Innovaciones y Historias: A Home- and Community-Based Approach to Workplace Literacy

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Articles

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Abstract

Drawing from Latinx studies and the literacy experiences of men employed as university custodial staff, we propose a home- and community-based approach to workplace literacy. The central goals of this approach are to allow participants to identify their professional and vocational literacies to highlight their literate assets and goals across contexts. The approach offers a humanizing lens for individuals who are often denied the opportunity to showcase their literate repertoires and desires within the context of their formal workplaces. Overall, this article calls for a broader understanding of participants' literacy experiences—not only as workers but as people who work.

Keywords

home, community, workplace, university, Latinx, critical methodologies

Introduction

I was the first boy born to my family. When I was a boy, there were lots of fiestas with people dancing and drinking and songs. The music was very good—the guitars and songs. When I was in my mother's stomach, I was looking out at the party and I remember eating bananas, apples, pears, and guava. When I was two years old, I went up to my grandfather and I held onto him by the water. It was special water. My family used it to cook and drink. While I was digging a hole, I held my grandfather and a big, heavy rock fell on us. My grandfather dropped me and stopped the rock, but I fell into the water and he could only see my leg. He pulled me out and saved me. I was passed out for an hour and my mother thought I was gone and cried. She said, "thank you for my son; I love my son." When I came back, she was very happy and all of her friends said, "the boy came again."

Fui el primer niño que nació en mi familia. Cuando era niño, había muchas fiestas con gente bailando y tomando y canciones. La música era muy

buena, las guitarras y las canciones. Cuando estaba en la barriga de mi madre, estaba mirando la fiesta y recuerdo comer plátanos, manzanas, peras, guayaba. Cuando tenía dos años, corrí hasta mi abuelo y me agarré a él cerca de un manantial. Era un agua especial. Mi familia la usaba para cocinar y beber. Estaba agarrado a mi abuelo cavando un hoyo cuando una roca grande y pesada me cayó encima. Mi abuelo me soltó y paró la roca, pero yo caí en el manantial y él solo podía verme una pierna. Me sacó y me salvó. Estuve desmayado durante una hora y mi madre pensó que me había muerto y lloró. Dijo: "gracias por mi hijo, amo a mi hijo". Cuando desperté, ella estaba muy feliz y todos sus amigos dijeron, "el niño ha vuelto."

This excerpt comes from the beginning of Alfonso's life history, a testimonio he wrote to share miracles with his church community. At the time Alfonso wrote this story, he was also participating in a workplace study with Calley, an academic researcher who was studying the literacy practices of people employed as university custodians. As a part of the study, Calley asked Alfonso about his reading, writing, and speaking experiences within the workplace, but she soon found that her questions did not adequately account for important literacies like this testimonio. Similarly, other study participants expressed a desire to discuss literacies they practiced outside of the university. As opposed to those literacies directly tied to their institutional labor, they wanted to discuss those connected to their faith, families, and intellectual and professional pursuits. They wanted to discuss literacies activated in their garages, kitchens, and church pews—their home and community contexts—because it was those conditions that supported their literate desires. In this way, participants highlight a need for literacy researchers to look beyond a single site of employment to understand the workplace literacies of people who, because of race, class, and linguistic othering, are often denied opportunities to practice their chosen work and literacies in the context of their job.

Drawing from a broader year-long qualitative study, this article focuses on the question: for men who identify as Latino and are employed as university custodians, how does understanding literacy in home and community contexts inform understandings of their workplace and community literacies? To begin to answer this question, we draw from the experiences of two participants, including their stories, videos, and photographs across home, work, and religious community contexts. We also draw from Latinx and Chicanx theories in education, writing studies, and transnational literacy studies to assert the value of understanding workplace literacies in relation to people's broader literate lives. We propose a home- and community-based approach to workplace literacy that positions these spaces as central to, rather than context for, each other. Putting these literate contexts in conversation is particularly consequential for workers like Latino immigrant university laborers who are disproportionately racialized and whose conditions too often instrumentalize and dehumanize their labor as a part of literacy production (Marko et al; Marotta). Such exploitation is upheld by racist cultural stereotypes that limit Latinx men's identities

to that of labor (Molina) and thus deny them their knowledge and literacies within a public literacy institution. Considering these hypocrisies, universities have a stake in isolating workers from literacies that connect them to identities and lives beyond their institutional labor.

Literacy researchers can reinforce these problematic institutional constructions through their framing and analysis when they position home- and community-based literacies as either separate from or context for literacies practiced in a single site of paid labor. Drawing from a long history of Latinx/Chicanx and transnational literacy scholarship, we propose a home- and community-based approach to workplace literacy to analytically connect literacies activated in home and community spaces to practices and experiences in the context of paid work. This approach asks researchers to shift the lens through which they analyze workplace literacies. Rather than starting analysis with literacies primarily practiced in the context of formal employment, it asks them to use literacies participants identify as meaningful across their home and community spaces to analyze literacies practiced within a formal, paid work context. While the object of study remains workplace literacies in that the analysis and implications focus on interpretations of literacies associated with work, this approach fundamentally changes what is being centered in that analysis, so participants' literate wealth, knowledge, and priorities are positioned at the forefront.

