Putting It into Practice: Moving Forward with Integrating the New Literacy Studies into Literary Education Once and For All

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Recommended Citation
Dennis, Shenir (2020) "Putting It into Practice: Moving Forward with Integrating the New Literacy Studies into Literary Education Once and For All," The Macksey Journal. Vol. 1, Article 239.
Available at: https://www.mackseyjournal.org/publications/vol1/iss1/239

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Putting It into Practice: Moving Forward with Integrating the New Literacy Studies into Literacy Education Once and For All

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Abstract

Over the past few decades, the definition of literacy and what it has meant to be considered “literate” has undergone substantial transformation that has distinguished it from solely being able to read or write. Specifically, this new approach to literacy education and practice called the “New Literacy Studies” (NLS), interrogates the standards in which individuals are held to in traditional literacy education as their literacy capabilities are susceptible to being molded by sociocultural influences. This is an interdisciplinary approach to literacy studies that collectively calls upon the research of sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists, in addition to literacy scholars and educators, but has yet to be formally introduced to literacy education. Now more than ever, as existing research merely speculates about the benefits of an NLS-integrated education for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, efforts to make such realities occur are urgently needed for the future success of such students.

Keywords: Literacy, New Literacy Studies, Marginalized, Sociocultural, Rhetoric, Discourse, Composition

Background
Over the past few decades, the definition of literacy and what it has meant to be considered “literate” has undergone substantial transformation that has distinguished it from solely being able to read or write. Specifically, this new approach to literacy education and practice called the “New Literacy Studies” (NLS), interrogates the standards in which individuals are held to in traditional literacy education as their literacy capabilities are susceptible to being molded by sociocultural influences. In other words, people learn and use literacy in specific sociocultural contexts and the ways they use them are associated with relations of power and ideology across socioeconomic status, immigrant status, English language learner status, race, disability, etc. (Green & Kostogriz 2003, p. 103). This is an interdisciplinary approach to literacy studies that collectively calls upon the research of sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists, in addition to literacy scholars and educators.

This collective of specialists, academics, and enthusiasts who have extensively published research on NLS practices and approaches are what James Paul Gee (2001) would describe as individuals part of a discourse, which are [ways] of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions and clothes… Discourses not mastered by overt instruction, but by enculturation into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse (p. 526).

Assessing the pedagogies associated with NLS from the angle of discourses is relevant in that it compels literacy research to consider an individual as simply the meeting point of many, sometimes conflicting discourses that are socially and historically defined (Gee 2001, p. 539). In
other words, we understand that NLS research is groundbreaking because has traditionally included scholarship published by individuals involved in a spectrum of disciplines separate from solely literacy studies. Together, these scholars have consistently found that levels of literacy and literate ability vary across members of different ethnic groups, age groups, sexes, socioeconomic classes, etc. (Szwed 1981, p. 423). For instance, in “Sponsors of Literacy” (1998), researcher Deborah Brandt considers how “…the effects that economic and political changes... [have on] people’s ability to read and write, their chances to sustain that ability, and their capabilities to pass it along to others” (p. 173) exemplifies literacy learning as a sponsored by the circumstance of an individual’s identity and identifying communities. The range and amount of sponsors in an individual’s lifetime (defined as “any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy – and gain advantage by it in some way” (p. 166)) vary tremendously and have an equally tremendous effect on an individual’s ability to acquire literacy the way U.S. education has traditionally required for decades. Many of the NLS educational models that scholars involved in literacy studies research acknowledge how vast the span of literacy sponsorship among students can be in a single classroom. Literacy is sponsored differently for a student from a higher socioeconomic background and a family made up of professors, doctors, or engineers versus a student from a lower socioeconomic background whose parents may have never finished high school.

Consequently, this article aims to initiate discussion among literacy educators about the possibilities of adopting an NLS-based curriculum for students whose literacy attainment has been impacted by their marginalized identity (note: the term ‘marginalized’ is used in this article with awareness of its broader definition to account for the multitude of marginalized identities
that has the potentiality to influence literacy learning). I want to consider **how literacy can be promoted for students hailing from marginalized communities that lack resources for extending their literate abilities and by extension, upward social mobility.** I want to ask what has become of students who have attempted to acquire literacy in environments where “…the languages, dialects, and literacies that shape their identity constructions and give expression to their world views” have not been welcomed (Paremgiani 2014, p. 25) in their education? Or, how have external forces in their nuclear families and communities impacted their abilities to acquire literacy? Changing the standards to which we deem someone as satisfactorily literate by using the NLS as a guide could revolutionize literacy education for marginalized students and the educators that teach them for time to come.

