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Toward a *Corridista* Consciousness: Learning From One Transnational Youth's Critical Reading, Writing, and Performance of Mexican Corridos

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ABSTRACT

This article examines instances of a U.S.-Mexican transnational youth honing his critical translanguaging literacy skills through his engagement with corridos, Mexican balladry in Spanish that often emphasizes injustice and border strife. The author relies on ethnographic classroom observations, the student's journals, and semistructured interviews to provide a glimpse into the complexities and sophistication of the bilingual youth's everyday language and literacy practices in an era of vehement anti-immigrant rhetoric. This inquiry asks, (a) What do literacy practices deeply rooted in corridos look like? (b) How does one youth read and engage with the Mexican musical genre of corridos to make sense of his social and political world? and (c) What are the environments and educational settings that supported this literacy development? Findings detail a transnational youth's *corridista* (balladeer) consciousness and its concomitant language and literacy practices that shape and are shaped by his participation in both his Tijuana communities of origin and his Los Angeles communities. Specifically, this study showcases a student's uses of literary devices, including allegory, to describe myriad forms of oppression and resistance found in corrido lyrics and throughout the lives of U.S.-Mexican transnational youths. Attention to literary genres that are often unsanctioned in traditional English-medium classrooms and recognizing the complex cognitive abilities of bilinguals can harvest critical insight about literacy education in and out of school. Implications from this study highlight meaningful learning contexts for transnational adolescents' literacies and how engagement of these literacies might be (re)conceptualized through an ethnic studies and Chicana/Latina Studies lens.

For me, corridos¹ are [the carriers of] our history, stories, and struggles as a people. I been listenin' [to them] since I was little. They teach us 'bout México y la lucha de nuestros antepasados [the struggle of our ancestors], you know? They also teach you 'bout the streets, how to *sobrevivir* [survive] in *el norte* [the North, or the United States]. I been writin' corridos since middle school, too....But for the most part, it's like *Mexicanos* don't exist [in school curricula]. And when we do, *somos los ilegales* [they talk about us as illegals]....Corridos remind us of who we really are. (Joaquín, 11th grader, field note, November, 13, 2014; all names are pseudonyms)

Joaquín's statement was recorded at a Southern California high school as part of a study about Mexican students' diverse experiences with literacy. At the time, he was enrolled in a high school ethnic studies course called Chicana/Latina Studies.² Joaquín was reflecting on his knowledge and proficiency of Mexican border corridos and the stories

that they carry as tools for empowerment in an amplified anti-immigrant climate. His words “*somos los ilegales*” remind us of the greater antimigrant hegemony (Gonzales, 2013) that pervades our society, media, and educational system. Reading, writing, and performing corridos are among the myriad transnational and translingual literacy practices that bilingual students, like Joaquín, engage in daily and bring to U.S. schools’ rapidly changing demographic compositions. Yet, these compelling practices are narrowly conceived by nationalized literacy curricula (Gutiérrez, 2007). Scholars aligned with the New Literacy Studies tradition (Gee, 1991; Street, 1984, 1995) have urged further examination of the power relations surrounding what counts as literacy and whose literacy matters (Alvermann & Heron, 2001; Fisher, 2005; Morrell, 2004; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007). These questions are especially urgent as transnational social worlds become increasingly accepted as commonplace (Canagarajah, 2013; Skerrett, 2015).

Students who lead transnational lives are a critical segment of U.S. schools (Skerrett, 2012). However, their literacy engagements are less understood because they are too simply grouped within the umbrella of immigrant students (Zuniga & Hamman, as cited in Skerrett, 2015) in ways that flatten the complexity of their literacy practices. Although many immigrant students live transnational lives, scholars have delineated some important differences. In brief, transnationals engage with the ongoing contact and movement of people, ideas, capital investment, and products between two or more nations (Portes, 1999), and their unique literacy practices can be manifested in physical or digital forms (Jiménez, Eley, Leander, & Smith, 2015). Thus, transnational students often live complex lives where the adoptive community may contradict the norms and values of the students’ home community (Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007).

In the last two decades, scholars have increasingly urged further study of young people’s varied transnational literacies (Jiménez, 2003; Kim, 2016; Lam, 2006, 2009; Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009; Lam & Warriner, 2012) and the ways in which students’ transnational language and literacy practices can inform literacy learning in schools (Skerrett, 2015). This article contributes to this literature by providing a telling case (Mitchell, 1984) of Joaquín’s transnational literacies of corridos. Toward this aim, three central research questions guided this study:

1. What do literacy practices deeply rooted in corridos look like?
2. How does one youth read and engage with the Mexican musical genre of corridos to make sense of his social and political world?
3. What are the environments and educational settings that supported this literacy development?

Findings challenge dominant narratives that tie the Chicana(x) (of Mexican origin) student-age population to ideologies of languagelessness (Rosa, 2016) and instead position them as youths who employ cognitively sophisticated and complex multilingual and multiliterate practices (García, 2009; Skerrett, 2013).

The subsequent section provides a rationale for studying adolescents’ corrido literacies, the sociopolitical climate that mediates the experiences of transnational youths, a theoretically informed discussion pertaining to the study, a more detailed description of Joaquín, and the context and methodology. The analysis follows, tracing Joaquín’s numerous cultural, language, and literacy practices with corridos that work to orchestrate his *corridista* (balladeer) consciousness (de los Ríos, 2017a), which I further detail. The discussion and implications highlight meaningful learning contexts for adolescents’ transnational literacies and how engagement of such literacies might be (re)conceptualized through an ethnic studies and Chicana(x)/Latinx Studies lens. This study contributes to the nascent knowledge about transnational adolescents’ corrido literacies, as well as ethnographic understandings of transnational youths’ literacy practices within ethnic studies classrooms.

Corrido Literacies

Since the 19th century, corridos have amplified issues of repression and contested the hegemonic discourses of print journalism in Mexico (Paredes, 1958; Westgate, 2013). Corridos, which have historically been written in Spanish, have long been central to the self-determination and literary landscape of Mexican people (Paredes, 1958). Corridos, a border rhetoric (Noe, 2009), are short ballads often made up of nine stanzas of four lines each and up to 10 syllables per line. The songs tell stories of love, triumph, and hardship and often narrativize border conflicts and struggles for justice (Simonett, 2001). Developed out of the Spanish ballad (Paredes, 1958), during the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the corrido was popularized as a form of *poesía callejera* (street poetry; de Guzmán, 1962) that aimed to illustrate the struggles of indigenous people, Mestizos, and the poor throughout Mexico and along the U.S.–Mexico border (Chew Sánchez, 2006; Paredes, 1958; Simonett, 2001). The Mexican corrido disseminated news about the battles of the Mexican Revolution and future combat to the general populace. Lyricists would put current events into words, whereas the music remained in its traditional form (Paredes, 1958). Corridos continue to shape “the cultural memories and identities of transnational Mexican groups” (Chew Sánchez, 2006, p. 3).

