the function/purpose construct. Within the frame of literacy as social practice, we could see function/purpose of a particular type of literacy engagement both on the closer level of

participant fulfillment of a communicative function and on the level of larger social purposes that are not as close to the textual communicative function of the individual literacy event. For example, through the literacy act of writing a personal letter to a family member, the agent can be seen as writing to inform the family member about what has been happening, how she is doing, etc. At the same time, we can look at the social purpose of this act as serving to maintain family bonds and connections.

Both of these types of function/purpose were of theoretical interest to us. The communicative-level function was of interest for its relationship to the third branch of the CPLS umbrella: The design of models of literacy instruction that reflect the literacy worlds of students in ways that bridge these worlds and the literacy worlds of formal educational contexts. The social purpose level was of interest in that it would contribute to theory as well as descriptions of literacy practices across different sociocultural contexts. We first discuss the *Function* code type and then the *Purpose* code type.

When we asked ourselves, when coding an individual literacy event, "What is the reader reading this particular text for?", we were asking about *function*. For writing events, we asked, "What is driving the composition of the text? What is the writer trying to do with this literacy engagement?" *Driving the composition of the text* included such consideration as wording, textual structure, and design, in the manner described by the New London Group (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). The answers to such questions were considered particularly relevant to the instructional model of what we now call Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction (CRLI), previously referred to as *Authentic Literacy Instruction* (Duke & Purcell-Gates, 2003; Duke, et al., 2007; Purcell-Gates, et al., 2002; Purcell-Gates & Duke, 2007). This model asks teachers to consider questions of function/purpose when they involve their students in the reading and writing of real-life texts – text types that are read and written outside of a formal instructional context. Thus teachers may engage their students in writing invitation *to invite someone to an actual event*, and the wording and design of the invitations would help accomplish that function by including the relevant invitation information such as name of event, date, time, place, etc. Or a teacher may have their students read informational text *to answer their questions about the topic*, with this function guiding the reading.

In working with teachers, we have found that it is difficult at first for teachers to grasp and use this aspect of authentic literacy instruction, or CRLI. Our growing database of real-life functions for reading, writing, listening to, or copying will assist in conveying the essence of this construct. Table 3 contains a sample list of functions taken from our data. In all, we have documented more than 320 different tokens of the Function code type for the CPLS studies.

In addition to serving instructional model design, our Function code provides insights into the literacy practices of different cultural groups. By comparing functions for literacy

engagement across studies, we can provide portraits of textual use and their cultural meaning potentials within and across socio-culturally defined groups. It is particularly informative for responding to statements and beliefs from mainstream institutions that X marginalized group is low-literate and does not value or use literacy in their homes. For example, a study of migrant farm workers in the U.S. (Purcell-Gates, HYPERLINK "http://cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/ongoing_migrant.html" http://cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/ongoing_migrant.html) revealed more than 100 different functions for reading and writing in the camps. Furthermore, these functions reflected the lives of the migrant workers – lives of documentation, rules, accessing health care, family, and religion.

Table 3. Sample of the Function codes from the CPLS Coding Manual

_____

_____l

Fn: To address envelope

Fn: To check for changes in salary

Fn: To check for incorrect information

Fn: To check health record for information

Fn: To check how number problems can be solved

Fn: To check if license plate had been renewed

Fn: To communicate online

Fn: To communicate with family and friends

Fn: To compile signatures

Fn: To indicate approval/disapproval

Fn: To indicate how much money is to be paid

Fn: To indicate responses on rating scale

Fn: To indicate team names

Fn: To inform about plans

Fn: To inform boss of needs or plans

Fn: To inform family members of their chores

Fn: To inform neighbours that children will be alone

Fn: To inform of illness of child

Fn: To inform public what one is selling

Fn: To inform self/family about family

Fn: To invite someone to an event

Fn: To keep score

Fn: To know which notes to play

Fn: To label location

Our Purpose codes, as stated previously, reflect the ways that particular literacy events mediated social activity within socio-cultural contexts. They document how people used literacy behavior to mediate their lives in the different case studies. To represent the interrelationships between function and purpose and to help us conceptually maintain this focus, we employed grammatical relationships within the token code names, themselves. Thus, we may have a person reading an application form *to learn what information is needed* (function) *in order to apply for admission to college* (Purpose). *To* always begins a Function code , and *In order to* always begins a Purpose code . While the codes are referred to as *Function* and *Purpose*, these are in fact shorthand for *communicative function* and *social purpose*. Following (Table 4) are some examples of our identified social purposes for which people used literacy across the CPLS case studies. The CPLS coding manual includes more than 300 different Purpose codes, reflecting the multitude of ways that literacy mediates social activity around the world.