After all, there are even more complexities to consider when, for instance, a student’s second language is English, or they identify with one or more of the historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. Acknowledging that these factors as have the potential to impact one’s literacy attainment suggests that accesses to discourse is based on birth into the right set of socio-economic circumstances (Parmegiani 2014, p. 30), which gives certain individuals unfair advantages over other. There is merit to this argument insofar as scholars invested in literacy studies research are aware of how the structural oppression of certain groups of people over the course of U.S. history has allowed this to be the case. The acknowledgement of these structures is but one objective of NLS research: proving that the communities students are born into and their proximity to whiteness (which takes the form of socioeconomic status, language, resources, and opportunities) determines their ability or inability to become literate in it. Their ways of acquiring literacy may contradict the traditional expectations of literacy that are taught in formal schooling (Heath 1982, p. 94) according to this proximity to whiteness. As Amy
Robillard notes in her article “It’s Time for Class: Toward a More Complex Pedagogy of Narrative” (2003), the primary academic discourse that students are taught in privileges the abstract and analytical ways of knowing that privileged middle-class students are already privy to; yet, asks students from lower income statuses to identify with them (p. 80), effectively disregarding their own foregrounding identities. In other words, we are asking students who are unfamiliar with middle-class notions of literacy to adhere to its standards and discouraging them from utilizing their own learned literacies. We are telling them that the ways that they have acquired literacy in their communities do not have value if they do not follow the guidelines of what is taught in traditional education.


To provide schooling for everyone’s children that reflects liberal, middle-class values and aspirations is to ensure the maintenance of the status quo, to ensure that power, the culture of power, remains in the hands of those who already have it. Some children come to school with more accoutrements of the culture of power already in place – “cultural capital,” as some critical theorists refer to it – some with less. Many liberal educators hold that the primary goal for education is for children to become autonomous, to develop fully who they are in the classroom setting without the arbitrary, outside standards forced upon them. This is a very reasonable goal for people whose children are already participants in the culture of power and who have already internalized its codes (p. 28).
Delpit notes the most detrimental effect of attempting to mold “non-traditional” students towards traditional standards of literacy: fundamentally denying them access to opportunities for social mobility. Black students, Indigenous students, students of color, students of lower socioeconomic statuses, students whose second language is English, students that are undocumented—all are defined as “non-traditional” (re: underrepresented) in the sense that traditional U.S. education currently does not account for ways in which these individuals acquire literacy by way of navigating their own identities. On the other hand, “traditional” students (i.e. white, middle-class, etc.) are able to adapt to educational practices in the U.S. with fair ease as U.S. education has historically been tailored to suit their literacy needs. Traditional students already have leverage to succeed more than non-traditional students as soon as they begin schooling making for a strikingly uneven playing field in which an outcome is already determined: non-traditional students eventually fall behind as they are forced to catch up with traditional students.

Put simply, finding ways to integrate the NLS into contemporary literacy education then, is not only imperative, but also urgent for these non-traditional students as they need to be provided equal opportunity to develop the embodied capital that will allow them to use their literate abilities to contribute to their upward academic and social mobility (Fairbanks & Ariail 2006, p. 352). Conforming to white, middle-class educational standards should not have to be a burden they upon entering school. Instead, as educators, we must be responsible for restructuring our teaching methods and ideologies in ways that acknowledge and represent our student’s complex identities. We must ensure that we are learning about the ways in which our student’s literacies are impacted by their identities just as much as our students learn from us. By holding ourselves accountable in these ways, we are, in effect, transforming our teaching to reflect the
reconceptualized methods of an NLS-based curriculum. And so long as empirical and ethnographic research dedicated to tracking the impact of integrating NLS-based teaching standards is scarce, efforts need to be made at all levels to provide tangible data and models for fine-tuning this new approach.

**Exigency for Research**

As established prior, published research documenting the outcomes of integrating an NLS-based curriculum into local classrooms is generally scarce. Many educators and even more educational policymakers still abide by the same oppressive teaching ideologies that have allowed significant inequities to persist among students (Green & Kostogriz 2003, p. 103). NLS-based teaching methods gives educators the tools for understanding the impact that having multiple marginalized identities can have on a student’s literate ability. This is one of the many benefits of an NLS-based curriculum for both teacher and student, but there are steps that need to be taken for educators to understand the full scope of impact.