Despite the popularity of corridos, there have been very few investigations of the adolescents who read and

write corridos as a literacy practice. There have been, however, extensive inquiries into corridos as an adult activist literacy practice in Mexican American and Chicana/o Studies (Herrera-Sobek, 1993; Paredes, 1958), rhetoric and composition studies (Noe, 2009), folklore studies (McDowell, 2012; Simmons, 1957), and media studies (Pedelty, 2004; Westgate, 2013). Within the field of adolescent literacy, there remains a paucity of research on the academic affordances of corridos in the lives of bilingual transnational young people. One recent exception is Garcia-Hernandez's (2016) notable study of Latina adolescent girls' critical readings of Chicana corridista Jenni Rivera's corridos and the ways in which her corridos served as "sonic pedagogies" (p. 428) for cultivating feminist and counterhegemonic identities. I argue that a sociopolitical climate of hostility toward transnational and immigrant Latinx youths only intensifies the urgency to study their language and literacy practices as forms of resistance, transformation, and possible solutions.

Sociopolitical Context of the Study

The past decades' attacks on immigrant communities through harsh migration control policies and practices in the United States have served as fertile soil for communities to respond agentively (Das Gupta, 2006; Pallares, 2014; Zepeda-Millán, 2017) and for developing students' critical literacies in schools (Cabrera, Meza, Romero, & Rodríguez, 2013; de la Piedra & Araujo, 2012; de los Ríos, 2013). Gonzales (2013) contended that the contemporary immigrant movement and its supporters face a dynamic form of political power that he identified as antimigrant hegemony. This influence is applied in various sites of power, including Congress, the media, and local governmental institutions, through which a presumed race-neutral public policy discourse is employed to criminalize immigrants and their children (Gonzales, 2013; Pallares, 2014).

According to a Pew Hispanic Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data, there were more than 12.4 million Latinx students enrolled in prekindergarten to 12th grade in 2014, making them among the largest school-age groups in the United States (Fry & Lopez, 2012). Of this critical mass, the majority of Latinx children are ethnically of Mexican descent (Fry & Lopez, 2012). At the end of the 20th century, debilitating political, economic, and social systems and foreign policies pressed millions of families from Latin America to migrate north to the United States (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Thus, Latinx immigrants and their children are transforming the racial compositions of U.S. schools, prompting educators and policymakers to reevaluate

curriculum and instruction (Callahan & Gándara, 2014).

Within this context, the everyday language and literacy practices of transnational youths remain an understudied phenomenon (Skerrett, 2015). Prevailing discourses position students, like Joaquín, through deficit lenses that locate educational inequalities as deficiencies in the skills, culture, values, and activities of students' families (Gutiérrez, 2006). In contrast to deficit model ideologies, scholars have located inequalities in the devaluing of students' fluid linguistic repertoires, funds of knowledge, and transnational resources while pointing to social and economic structures as the sources of inequity (Brittain, 2002, 2009; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Valenzuela, 1999). Joaquín, like many U.S.–Mexico transnational youths, is bilingual, and much of his identity depends on constantly performing culturally and linguistically in a standardized variety of the dominant language (García & Wei, 2014).

Furthermore, the abolishment of the Tucson Unified School District's Mexican American studies program demonstrates assaults on Mexican and Chicana students' humanity, literacies, and histories. Critics have argued that ethnic studies courses, including its subdisciplines such as Chicana/Latinx Studies courses, promote racial separatism and do not equip students with academic literacy skills (Martinez, 2012; Planas, 2012). However, growing research has demonstrated that ethnic studies courses foster robust academic literacy development and empowered transnational youth identity development (de los Ríos, 2013, 2016, 2017b). Moreover, as increasing anti-immigrant rhetoric rises under the current presidential administration, the grassroots movement to expand secondary ethnic studies courses is gaining momentum in some of the most racially and linguistically diverse California school districts (Buenavista, 2016). Studying the literacy activities within ethnic studies courses in the Southwest is important because enrolled students are often bi/multilingual and have transnational backgrounds (de los Ríos, 2013); the cultural hybridity explored through these curricula also often appears in students' language and literacy repertoires. With this in mind, little has been documented around the nature of transnational and immigrant youths' participation in ethnic studies courses.

Theoretical Framing and Relevant Literature

To build a framework for the analysis of Joaquín's transnational literacy practices, I draw from perspectives that contemplate the situated, contextual, and ideological nature of reading and writing in young transnational people's lives.

Latinx Literacies as Social Practice

Studies in the field of adolescent literacy have highlighted the disjuncture that students from Latinx immigrant and transnational families experience between the cultural and linguistic resources extant in their communities and those that are prized in schools (Bartlett, 2007; de la Piedra & Araujo, 2012; Pacheco, 2012). Several scholars studying immigrant and transnational children's literacies have looked to New Literacy Studies (Bartlett, 2007; Lam, 2004) and critical sociocultural literacy (Ghisso, 2016) because of their expansive understandings of literacy beyond the printed world and as something influenced by social interactions and globalization and shaped by economic, political, social, and cultural forces (Gee, 1991; Street, 1984, 1995). Scholars aligned with these traditions see literacy as a social and ideological practice (Street, 1995) and investigate the ways in which individual identities, relationships, and institutional structures are maintained and negotiated through what people say and do with literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2012). Characterized by an understanding that there are multiple literacies (New London Group, 1996) situated within social and cultural practices, New Literacy Studies amplifies the role of power and social hierarchies, including the ways that certain forms of literacies in society are more valorized than others (Street, 1984).

Studies within the New Literacy Studies tradition, specifically, have pointed to the language and literacy practices that Latinx bi/multilingual youths develop in out-of-school spaces (Lam, 2000, 2006, 2009; Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009). Yet, insufficient information exists about the ways in which Latinx bi/multilingual youths develop these practices and identities across their social and political worlds (Skerrett, 2013, 2015). Furthermore, even fewer studies have linked literacy practices to the unique issues of language and literacy engagement of bi/multilingual transnational youths inside secondary schools (Bartlett, 2007; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007; Stewart, 2014). Consequently, I discuss other bodies of literature that have informed the present study (a) in relation to the literacy and language practices of secondary transnational youths and (b) with respect to transnational youths' border thinking as an integral component of understanding their *corrido* literacy practices.

Translanguaging and Transnational Literacies

Collectively, translanguaging and transnational literacies are border-crossing communicative practices (Hornberger & Link, 2012) that are increasingly becoming recognized as the normative practice of people around the world (Canagarajah, 1999). Scholars have argued that this kind of linguistic fluidity has long been

ubiquitous; however, colonialism and monoglossic ideologies have worked to silence, erase, and control fluid language practices in a globalized world (Canagarajah, 1999, 2013; García, 2009). In its original practice and understanding in Wales, translanguaging denotes the intentional pedagogical vacillation of languages in oral and written, receptive and constructive modes (Baker, 2001; Williams, 1994). A number of scholars have extended the concept of translanguaging and pushed back against dominant notions of a bilingual person as the sum of two monolinguals (Grosjean, 1982).

For example, García (2009) advanced a dynamic bilingualism that

is not like a bicycle with two balanced wheels; it is more like an all-terrain vehicle...[whose] wheels...extend and contract, flex and stretch, making possible, over highly uneven ground, movement forward that is bumpy and irregular but also sustained and effective. (p. 45)

As a discourse practice, translanguaging engages “different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential” (p. 140). García, Ibarra-Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) argued that bi/multilingual students regularly draw from their diverse language practices and registers of speech to make sense of their everyday and complex bi/multilingual worlds.