Table 4. Sample Purpose codes from the CPLS Coding Manual

Pr: In order to apply for/get a driver's license

Pr: In order to apply for/get a job

Pr: In order to apply for/get a library card

Pr: In order to apply for/get a scholarship/grant

Pr: In order to apply for/get a work transfer

Pr: In order to apply for/get an email account

Pr: In order to apply for/get birth certificate

Pr: In order to apply for/get citizenship/legal residency

Pr: In order to apply for/get credit card

Pr: In order to apply for/get housing

Pr: In order to apply for/get ID card for child

Pr: In order to apply for/get marriage certificate

Pr: In order to apply for/get passport

Pr: In order to apply for/get power of attorney

Pr: In order to apply for/get professional certification

Pr: In order to apply for/get refugee status

Pr: In order to apply for/get retirement benefits

Pr: In order to apply for/get visa

Pr: In order to inform discussion on country of origin

Pr: In order to inform doctor

Pr: In order to inform employer too sick to work

Pr: In order to inform others about a class

Pr: In order to inform others about a person

Pr: In order to inform others what to buy

Pr: In order to inform others what to cook

Pr: In order to inform public of price of product/event

Pr: In order to inform someone of messages

Pr: In order to inform teachers about child

Pr: In order to inhibit other's understanding of text

Pr: In order to inspire personal writing

Pr: In order to join an organization

Pr: In order to keep family/self healthy

Pr: In order to keep record of books loaned

Pr: In order to keep record of family events

Pr: In order to keep record of favorite Bible verses

Pr: In order to keep record of meeting

Pr: In order to keep record of work

Pr: In order to keep track of child's whereabouts

Pr: In order to keep track of creditors

Model of Literacy Practices

Developing our theoretically-derived codes took place in many stages across several years. The process of identifying, defining, and refining each code required us to develop a strong conceptual understanding of observable literacy events and their relationship to ideological literacy practices that are grounded in social structures and other power relationships. As a result of this process, we were able to develop a model that represents the theoretical relationship between the codes we use to describe literacy practices. Figure 1 illustrates this model. The central, shaded layers of the model represent observable literacy events, beginning with the agent's intent for reading or writing, and then moving to the text itself. For example, a woman may read through an online employment database to identify job openings. Together, this function, or communicative intent (locating job openings), along with the actual text (online employment database), mediate the agent's purpose, or social goal, for engaging in the event. In this case, the woman's purpose is to apply for (and, ideally, to obtain) a job. This immediate social goal is shaped by larger domains of social activity, which are in turn shaped by various other layers of context. Applying for and obtaining a job occur in the social domain of Working. This domain is, in turn, shaped by other contextual layers. For example, the woman's own personal and familial history, as well as her beliefs and values, will help to shape which types of jobs she does and does not apply for. If the woman has school-aged children, she might choose to work only part time so that she may be home when her children return from school. Power relationships and social structures are an important, and over-arching, layer of context. If, for example, the woman is an illegal immigrant with limited skills in the mainstream language, this will further shape which jobs are available to her.

The difference between *literacy events* and *literacy practices* has been an important guiding principle for researchers who study literacy as a social practice. The distinction between the two is clear: Literacy events are observable, while practices relate to non-observable beliefs, values, attitudes, power relationships, and so forth, and therefore must be inferred. While scholars such as Street (2001a) and Barton and Hamilton (1998) have theorized that practices may be inferred from events, it has not always been clear how to connect the invisible practices to visible events. Our model is an attempt to make those connections more explicit.

Figure 1. Model of a literacy practice, reflected in the analytic categories of the Cultural Practice of Literacy project.

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 If the participant was a child at the time of the study, this was considered 'current'.

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 Here we focus on reading and writing, or print literacy. However this view is embedded in a larger frame for literacy that includes other semiotic systems, including oral language mode. This is not to privilege print literacy over other literacies like visual literacy, digital literacy, or oral literacy. It merely reflects a bounded area for purposes of research related to practice (teaching reading and writing) that is of personal interest to us.

 Type refers to different types of codes; *Token* refers to instances of each type of codes.

See Purcell-Gates & Duke (2007) for a discussion and operationalisation of the constructs of "authentic literacy instruction" and "school-only" literacy.

Paper presented at the National Reading Conference, Orlando, Fl, Dec. 3, 2008