First, it should be recognized that student success trajectories are constrained by the ways in which institutional agents read them (Fairbanks & Ariail 2006, p. 349), with the ‘institution’ being the schools that they attend. This has extended consequences for students of marginalized identities as they are quickly labeled as “Other” when they exhibit any sort of learning difficulty or literacy “deficiency” (Green & Kostogriz 2003, p. 104). In turn, these “othered” students immediately are viewed as representatives of their peers with similar identities (Delpit 1998, p. 38), further increasing the harm that those labels can have on said students’ success trajectories. As educators teaching in these oppressive institutions, there should be a sense of responsibility to call attention to the “sociocultural dimensions of students’ lives that are not fully represented” by
traditional education in order to “emphasize and privilege” (Scherff et al. 2013, p. 109-110) these dimensions of students’ identities in their instruction. Rather than hastily passing judgement on students who do not meet the required standards of literacy, efforts should be centered on putting one’s self in their student’s shoes and recognizing they do not all fit the same. There is cultural capital in being an educator in an institution where middle-class values are emphasized—such is not the reality for students who cannot readily identify with these values.

Delaying the integration of NLS into literacy education denies marginalized students from being able to develop the sociocultural and class consciousness (Robillard 2003, p. 76) they need to be able to succeed. Further, it is delaying the possibilities of ethnographic research that could help to broaden existing teacher perspectives (Scribner & Cole 1981, p. 85) and provide concrete models for creating curriculums reflective of NLS for literacy instruction. Currently, the only existing scholarship for framing NLS-inspired literacy education are mostly theoretical; however, theories and philosophies about what NLS could do for the literacies of marginalized students cannot provide insight into the potential limits that could arise upon integrating NLS teaching standards. In order to address these potential drawbacks, a firmer grasp on what an NLS literacy education looks like in practice is needed.

Methodology

In addition to finding research material in the form of documents, journal articles, and other scholarly-written work, I have included some self-conducted research here that will largely be the focus of the rest of the article. Five participants – all full-time college students at a local, private university – were chosen to be interviewed and their responses recorded to be included in this study. The five participants, Ashley, Carmen, Veronica, Molly, and Irene, all identified as
women of color and low-income (or hailing from a lower socioeconomic background/family); however, there were divergences between their types of education (i.e. public or private schooling), ethnicity, and previous schooling locations. Included below are the several standard questions each participant was asked while follow-up questions were improvised as needed for elaboration.

1. How did you learn how to read?
2. How did you learn how to write?
3. Describe the community you come from.
4. Did you feel like there were any cultural influences that affected your ability to learn how to read and/or write?
5. Do you feel like education was promoted in the place that you grew up in?
6. Did you ever feel like your community had a lack of resources that was preventing people from being able to move up in social status?
7. How did you find ways among these setbacks to continue being successful in your education?

After interviews were conducted, participant responses were selectively transcribed in accordance with their relevancy to the main research question—How can literacy be promoted for marginalized students who hail from communities that lack resources for extending their literate abilities and by extension, upward social mobility—and the supplemental questions following. Lastly, analysis of their responses was divided into groups regarding literacy sponsorship either at home or in school (some participants expressed receiving more support for literacy in one setting more than the other). Responses pertaining to literacy sponsorship was also divided into additional sub-groups: in-community schooling and out-of-community schooling to accommodate for variation between school types and location among participants.

**Literacy Attainment at Home**
All participants spoke of having to find unconventional ways of acquiring literacy on their own, but some identified their parents as being their first sponsors for literacy. Parental sponsorship could only go so far, however, as their engagement was usually limited by several factors, including educational gaps between the participant and their parents. For example, Carmen’s parents were not able to finish school on account of their financial struggles and familial responsibilities when they were younger, but “...attempted to instill and emphasize the importance of schooling for their children.” Molly voiced a similar circumstance: her parents did not finish school either but pushed for Molly and her siblings to read and write from an early age. For Carmen and Molly’s parents, motivation and support of their daughters’ education had to account for the resources, connections, and opportunities that they could not provide. And while objectively, these parents’ method of literacy sponsorship may not have followed Brandt’s model (that was depicted earlier on in this article), it was still of equal importance for Carmen and Molly to have to continue with their schooling. Their parents recognized that their children needed affirmation that school was worth pursuing since they had been unable to be a role model of that themselves.