Transnational literacies, in contrast, engage funds of knowledge, identities, and social, political, and economic relations that spread across national borders (Warriner, 2007). According to Vieira (2013), as literacy practices and human beings travel across national borders, a transnational perspective of literacy elucidates the ways in which these trajectories overlap and intertwine. Skerrett (2015) noted that although studies examining transnational youths' literacy practices remain scant, they are growing (Bartlett, 2007; de la Piedra & Araujo, 2012; Jiménez, Smith, & Teague, 2009; Kim, 2016). Studies that explored transnational U.S.–Mexican youths make up a significant portion of the scholarship and focused primarily on border youths' popular culture practices and their concomitant multilingual and multimodal literacies (de la Piedra, 2010; de los Ríos, 2017a; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007; Skerrett, 2012). As studies continue to emerge, there remains limited knowledge in practical approaches to literacy education that are receptive and inclusive to the skill sets and literacies that transnational youths, like Joaquín, bring with them to school (de la Piedra, 2010; Sánchez, 2007; Skerrett, 2015).

Accordingly, transnational youths' everyday literacies are ongoing assemblages of knowledge, ideology, and specific cultural practices replete with potential academic promise (Jiménez et al., 2015). Whereas the literature has noted that border youths' multiliterate and multilingual practices are rarely valued in dominant

curricula (de la Piedra, 2010), Joaquín's case builds on the emerging studies that have documented the collective force of translanguaging and transnational practices when leveraged in secondary classroom contexts (de los Ríos, 2017a; Stewart, 2014). To further develop a conceptual frame for examining such cognitive abilities and movements across physical and metaphorical borders, I turn to recent studies of border thinking with border youths.

Border Thinking With Border Youths

Drawing on Anzaldúa's (1987) notion of the borderlands, Bejarano (2005) characterized the lives of border youths as intricately tied to border culture and border life, stating that living so close to the border "symbolized their umbilical cord to Mexico" (p. 169). This metaphor describes many U.S.–Mexican transnational youths who choose (consciously or unconsciously) not to passively assimilate U.S. standards of life and culture, making the borderlands a critical component of their survival. Bejarano added that it is imperative to hear youths' nuanced border narratives because youths of Mexican descent live at the crossroads of divergent forms of colonialism and domination perpetuated by both youth and adult societies. Because a "mestiza consciousness" or "a consciousness of duality" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 59) endures as a mode of survival in the borderlands, Mignolo (2000) and Bejarano concurred that the border is a place where hybridity is shaped through experiences of repression and emerging consciousness.

Mignolo's (2000) work on excavating the thinking processes and bodies of knowledge that have been subalternized—rendered invisible by hegemonic orders of knowledge—pertains to this study because Joaquín's knowledge of, engagement with, and production of border popular culture in many ways reshapes the borderlands itself. Mignolo conceptualized "border thinking" as "knowledge conceived from the exterior border of the modern/colonial world system" (p. 11) and includes thinking "between two languages and their historical relations in the modern world system and the coloniality of power" (p. 74). Current racial, ethnic, and social hierarchies are the product of European colonialism in the Americas that dates back to 1492. These legacies of colonialism grant power to certain people while dehumanizing others through what Mignolo identified as the colonial difference. Within the colonial difference, border thinking emerges, emanating from the epistemic borderlands where the colonial/modern global design intersects with local practices and histories (Mignolo, 2005). Moreover, Mignolo first theorized border thinking on Chicax subjectivities when he recognized the subaltern knowledge production

of people, like Joaquín, living in ongoing colonial or formerly colonized lands. Finally, border thinking is concerned with the subjectivities of those who did not physically cross borders but rather had borders cross them.

Although still limited in scope, inquiries aimed at understanding transnational youths' unique border thinking in school communities and in the field of literacy are expanding (Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo, 2016; de los Ríos & Seltzer, 2017; Ghiso & Campano, 2013). Taken together, I see Mignolo's (2000) work on border thinking, concepts of transnational and translanguaging literacies, and Latinx new literacies as integral to inviting into the classroom the cultural, epistemic, and discursive borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987) that U.S. Latinx transnational youths deftly navigate.

Methodology

I draw from the aforementioned theoretical perspectives to analyze the ways in which Joaquín, who immigrated at a young age from Mexico to the United States, engaged a *corridista* consciousness and its concomitant literacy practices. This study is rooted in a critical paradigm that abandons the assumption of detached objectivism and instead speaks from "very particular race, class, gender, and sexual identity locations" (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005, p. 218). My understanding of literacy builds on the ethnographic tradition that documents how communities within a social context use literacy in their everyday lives (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984) and investigates the ways in which identities, relationships, and institutions are sustained and negotiated through what people say and do with literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Thus, this research used ethnographic methods and hails from a larger 10-month study examining immigrant and transnational bi/multilingual adolescents enrolled in a high school ethnic studies course in the Southwest.

Case Study

Case studies are qualitative methodologies designed to gather information about a unique circumstance of understudied phenomena. Due to their revelatory nature, case studies that represent unique cases are especially useful to extend or challenge theories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Within the field of literacy, the in-depth study of single cases "helps illuminate the situated nature of learning to read and write, and the complexity of individual persons and the practices of literacy" (Lam, 2000, p. 465). Although within the empirical literature Joaquín's expertise of corridos might be seen as extreme

or atypical, his story is a telling case (Mitchell, 1984) because his deep understandings of corridos represent not an outlier but rather a phenomenon that has gone woefully underrepresented in greater conversations of adolescent literacy research.

Characteristics of strong case study research include prolonged contact with the subject and data collection from multiple sources (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Thus, this study draws on the following sources of data: (a) three 45-minute semistructured interviews with Joaquín between 2014 and 2015, one follow-up 60-minute semistructured interview in June 2017, and many informal conversations between 2009 and the present; (b) participant observation in Joaquín's Chicana/Latina Studies course twice a week over the course of the 2014–2015 school year (documented through analytic memos and detailed field notes); and (c) Joaquín's written corridos from both his in-class journal and home journal. I then drew from the various data collection methods mentioned previously to provide triangulation of data.

Setting

Most of the students at the school were of Mexican descent and from immigrant families. According to California Department of Education data, the demographics of the students at Joaquín's school at the time were 85% Latino, 12% African American, and 3% undisclosed; 81% received free or reduced-price lunch. About 42% of the student body was classified as English language learners, with the primary language being Spanish. The Chicana/Latina Studies course under study comprised immigrant students or children of immigrants, at differing points of the bilingual continua (Hornberger, 2003). The teacher, Mr. Miranda, is the son of Mexican immigrants and self-identifies as a bilingual Chicano who was raised in the same working-class immigrant community as Joaquín. Prior to my research in Mr. Miranda's classroom, he was not aware of the official term or theory of translanguaging; however, he had already developed curricular and pedagogical approaches that reflected translanguaging and transnationalism. He shared that "it only makes sense" (field note, November 13, 2014) to use both Spanish and English when working with bilingual and emergent bilingual youths. His already existent engagement with translanguaging pedagogies was one of the primary reasons that I purposively selected his Chicana/Latina Studies class as the place of inquiry for my larger research project.