Of course, I would be remiss for assuming any of the factors that did not allow Carmen’s or Molly’s parents to finish their education came about from their own mistakes. On the contrary, many low-income families deal with similar issues of delayed or incomplete schooling with things being further exasperated by related factors such as citizenship status. Language is also a factor that can create additional burdens for being successful in school. For example, if one’s parents do not know English, the burden of acquiring literacy through a new language rests on the shoulders of both the child and the parent. Ashley, who was born and raised in Lawrence, M.A., a small city where most of its population are immigrants from the Dominican Republic
(DR) and Puerto Rice and where she says “You’re better off knowing Spanish than English” speaks below about the challenges of learning English that many families in Lawrence face

“... a lot of parents brought their kids from the Dominican Republic to go to America – to learn English so that they could help them better.... In Lawrence, even though it is a predominantly a Spanish city, a lot of the letters and whatnot still come in English. So, papers from the bank, papers about healthcare or insurance... that’s where the immigrant parents would have their kids going to school to learn English to help translate the papers for them... The kid became that mediator... It was difficult because you had 10- and 12-year-olds translating things from the doctor...”

Ashley, whose first language was Spanish, was responsible for teaching her parents English while learning English herself. Such was the culture of the small city of Lawrence, Massachusetts that Ashley hailed from, however, where many of the older generation had immigrated from the DR. Children were often the one’s responsible for teaching their parents English and about the broader American culture, but this presented many challenges as said children usually trying to navigate the new language and culture at the same time. Veronica, another participant of whose first language was Spanish, also recalled learning English alongside her mom: “My mom... she would give me magazines that would come home in the mail and she would sound out words with me because we didn’t really have ‘how-to-read’ books growing up.”

Since they did not have access to resources like books or other materials that could help her learn how to read, Veronica and her mother did their best to utilize the resources they had at their disposal, like magazines in the mail to strengthen their literacy together.
These participants’ experiences indicate the significance of recognizing how social, linguistic, and geographical factors may intertwine to shape the literacy interactions of individuals (Lynch 2009, p. 518) as they face “non-traditional” challenges such as having to learn English. Students of a similar background must acquire literacy under the same conditions and barriers and must work hard to find ways around them; yet they will still be held to the same traditional standards of literacy that do not account for their unique experiences making this a huge ethical issue that needs to be addressed. Integrating an NLS-based curriculum would be a first step into addressing these concerns because the NLS was created to equalize the value of non-traditional students’ experiences with literacy with that of traditional students. It would force literacy educators and educational policymakers to be cognizant of the fact there are students like Carmen and Molly whose parents did not finish school or students like Ashley and Veronica whose first language was not English. This would begin changing the definition of literacy into something more inclusive of these lived realities and positively influence the prospects of students alike.

**Literacy Attainment in School**

There were several similarities found among the participants with regards to the resources that they were able access for their educational attainment and literacy learning. For instance, almost every participant recalled a specific teacher in their K through 12 education that they felt contributed to their success with these factors. Molly spoke avidly about the teacher dynamics she felt best helped her, particularly when she was struggling in school:

“...I definitely could have dropped out. I didn’t go to school and was getting bad grades because a whole bunch of stuff was going on at home. And I went to such a...
predominantly white school that I felt like no one understood me and half of my teachers just thought I was a lazy high schooler... I probably had something wrong with me, so those teachers who were able to identify that there are other factors in the community and that not everyone has this ‘silver-spoon’ lifestyle – those were the teachers that kept me in school.”

Much of the pressures going on at home for Molly had to do with her background as a mixed-race, low-income student attending an otherwise predominantly white and rich high school. Her sociocultural context had a definitive impact on her ability to engage with her schooling and could have been detrimental for her success trajectory if her teacher had not reached out to her in time. On the other hand, that was just one teacher among many others who all did not understand how Molly’s lack of engagement was a response to facing challenges at home rather than an intentional choice to be “lazy.” Furthermore, being that most of Molly’s classmates came from much more affluent backgrounds, her teachers had very little exposure to working with low-income students and as a result, limited understanding of how a lower socioeconomic status could impact a students’ ability to succeed in school.

In Ashley’s home city of Lawrence, MA, things are quite the opposite. She grew up going to school with peers that hailed from low-income, mixed status households just like herself (over 90% of Lawrence’s taxes are paid for by the federal government). Conversely, the staff in the schools these students attended were usually far removed from the realities of their students

“The state [took] over the school system, so we don’t get to pick our own superintendent(s)... You can imagine people being picked from Boston – they don’t know the city, they don’t know the area, they don’t know what the people of the location need,
the community. So they always tend to overlook the students and the parents. The biggest argument they have, “Parents should get more involved” – They’re just high, rich people coming down from Boston”

Ashley’s frustration with the dynamic between the students of Lawrence and the teachers was very much apparent as she said this and should be taken seriously. It is clear then that non-traditional students, underrepresented students need teachers that are able to understand the scope of impact that their marginalized identities may have on their schooling. Molly had also admitted to being aware of the relationship between students being left behind in school due to them “having so much going on at home,” that focusing on their studies became harder and teachers not exhibiting compassion or patience. Teachers may be quick to blame parents or other external factors for their students lack engagement or inabilities to meet literacy standards. But they need to be able to understand why parents might not be able to sufficiently engage with their children’s education (they are working most of the day, trying to make ends meet for their families or they may not be at the educational level to be of any help) or why a student’s literacy skills may not be up to standard (their first language was not English, or their early education may have been stunted by factors above their control).

In fact, the only teachers that Ashley did have positive things to say about were the ones she felt recognized her marginalized identity and sought to highlight them rather than exploit them. Having teachers that could provide her with individualized help was an especially important part of Ashley’s literacy education because, unlike Molly, she had been diagnosed with a disability as a child: a speech impediment that made it difficult to learn how to articulate herself correctly. This meant that Ashley needed to deal with her speech impediment on top of
trying to be successful in school on top of whatever financial challenges her family might have been facing at home.

While it would be incorrect to generalize the experiences of all marginalized or “non-traditional” students, for many, going to school is an additional pressure to the familial, financial, and social challenges that may be occurring within their lives. Acknowledging these factors may not be directly related to literacy education, but it certainly raises questions for how we can expect these students to meet literacy standards that are not attuned to their unique experiences as marginalized individuals. When we hold them to standards that are unattainable, we are barring them from being able to access more opportunities to be successful. Furthermore, before the NLS can be completely integrated into literacy education, literacy educators “…must look at reading and writing as activities having consequences in (and being affected by) family life, work patterns, economic conditions, patterns of leisure, and a complex of other factors” (Szwed 1981, p. 428). Without doing this work first, we will never be able to view the full extent of what an NLS-based curriculum can provide students like Molly and Ashley. If students cannot be made to feel like their identities, no matter how underrepresented or marginalized, are being acknowledged by the teacher and more importantly, their way of teaching, they are being deprived of opportunities to be successful in their education. We must come to terms with the complexities of the lives of these students without patronizing them for it, or else we will become simply another oppressive force denying them access to social mobility (Szwed 1981, p. 427).

In-Community Schooling: Participants that disclosed going to schools within their communities for most or all their lives had significantly different experiences than their counterparts that went to school elsewhere. Participants that went to school within their marginalized communities that
found that they had a more difficult time acquiring literacy or finding opportunities to do so than participants that went to more affluent schools. It is also important to note that every participant interviewed had also reported living in communities in which the average income was lower and as a result, taxed less, which impacted the funding of for public resources such as community centers, playgrounds, and schools. Accordingly, the participants that attended schools in their communities – Ashley, Carmen, and Veronica – verbalized some of the ways that their peers and themselves were impacted by the school’s financial struggles:

One of the first common struggles that Ashley, Carmen, and Veronica had all witnessed to some extent within the schools they attended was that there was “never really enough to go around.” Having to share textbooks with classmates or read textbooks that were unkempt and ripping or simply outdated were normal practices at their schools. Being unable to use textbooks that were their own, in good condition and up to date meant that they were being deprived of acquiring or enhancing their literate abilities. Electronic resources like computers and tables were often in poor condition and unable to be used to their fullest extent and in many cases, had limited availability for students. Ashley voiced to us her concerns about the high teacher turnover rates at her school, explaining that they were usually “…overworked and underpaid…” in addition to being forced to work with such a limited number of educational resources. These issues contributed to

When we consider the impact that the attainment could have been stunted or delayed because of their underfunded neighborhood schools also remains. In the same way, being unable to use computers in the best condition, or rely on teachers because of the cycle of open positions that persisted because of the turnover rates was another opportunity for literacy engagement missed out on by these students. It is precisely why the NLS studies is so critical for measuring
the extent to which students like Ashley, Carmen, and Veronica were essentially denied opportunities at acquiring literacy because of their marginalized identities.