Joaquín

Joaquín was one of the eight focal participants in a larger study from a sample of 36 students between 16 and 18 years of age. The majority of the students enrolled in the course, and those selected as focal

participants, were of Mexican descent; however, several only had one parent from Mexico, another had a parent from El Salvador, and still another had a parent from Guatemala. Joaquín, like many of his classmates—42% of whom were classified as English language learners, and 85% of whom self-identified as Latinxs—was raised in a Spanish-dominant-speaking home. Whereas Joaquín was formally classified as a long-term English learner at the beginning of the study, I refer to him as an emergent bilingual (García, 2009) throughout the study to emphasize his linguistic strengths and the fluid and shifting nature of his developing practices as he does being bilingual (Auer, 1984). I selected him from among my focal participants as the subject of this case study for several important reasons.

First, Joaquín's responses in our interviews regularly referred to a range of bilingual literacy practices (i.e., media, musical, critical) and almost always centered the reading and writing of corridos. Second, he not only comes from a family of musicians but is also a musician who writes, composes, and produces corridos regularly. As a true scholar of corridos, he spent hours every day on YouTube listening and searching for the latest releases by his favorite *corridistas* and attempted to decode them for meaning and relevance. Part of this intellectual work included finding the songs' lyrics online to read them closely (field note, April 14, 2017). Concurrently, Joaquín was seldom perceived as a strong student by many of his teachers due to his formal classification as a long-term English learner (field note, April 14, 2015). As I read through the data in light of my research questions, the wealth and sophistication of his everyday literacy practices defied the racialized and deficit perceptions of Latinx students classified as long-term English learners (Brooks, 2015). Joaquín had an entire literacy expertise outside of school that was rarely seen, sanctioned, valued, or leveraged into his classroom life. Third, I selected Joaquín because he manifested the ways in which transnational youths, "through a mix of necessity and choice, embark on a mobile international lifestyle to take advantage of economic, social, educational, and other opportunities across two or more nations" (Skerrett, 2015, p. xi). He immigrated to the United States with his family at the age of 6 and had migrated back and forth to Tijuana several times throughout elementary school, primarily because of social and economic precariousness.

Although Joaquín manifests some of the characteristics of transnational youths' language and literacy practices reflected in the existent literature (de la Piedra, 2010; Gutiérrez, 2008; Stewart, 2014), his extreme case (Flyvbjerg, 2006) extends these conversations to include transnational youths' dynamic literacies of corridos. In particular, Joaquín's case highlights some of the learning contexts that can support these salient literacy practices.

Course Curriculum

The yearlong Chicana/Latina Studies class examined notions of colonialism, hegemony, and racism in the United States and how they impact communities of color, particularly Chicanas and Latinas. Although ethnic studies courses continue to be understood as rare, they have existed as both elective and core curriculum courses since the late 1960s (de los Ríos, López, & Morrell, 2015). Since the beginning, ethnic studies courses have sought to restore and mobilize the decolonial histories of oppressed communities of color in the United States. The elective Chicana/Latina Studies course was offered to 11th and 12th graders daily for 55 minutes. The course was devised and taught by Mr. Miranda, who was in his seventh year of teaching the course. As a curriculum of the borderlands (de los Ríos, 2013), the course sought to center border literary genres and pedagogies as a means to explore more nuanced understandings of Chicana and Latina histories as they are conditioned by the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, borders, regional variation, and power.

Positionality

I am a Chicana who was raised in an immigrant household in the city where this study took place and am a former teacher at the high school that Joaquín attended at the time. Trustworthiness was established through my prolonged knowledge and engagement with both the school community and Joaquín and his family. I once taught not only Joaquín but also several members of his family, including his high school sweetheart, now wife, whom he married shortly after graduating. As my role expanded to include research, I maintained trust with Joaquín through continual contact and member checking (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) as the writing developed, as well as by sharing insights on the theory and practice of translanguaging with Mr. Miranda, Joaquín's teacher at the time of the study. Given Joaquín's and his family's musical talent, several of his family members have performed at a number of my own family's intimate parties, and Joaquín and his family are seen as extended members of my family. In fact, his astute insight on corridos was central to my original impetus to pursue graduate school and study the undervalued literacy practices of transnational youths. Joaquín, in all of his greatness, reflected much of the genius of other emergent bilingual transnational youths that too often goes unheralded.

Limitations

Although the corpus of data includes Joaquín's references to family literacy practices and cultural resources that he engaged in beyond the school site, one significant limitation of the case study data are that all observations,

interviews, and field notes were done at school and in the Chicana/Latina Studies course. Additionally, a defining characteristic and limitation of single-case studies is the issue of generalizability. Regardless of methodology, notions of generalizability in qualitative literacy research are problematic (Neuman & McCormick, 1995). This research is aligned with the work of scholars who have advocated for notions of transferability instead (Cooper et al., 2007, as cited in Neuman & McCormick, 1995) so similar research could be reimagined, re-created, and extended to other contexts.

Analysis

I first took an iterative approach to my data that combined both inductive and deductive approaches (Maxwell, 2013). I developed deductive codes from existing empirical literature and a previous pilot study in the same Chicana/Latina Studies course and included translanguaging, students' readings of their social/linguistic/cultural worlds, resistance to dominant and oppressive narratives, and linguistic creativity. I derived inductive codes from data analysis in which I adapted Luttrell's (2010) three-step analytical process, in which data were sorted, indexed, and read through a total of three times. The first reading consisted of looking for "recurring images, words, phrases, and metaphors" (p. 262); the second reading entailed looking for "coherence among the stories" (p. 262); and the third reading consisted of a coding that used concepts from my theoretical framework. During the third reading, I looked for examples of border thinking, literacy as social practice, reading social and political borderlands, and transnational critical consciousness in Joaquín's transcripts and writing. I also looked for examples of where and when he referenced spaces in his ethnic studies classroom that created space for his corrido literacies. Whereas in the larger ethnographic project I accounted for discrepant cases, for this article I aimed my analysis at creating a more complex portrayal of literacy and pedagogical activity.

Toward a *Corridista* Consciousness

Deeply Rooted in Corridos: Joaquín's Early Family Literacy Practices

As mentioned in the epigraph of this article, Joaquín is an avid reader, writer, and creator of corridos; he manifests what I call a *corridista* consciousness. Emanating from one's personal relationship with the border and knowledge of corridos, a *corridista* consciousness acknowledges young people as the authors and storytellers

of their transnational lives and draws from their rich corrido literacy and language practices (de los Ríos, 2017a). In Joaquín's case, his *corridista* consciousness developed at a very young age and is rooted in his family's literacy practices with corridos. Joaquín grew up fully immersed in norteño (Northern Mexican) culture and music, where corridos about transnational life were central to the fabric of his family's life, identity, and literacy. When he was not working with his dad for extra money, Joaquín's weekends consisted of playing the accordion and listening to corridos with his father and uncles. When I asked Joaquín about his earliest memories of corridos, he reminisced:

I grew up listening to corridos, banda, and norteñas. *Mi pá* [my pops] was from Tijuana, and he loved Los Tucanes de Tijuana *y siempre los escuchábamos* [and we would listen to their music all the time]. So, *aprendí de él* [I learned from him]. *Mi pá* used to sing in a *grupo* [group] norteño *con mis tíos* [with my uncles], and I grew up hearing them play at different family parties. His *grupo* played a lot of [Los Tucanes de Tijuana's] cover songs. That's some of my earliest memories of corridos...always listening to corridos *de* [of] Los Tucanes *porque hablaban del rancho, de lo cotidiano en* [because they spoke of ranch life and of everyday life in] Tijuana...so my family could, you know, relate. This later made me want to learn the accordion and play music, too. *Mi grupo se llama* [My group is called] Los Iniciados, meaning like "the beginners." We picked it cuz we come from humble beginnings *y somos humildes* [and we're humble people]...that came from nothing but like to play corridos.

Drawing from his fluid linguistic repertoire, Joaquín noted "*aprendí de él*," which centralized his father as one of his earliest teachers of literacy. This statement signals literacy practices that are acquired through apprenticeships to new discourse communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that emanate from both epistemic and physical borders. Joaquín's earliest literacy practices, a subset of social practices, involved everyday interactions with his family members and learning from their knowledge of corridos. As a situated learner, Joaquín's father and uncles served as disciplinary insiders who socialized him as an apprentice through reading, memorization, oral recitation, writing, strong norteño and transnational identity affiliations, exploring the accordion, and musical and linguistic creativity.

Joaquín specifically identified the context in which he made the decision to learn; this context is decidedly transnational and affirms Mignolo's (2000) border thinking thesis of subaltern knowledge that derives from the modern/colonial world. Joaquín's written and performed ballads—original corridos themselves—invoke a Tijuana imaginary postmigration. Within this imaginary, moreover, he locates himself on his terms, as a subject who originates from humble beginnings. In this way, Joaquín's understanding of himself is liminal and shifts in and out

of different spaces. In addition to a transnational position, his drive to learn is undergirded by social relationships, a concept central to New Literacy Studies. Barton and Hamilton (2000) cautioned that literacy practices involve more than simply actions with texts: "Literacy practices are more usefully understood as existing in the relations between people, within groups and communities" (p. 8). Hence, Joaquín's literacy practices deeply rooted in corridos include intergenerational relationships and apprenticeship, not just a set of skills that reside in a single individual.

Joaquín stated that his family "could, you know, relate" to the corridos of the 1990s because they amplified a social and political world that vacillated between "el rancho" and U.S. urban barrios (Spanish-speaking neighborhoods). The musical group Los Tucanes de Tijuana write songs about the rise of drug cartels in Mexico and the ways in which transnationalism, exploitation, and political upheaval affect the lives of migrants on both sides of the border (Wald, 2001). Joaquín shared, "apart from what the corridos were saying in the 1990s, *mi pá* listened to them cuz they were good lyricists and talked about *los paisas³ de esos tiempos* [the *paisas* of that time]." These experiences planted the roots for a *corridista* consciousness that would eventually allow Joaquín to critically consume, analyze, and write his own corridos throughout his K–12 schooling trajectory. He formed his band in ninth grade with three friends, all self-taught musicians, and selected a name that reflects their working-class origins and their identities as emerging musicians with U.S.–Mexico transnational affiliations (field notes, April 17, 2017).

In one interview, Joaquín recited orally in Spanish one of his earliest memories of writing corridos. As he shared a corrido that he had handwritten in the seventh grade when his *abuelita* (grandmother) had passed away, he explained that he had first written it in his home journal where he writes most of his songs. Like most of his corridos, they are literary manifestations of his life's soundscape. He did not have to read actual words of this particular corrido because it had already become "part of [his] memory" (field note, December, 14, 2014). Joaquín sang,

Voy a cantar un corrido (I am going to sing a corrido),
quiero que lo escuchen bien (I want you to listen to me well),
te digo algo que pasó (I'll tell you something that happened),
allá por el mayo 23 (over there on May 23).
Una señora querida se nos perdió (A woman who was loved passed away).
Todos sus hijos les lloran (All of her children cry for her),
nietos y hijos también (grandchildren and children alike).
Nadien les pueden consolar (No one can console us)
pero la angelita va a volar (but our angel will fly).

Joaquín's cultural performance elucidates a type of literacy that uniquely captured his affection toward his grandmother, who lived in Tijuana and helped raise him and his brothers. Although Joaquín was not in Tijuana when she passed away, as a transnational border subject, he imagines himself as always connected to people in Tijuana and to Tijuana's specific aesthetic, landscape, and history. In many ways, he is in both places at once. According to Joaquín, this is when his literacy practices rooted in corridos shifted from just a form of popular culture to a form of family literacy that was sacred and significant. In the same interview, he shared that writing and performing this specific corrido for his *abuelita* helped him not only find healing but also discover the power of corridos as something that he and his *abuelita* "could have forever" (field note, December, 14, 2014).

Furthermore, as well-established, if short-lived, popular balladry (Paredes, 1958), "the corrido is as conventional a form as the five-paragraph model" (Paredes, 1958, as cited in Noe, 2009, p. 598). The word *corrido* derives from the word *correr*, meaning to run or flow; thus, the corrido narrates stories swiftly and directly (Paredes, 1990, as cited in Chew Sánchez, 2006). In many ways, Joaquín engages the corrido not just as a writing template for his song writing but also as a literary device itself that portrays his love across physical and metaphorical borders through a transnational lens. His love for his family, particularly his father and grandmother, springboarded his use of corridos as the most versatile platform to make his love and border thinking legible.

Joaquín's Critical Reading of Social and Political Worlds Through Corridos

The significance of corridos, both in content and as a catalyst for his own criticality and creativity, reappeared throughout Joaquín's interviews and my field notes. As a high school student, even when unsolicited, he regularly discussed with me and his teachers the role that corridos play in his daily life as a "type of school" (field note, October, 18, 2014), including his belief that the genre must never be passively consumed. Outside of school, Joaquín often spent a significant number of hours on various websites, primarily YouTube, working to closely read and identify the rich metaphors that *corridistas* used to talk about "*la corrupción*" (the corruption) or larger systemic issues in Mexico and transnationally across borders. The allegorical nature of poetry is central to Joaquín's *corridista* consciousness, through which he critically reads his sociopolitical world as a transnational subject. For example, the metaphors found in both Mario "El Cachorro" Delgado's and

Los Tigres del Norte's corridos excerpted below gave Joaquín compelling ideas to consider:

Qué está pasando en el rancho, se está perdiendo el respeto
(What is happening in the ranch, respect is being lost)
los pollos desaparecen y al mes aparecen muertos (the chickens disappear and a month later they come up dead)
que raro porque la granja la cuida un abuelo y nieto (how weird because the ranch is being overseen by a grandpa and a grandson; Delgado, 2015)

Hoy tenemos día con día (Today, day after day we have)
mucha inseguridad (a lot of insecurity)
porque se soltó la perra (because the dog has been unleashed; Los Tigres del Norte, 2009)

To describe these corridos, Joaquín shared the following:

Like any kind of music, there are good and bad. There are some bad corridos, like narcocorridos that talk about drugs, drug trafficking, cartels, and like making money... *o como los del Chapo* [or like those about El Chapo], the drug cartel leader de Sinaloa..., and then there are some real good ones. "*La Granja*" by Los Tigres and "*El Rancho*" by El Cachorro use metaphors and code language, like farm animals or like a dog as a *narcotraficante* [drug dealer] and other types of characters, to talk about the corruption of the Mexican and U.S. governments, like how they work together and sometimes even with the cartels. *Los pollitos desaparecidos* [The missing chicks] in El Cachorro's song, "*El Rancho*," are actually the 43 missing *normalistas* [student teachers] that disappeared from Ayotzinapa in [Southern] Mexico. You know, all them [students] that went missing? And the grandpa and *nieto* [grandson] are *el presidente de* [the president of] Mexico, Peña Nieto. So, you have to know what they're talking about, or figure it out. The *corridistas* make us aware of issues happening. They make us want to do right, and show us how to not be *tontitos* [ignorant]. [Joaquín pauses, looks at his phone, scrolls through some pictures, and shows me El Cachorro's album cover.] *¡Él es!* [This is him!] (personal communication, November 14, 2014)

Joaquín expressed the importance of corridos as a form of literacy in his life, and the ways in which they can serve as a conduit for social awareness and critical consciousness in immigrant youths' translingual and transnational worlds.