In other words, the rabbit hole runs deep: the families, communities, and schools within their communities all have played a role in impacting their literate abilities. To put their skills against students that have grown up in affluent families, within affluent communities, having gone to affluent schools would be a disservice to them and the literate abilities they have managed to acquire amidst their circumstances. So, we cannot insist on a way of literacy learning that is familiar to the middle-class mainstream (Green & Kostogriz 2003, p. 110) for students like Ashley, Carmen, and Veronica because they have simply been unable to learn in such a way. The NLS aims for literacy educators to be privy of these “non-traditional” students and it has never been more urgent than now to begin integrating it for this reason.

*Out-of-Community Schooling:* Molly and Irene were the only participants that stated that they attended schools outside of their neighborhoods. Usually, the separate neighborhoods that their schools were in were more affluent and the student population reflected this. They were also predominantly white and rich both in terms of average student-family income and resources provided for the student body. Molly and Irene were equally aware of the privilege they held being able to attend these schools as opposed to their local community schools where drop-out rates were higher, and education was promoted less frequently. They lived two lives: going to school in more privileged communities but having to go back to the reality of their significantly less privileged at the end of the school day. Below Irene describes some of the paradoxes that came about from living this double life in her high school years:
“...the area that I live in now, everyone doesn’t end up... half of them drop out of high-school, a lot of them drop out of college, but I didn’t go to school in that district... I went to a private high school so that definitively made a difference in terms of the promotion for education. The whole time my school prided itself for having a very high graduation rate of students who pass on to go to a four-year university.”

Her explanation of these circumstances came about because of her struggling to answer the fifth question asked: Do you ever feel like education was promoted in the place you grew up in? She found that she would be unable to answer this question without mentioning the two opposing places where she found education was promoted less (in her hometown) and promoted more (in her high school outside of it). As literacy educators and scholars, considering the paradoxical influences that may be present in a student’s life – the push and pull factors that may be leading them away and towards literacy all at once – is necessary, especially when a student is hailing from an arguably “less literate” community.

Even at the more affluent schools she attended, Molly stated that teachers “...would select the students that they see aspiring the most and tell them to go there [good schools] instead of keeping that as a common goal for everyone” (particularly for the students that were of a similar background to her own but were not as academically successful). If this is the case, then what should the parameters be for deeming a student as more “academically aspiring” than others when they come from communities that are not resource-rich? Should there be any at all? More importantly, how can we ensure that as educators we are acting in the best interest of all of our students rather than a select few? These are the questions that should be asked as educators begin to integrate NLS initiatives into their teaching methods, but the answers to them can only come after we have enough information on the outcomes. Urging educators and educational
policymakers to consider this new approach to literacy studies that honors the identity of all students is the first step to getting there.

**Implications and Limitations of Research**

Unfortunately, the research in which I have presented thus far has only been heavily theoretical and not a comprehensive example of what NLS integration looks like (as has been the standard for NLS research for more than a decade). I intended to establish a “call-to-action” for literacy educators and educational policymakers to incorporate the ideologies of NLS en masse, by providing a starting model for the type of ethnographic research that should be conducted moving forward. I have provided examples through my own research but have also been limited by other factors as well. One of these constraints, as mentioned previously, stems from there simply being not enough similar research published that is concrete and not solely foundational. Contemporary research dedicated to the NLS should no longer be based in theory as it can have larger implications for how to respond to the proposed “literacy crisis” that literacy educators claim that our society is currently facing.

Additionally, the participants chosen for this study were not all completely representative of the marginalized identities that I wanted to discuss and as a result, I could not make any arguments that were too specific in application. This does not diminish their experiences however as they provided valuable insight into what a literacy education rooted in the NLS should incorporate. Irene, for instance, spoke about sharing the knowledge and working as an afterschool tutor in her community to help the students there. Ashley suggested having individualized help for marginalized students or creating programs that are mindful of the time commitments of working-class families. Molly credited a large portion of her early academic
success to her attendance of free academic camps. These are all places where NLS education can be fit in some way.

So, the time is now to begin highlighting and acknowledging the identities of marginalized students rather than putting them against unrealistic standards of literacy. The NLS should no longer be just a theory for future literacy education – it should be the future of literacy education and the goal of literacy educators to incorporate broadly. I encourage scholars and enthusiasts within the literacy studies discourse to push for the same agendas I have in this paper by conducting research that attempts to understand the urgency for the NLS in literacy education and the instances where it can benefit students the most.

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