Drawing from his multiple transnational and translinguaging literacies, Joaquín astutely connected the missing chickens on the farm referenced in El Cachorro's song to the 43 student teachers who disappeared from the Ayotzinapa Normal School in Iguala, Mexico, in September 2014. Given Joaquín's participation in political conversations and keen attention to both commercial and alternative Spanish media outlets, he confidently recognized that El Cachorro and other *corridistas*, such as Los Tigres del Norte, regularly utilize code language about transnational corruption in Mexico and along the

U.S.–Mexico border (field note, November, 14, 2014). According to Joaquín, some *corridistas* use allegory to dodge legal action for defamation, whereas others do it to protect themselves from possible violence inflicted by government officials or the cartels (personal communication, November 14, 2014). His highly evolved literary understanding of *corridistas*' use of allegory is representative of Lee's (2007) theory of cultural modeling. Corridos serve as cultural data sets in Joaquín's life where his everyday language and literacy practices with corridos, usually disregarded in academic settings, are "generative resources for...rigorous disciplinary reasoning" (p. 7). In turn, his everyday knowledge reconciles with the demands of subject matter literacy learning.

Similarly, Joaquín noted that the dog referenced in "La Granja" represents the presence of "narcotraficantes." He clarified, "So, you have to know what they're talking about, or figure it out" (personal communication, November 14, 2014). To "figure it out" often means drawing from literary figures of speech, such as metaphors, similes, and hyperboles, to understand the depth of lyrics. Figuring it out also positions the listener as a border thinker who must actively participate in the meaning making of corridos situated within exacerbated sociopolitical border contexts where coloniality persists. With regards to what happened at the Ayotzinapa Normal School in 2014, campaigns and protests were replete with slogans like "¡Nos Faltan 43!" [We're missing the 43!], which referenced the 43 missing student teachers as a cry throughout the world to publicly hold the Mexican government accountable for its involvement in this atrocity. According to Joaquín, many Mexican and Chicana students in the United States were just as aware of the incident at Ayotzinapa Normal School as students in Mexico.

Furthermore, Joaquín's critical reading of corridos to better understand his social and political worlds represents what Mignolo (2000) called "cracks [in]...the modern world system" (p. 23), or an awareness of and resistance to the colonial difference which manifests itself as racial, ethnic, and social hierarchies in the Americas. For example, Joaquín highlighted that the missing people were student teachers dedicated to serving the rural poor and were killed because they "were talking of the gap between the rich and poor, and different cartels' connections to the Mexican government" (field note, October, 18, 2014). Although Bejarano (2005) suggested that Mexico may represent an umbilical cord that sustains border youths' identities in the United States, Joaquín demonstrates that this connection to Mexico is much more than a cultural source. Rather, the metaphoric umbilical cord enables possibilities of political consciousness, even as they are rooted in the repression of people by the Mexican government.

As a singer-songwriter, Joaquín's *corridista* consciousness hones the ability to critically decode not only border corridos but also some of the allegorical nature of the more hard-core narcocorridos and cartel corridos that offer glamorized portraits of transnational drug trade leaders (McDowell, 2012). As a popular culture text, narcocorridos offer a window into the laborious intellectual work that students are already engaged in within the context of political and colonial discourses. Like traditional border corridos, some narcocorridos carry important lessons about life, including resistive qualities of the drug trade, corruption, greed, and overall political upheaval that are tied to an ongoing hemorrhaging capitalist relationship between the United States and Mexico (Anzaldúa, 1987; Mignolo, 2000). Joaquín shared that although he does not listen to narcocorridos outside of school for the purpose of glorifying the gratuitous violence and heterosexism of drug trafficking, he felt that young people are often drawn to the "flashy lifestyle" presented in these lyrics and music videos. He elaborated:

It's not like we listen to them and say, "Oh, *yo quiero ser sicario o transportador de drogas*" [I want to be an assassin or a drug transporter] or anything like that. A lot of us who listen [to them] aren't into anything like that at all, but we like the lifestyle [that the *corridistas*] live and have. They have personal bodyguards. They have money and nice things and homes. They can provide for their families. That's something a lot of us would like for our families, but I want it through college and hard work, not through corruption or violence. I used to look up to cartel leaders like El Chapo when I was little, but then you grow up and see how innocent people die for no reason. If anything, we learn what not to be and what not to do through the lessons of the corridos, and a lot of it is through the messages in the corridos, like what they sing about. (personal communication, October 18, 2014)

Here, Joaquín narrated an important critique about narcocorridos and how they can be understood as an analytic tool for understanding his social and political world. Mignolo (2000) noted that central to border thinking is translanguaging, which functions as a "border tongue" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 77) and captures nuanced Chicana subjectivities. Interestingly, in an interview that employs language such as "violence," "assassin," and "*transportador de drogas*" sits the word *college* and notions of a strong work ethic, which suggests an alternative comprehension of narcocorridos. Joaquín seems to be reading against the grain of narcocorridos, providing a critical bilanguaged (Mignolo, 2000) interpretation beyond simplistic arguments about this subgenre of corridos as a corruptive influence on border youths. His agency positions the ballad outside of the context of violence and within the broader context of education, suggesting that his *corridista* consciousness,

which includes a critical engagement of his multiple literacies, is at work at all times.

Young people's relationships with corridos are fertile with critique, evaluation, and analysis, pointing to sophisticated multimedia and translingual skills that assist U.S.–Mexican transnational students' navigation of their sociopolitical worlds through lyrics and storytelling. Young people's consumption and oral recitation of the narcocorrido genre, like many other racialized popular cultural practices, are often "vilified in academic settings" (Lee, 2007, p. 7) and rarely valued for the acute analysis of metaphor, allegory, and figurative language inherent in such cultural practices. As a literary genre that centers critical theory, corridos serve as a window into reality that help Joaquín critically read and interpret not only literary texts but also his personal life (Appleman, 2000). As students, like Joaquín, navigate their worlds, including online, and listen to the various forms of Mexican regional music that often saturates their lives, they critically translanguage on a daily basis to make meaning, negotiate their identities, access content, analyze figurative language, and engage in border thinking between two languages (Mignolo, 2000). This idea of a *corridista* consciousness is a form of literacy that many students, like Joaquín, might already have. For Joaquín, his *corridista* consciousness translates into an array of multiple literacy practices that center his diasporic knowledge and analysis of corridos as a medium of transnational life and struggle.

Finally, a *corridista* consciousness recognizes young people as the storytellers of their border communities and draws from their everyday politicized multiple literacies. Part of this consciousness is the ability to resist the rampant anti-immigrant rhetoric pervasive throughout institutions. For example, in one of his Chicana/Latina Studies class sessions—the classroom setting that I turn to next—Joaquín shared insight into the ways in which the *corridistas* in Los Tigres del Norte help immigrant communities resist:

Los Tigres del Norte sing a lot 'bout how the U.S. blames Mexicans for all the problems, like the economy, crime, but in reality, we help the economy way more than hurt it, and do the work no one else wants to. (field note, March 22, 2015)

Joaquín alluded to the tenuous dominant narrative of immigrants as "a drain to the economy," where immigrants and their labor are scapegoats for problems in the United States rather than as the magnifier, primarily through exploited labor, of an economic surplus. The *corridistas*, Los Tigres del Norte, and their denunciations of exploitation and oppression through their corridos help solidify Joaquín's growing political consciousness in speaking back to the antimigrant hegemony that permeates his sociopolitical world. Thus,

in the following section, I explore one environment where Joaquín further developed his corrido literacies and leveraged them as analytic tools to make sense of himself and his communities.

Environments That Supported Joaquín's Transnational and Corrido Literacies

Joaquín's first environment that buttressed corrido literacies was inside his home with his family members, positioning his kin as his first teachers of literacy. Once in high school, however, the exploration of corridos as a literary genre was taken up in his Chicana/Latina Studies class, where students' politicized funds of knowledge (Gallo & Link, 2015), or rather their knowledge of immigration, border crossing, oppression, and corridos and political *corridistas*, would often be incorporated into both classroom conversations and the instructional classroom design. Mr. Miranda's teaching approach incorporated corridos and was informed by García et al.'s (2017) notion of a translinguaging pedagogy, which puts students' language practices at the center and makes space for students to draw on their fluid linguistic and cultural resources at all times.

In particular, Mr. Miranda adopted a translinguaging stance, a set of beliefs about students' language practices that cedes some of the control in English-medium classrooms and allows students' bi/multilingual voices to take center stage, as well as a translinguaging design, which references the organization of classroom life that brings to the surface the diversity of students' language practices (García et al., 2017). In referencing his teacher's classroom design, Joaquín recalled,

In his class, we would listen to border corridos in Spanish during class like "*La Jaula de Oro*" ["The Golden Cage"] by Los Tigres del Norte, then talk about them in English or in both languages, and then write papers or write in our journals. Los Tigres are more like *mi pá's* generation, but I like them cuz they talk about the real struggles and immigrants and are more political than other *corridistas*.

The literacy products that Joaquín referenced often drew from the students' social and political worlds, including their transnational, multilingual, and multiliterate repertoires (Skerrett, 2013). Mr. Miranda had a philosophical and political commitment to, or rather took a stance toward, his bilingual and emergent bilingual students that often countered what is expected or seen as normative outside of the walls of English-medium literacy classrooms (García et al., 2017).

For example, using Google Drive journals, students regularly wrote corridos in Spanish and English about their lives and responded to specific prompts provided

by Mr. Miranda. In one of Joaquín's journal entries, he wrote a corrido in both Spanish and English in response to the corrido "La Jaula de Oro," reflecting on his experiences of migration. Below are his first two stanzas:

Soy de el color café [I am the color of coffee]
Y esto me lo enseñó el profe [And this is what my teacher taught me]
Que la sangre de mi gente [that the blood of my people]
Cayó en el piso rápidamente [shed quickly on the floor]

Mis padres y yo nos fuimos de nuestro país [My parents and I left our country]
Para sembrar nuestro raíz [to plant our roots]
Hacia un nuevo amanecer [toward a new dawn]
In the barrios of Pomona and Huntington Park. (Joaquín's journal, March, 22, 2015)

In his corrido, Joaquín engages in border thinking, what Khatibi (as cited in Mignolo, 2000) called "an other thinking" (p. 18), that moves "between two languages and their historical relations in the modern world system and the coloniality of power" (p. 74). Joaquín primarily presents his first stanza in Spanish to recollect a piece of his migration story, and then he begins to draw from English registers of speech as he speaks of his postmigration life in the urban neighborhoods of Pomona and Huntington Park, California. He references the process of colonization and pain through the bloodshed witnessed by his parents and ancestors. He takes up a number of literary devices, such as a simile to describe himself as the color of coffee, and a metaphor of planting seeds to bring about new roots and beginnings. As a transnational youth, Joaquín negotiates his language and literacy practices "in ways that are at the forefront of global dynamics—constructing new social practices" (Ghiso, 2016, p. 34). Joaquín crosses borders not only linguistically but also culturally as he navigates life and culture throughout various Los Angeles barrios. His writing also works as a type of "syncretic *testimonio*" (Cruz, 2007, as cited in Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 149)—a text that is "situated in [a] subjective particularity" (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 149) and laced with myriad contested forms of colonialism.

Joaquín shared that "writing corridos [in class] helps us understand ourselves and realities better, in our own way" (field note, March, 12, 2015). It is important to note that making sense of students' worlds through corridos is on the students' own terms. Both the more traditional corrido and the more contemporary narcocorrido are providing the mediums through which counterhegemonic identities and literacies are being expressed. Like the narcocorrido, Joaquín's stanzas previously excerpted imply deadly violence in lines 3 and 4. However, violence is referenced as the motivation for migration, as opposed to participating in or reproducing conflict. In many ways, the literary genre of

the corrido provides a platform for Mexican transnational bi/multilingual students to contest popular representations of immigrant and transnational experiences by reconstructing more dignified histories of self and family.

Joaquín's use of corridos emphasizes not only his multiple literacies but also the multiple ties and interactions that link him across the U.S.–Mexico border, and what Vertovec (2001) called the "various kinds of global or cross-border connections" (p. 573) that are central to transnational subjectivities. Mignolo (2000) and Anzaldúa (1987) noted that Mexicans and Chicanxs live in the borderlands that intersect with, but is not reflective of, mainstream culture. Anzaldúa urged the generating of new identities and consciousness that challenge the current terrorized state of mind of Mexicans and Chicanxs as hybrid outsiders in the United States, in which dehumanization often results in internalized oppression. Because K–12 classrooms can be places of psychic unrest for U.S.–Mexican transnational youths and many other students (Pizarro, 1998), the leveraging of corrido literacies can be fertile ground for youths to creatively and critically assert new identities grounded in the nuanced realities of the borderlands.

Discussion

Transnational and emergent bilingual youths, and their rich literacy resources and practices, remain a significant promise in U.S. schools (Ghiso, 2016). Joaquín's case sheds light on some of the robust literacy and language practices that transnational youths are already engaging in outside of school. Incorporating students' translanguaging and transnational lived experiences and literacies (Skerrett, 2015) can offer them the alternative to perform a dynamic bilingualism (García, 2009) that is flexible and responsive to local communicative contexts. Joaquín's literacy and language practices must be understood as part of an expanding repertoire deriving from his transnational affiliations (Lam, 2006; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007) and seeded in his *corridista* consciousness. Because my definition of a *corridista* consciousness could be applied to a wider range of literacy practices that take ideas of culture, criticality, agency, and justice as central, Joaquín's literacy practices deeply rooted in a *corridista* consciousness point to the specific affordances of reading, writing, and performing corridos as a social practice.

The contours of Joaquín's *corridista* consciousness are dynamic, fluid, and always at work. This consciousness as a form of border thinking is not static; however, for Joaquín, it draws from a range of political, cultural, linguistic, and literacy resources, including intergenerational relationships, a keen understanding of the effects and politics of transnationalism, everyday translanguaging

practices, knowledge and participation in Mexican popular culture, a transnational identity affiliation, the ability to critically read and decode the rhetorical devices of corridos via online and digital platforms, the writing and production of corridos, and the capacity to orchestrate all of these for the purpose of performance. Ultimately, a *corridista* consciousness draws from the legacies of anticolonial resistance embedded in corridos as a resource for one's critical, bi/multilingual, and transnational engagement with the world.

Making space in the curriculum for bi/multilingual students to engage nondominant literary genres such as corridos can deepen and expand what Mignolo (2000) called pluriversality, or a world where many worlds coexist, rather than subsist, in the classroom. Contextualizing Joaquín's literacy practices in this study, especially those deeply rooted in corridos, allows both teachers and students to better understand and value the myriad ways that students do literacy and language in real-world contexts and why they do them. This stance echoes Barton and Hamilton's (2000) succinct assessment, "in the simplest sense literacy practices are what people do with literacy" (p. 7). Such literacy stances and practices can help create translanguaging spaces (Wei, 2011) that promote literacies of creativity, critical consciousness, and counterhegemonic understandings of immigrant and transnational communities alongside the U.S.–Mexico border.

Joaquín's case study speaks to the rich cultural and linguistic dexterity (Paris, 2012) that exists in the lives of transnational youths. It also highlights students' critical awareness of their dexterity and the ways in which their dexterity intersects with social and political climates. The literacy practices enacted by Joaquín, and supported in his Chicana/Latina Studies class, mirrored Street's (1984) notion of ideological literacies that acknowledge literacy practices as context specific and as a set of social practices always influenced by hierarchies of power. As such, literacy is more than just the traditional monolingual forms of reading and writing; new literacies for Mexican and Chicana border youths also honor bi/multilingual forms of speaking, writing, listening, and performing (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007) transnational genres of music, such as corridos. Yet, it is not enough to simply honor and incorporate young people's transnational literacies; we must consistently strive to deeply understand and engage them in socially responsible and culturally empowering ways in the classroom.

Implications

This article has explored what literacy practices deeply rooted in corridos look like, how one youth reads and engages with the Mexican musical genre of corridos to

make sense of his social and political world, and what environments and educational settings supported this literacy development. Joaquín's literacy practices illuminated instances of a youth honing his critical translingual literacy skills outside the bounds of school through his engagement with corridos and the ways in which some of that knowledge made its way into his ethnic studies course. These cognitive activities point to renewed implications for critical translingual approaches (Seltzer, 2017) in literacy classrooms that are inclusive to corridos and other translingual and transnational critical literacies.

This study has implications for both the ongoing examination of transnational corrido literacies and the possibilities for leveraging students' transnational literate lives into secondary ethnic studies curricula—courses that are rampantly spreading throughout the Southwest, especially California. Joaquín's unique sources of translingual and transnational knowledge pushes researchers and practitioners to reorient literacy and ethnic studies classrooms to what Pérez (1999) identified as a decolonial imaginary, or a place where young people can imagine themselves as decolonial subjects whose futures will be on their own terms. A decolonial imaginary means moving past simply allowing students to draw on their everyday language practices; instead, it shifts what is possible in literacy classrooms and centers curricula and instruction around who and where students are as historically colonized, racialized, and transnational subjects.

From a curricular perspective, ethnic studies courses center multiple literacies of race, racism, colonialism, and resistance and are some of the precise spaces for engaging transnational students' forms of everyday resistance practices (de los Ríos et al., 2015). Conversely, though, whereas dominant discourses have argued that ethnic studies courses are spaces for developing youths' critical sociopolitical consciousness, Joaquín demonstrates that many youths already have deeply critical readings of their sociopolitical climates and that his ethnic studies class was simply a space to further hone and engage some of his robust analytical skills. Ethnic studies courses encompass and amplify fundamental sociocultural and sociopolitical experiences, where students are encouraged to make sense of their intersectional lives on both personal and structural levels. As secondary ethnic studies courses continue to proliferate with the support of California Assembly Bill 2016, a recently passed legislation that sanctions ethnic studies courses throughout California's school districts, this research contributes to the scant but necessary scholarship about the decolonial possibilities of literacy activity within these classrooms (de los Ríos, 2017a, 2017b).

From a pedagogical standpoint, teachers of emergent bilingual students might find fecund soil in the

classroom for engaging the variant types of knowledge, experiences, and literacy practices that youths develop through transnational life (Skerrett, 2015). Corridos as critical textual practice is one avenue that can build on students' unsanctioned resources and "details how these transnational repertoires may contribute to literacy teaching and learning" (p. 16). Youths like Joaquín find few spaces within and outside school to build on and engage their transnational capital, including their linguistic, cultural, social, and political repertoires, understandings, and skills (Skerrett, 2012, 2015). As the ubiquity of transnational and dynamic language practices of students becomes increasingly recognized as the norm (Canagarajah, 2013), it is imperative that we continue to develop curricula and pedagogy that validates, sustains, and develops further their linguistic, epistemological, and cultural resources (Paris, 2012).

Furthermore, the invisibility of corridos within the field of adolescent literacy calls us all, as researchers and educators, to continue to work harder to identify, value, and respectfully engage the many other literate practices, especially those of historically subjugated youth communities, that remain underrecognized in classrooms. Literacy scholars still have much to learn from the unique and complex cognitive abilities of bi/multilingual transnational youths and the ways in which their diasporic knowledge can harvest critical insights about literacy learning in and out of schools. This study highlights meaningful learning contexts for U.S.–Mexican transnational adolescents' literacies and how engagement of these literacies can be (re)conceptualized through an ethnic studies and Chicana/Latina Studies lens. This work remains especially urgent as dominant discourses continue to legitimize hate-saturated speech targeting young people, like Joaquín, throughout school settings and society.

NOTES

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¹ With origins in the 1910 Mexican Revolution, corridos are musical ballads that often depict border conflicts and resistance to Anglo dominance (Paredes, 1958). As a form of historical literacy, the songs narrate stories of struggle, resilience, and heroic acts.

² I use *Chicana* and *Latina* as gender-inclusive, nonbinary alternatives to *Chicana/o* and *Latina/o*.

³ *Paisa* is a colloquial word used in the Mexican immigrant community and refers to *paisano*, which means fellow countrymen in Spanish. *Paisa* is often used by first- and second-generation young people to describe recently arrived, often undocumented immigrants (Rendón, 2015) who espouse a Mexican ranch lifestyle. Although it can be seen as derogatory, some youths, like Joaquín, have appropriated the term for cultural, racial, and linguistic pride. *Paisa* lifestyle and culture often refers to "wearing cowboy boots and clothing, going to rodeos, going to 'paisa parties,' and listening to corridos" (Joaquín, personal communication, June, 9, 2015).

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