In this article, we focus on two participants, Henry and Alfonso, whose experiences reflect a broader pattern in the research. We describe how Henry uses his home as a workspace to extend his professional knowledge that he must negotiate within his university workspace. We then explain how Alfonso leverages personal storytelling in his church but faces university work conditions that restrict those storytelling practices. Both these cases show how reading people's literate experiences in their formal workplace through practices activated in home and community contexts illuminates how they experience literacies across contexts—including that of their paid employment. This approach reveals literacies often obscured or silenced by workplace conditions and how workplace conditions that (dis)connect workers from their broader literate lives have important consequences for their experience.

Alfonso and Henry's responses align with Latinx and Chicanx scholarship in writing studies (Alvarez; Cintron; Ruiz; García and Baca) and education (Elenes, Delagdo Bernal; Pacheco) that have long claimed researchers must look beyond institutional spaces like classrooms to understand Latinx peoples' literacies. Their responses also align with transnational literacy studies research that suggests literacies are not tied to single sites but move across contexts (Lam; Nordquist; Bolt and Leander; Vossoughian and Gutiérrez; Lorimer Leonard). While it has become increasingly common for researchers studying classroom literacy to do so in the context of literacies taking place in homes and communities, workplace literacy studies still predominantly examine a formal workplace as a central site[1] (for example see Farrell; Lauer and Brumberger; Hull; Haas and Wittee; Rose; Spinuzzi; Windsor; Wardle). As such, there is a need to further examine the relationship between work, home, and community spaces in the lives of Latinx people and Latin American immigrants.

Drawing on these theories and Alfonso's and Henry's experiences, a home- and community-based approach to workplace literacy allows participants to identify with multiple work contexts and to identify which work is primary for them. Considering conditions that construct them as the lowest rank of university labor, Henry and Alfonso want to be recognized for university work, but they also want to be understood as more than labor. Alfonso and Henry's experiences show sometimes work, callings, and vocation exist beyond sites of paid employment but also impact those sites. Failing to examine literacies across contexts fails to appreciate the complex relationships between sites of work—how people negotiate their home and community literacies within their formal workspaces and how they make homes and communities their workspaces. For example, Henry's work in his garage is an extension of his role as a community member. To him, his work is much more than a paid job. For Alfonso, his role in church is part of his spiritual calling or vocation and an example of how he contributes to his community. As such, community and home contexts become important sites for understanding workplace literacies at the same time as workplaces become important sites for community literacy scholarship. Both case studies contribute to community literacy studies by challenging current definitions and perspectives which use "community" to explain all literacies that do not neatly align with educational institutions.

The central goals of this approach are to allow participants to identify their professional and vocational literacies to highlight their literate assets and goals across contexts as well as to inform more equitable workplace literacy conditions. This article calls for workplace and community literacy to inform one another so that individuals can connect their broader literate goals and repertoires across contexts. A home- and community-based approach to workplace literacy offers a humanizing lens for individuals who are often denied the opportunity to showcase their literate repertoires and desires within the context of their formal workplaces. Overall, we call for a broader understanding of participants' literacy experiences—not only as workers but as people who work.

A Home- and Community-Based Approach to Workplace Literacy

To provide a theoretical rationale for a home- and community-based approach to workplace literacy, we combine Latinx and Chicanx theories in education and writing studies with theories in transnational literacy studies. Theories in Latinx and Chicanx scholarship position home and community contexts as central sites of literacy and knowledge. And theories in transnational literacy studies conceptualize literacies as necessarily moving across contexts like universities, homes, and religious community spaces examined in this study. We use these theories to analyze how participants leverage literacies as a part of broader sociocultural and professional histories and how those histories, experiences, and repertoires can show up in their experience of university and community work.

This article extends Latinx studies and Chicana feminist scholarship in education and writing studies that have long theorized home and community contexts as

sites of literacy strength. Through ethnographic research with Mexican families and communities in particular, scholars have urged researchers and teachers of literacy to account for home-based practices and knowledge (Delgado Bernal; Cintron; Elenes; González et al.; Farr and Guerra; Farr) to extend rather than erase and silence students' "ample cultural and cognitive resources" (Zepeda 140). These resources stem from "pedagogies of the home," the often informal embodied lessons learned at home and transmitted across generations (Delores Delgado Bernal)[2] and "funds of knowledge" (González et al.) or assets students carry into classrooms from home-based learning. This scholarship also highlights community-based literacies (Alvarez; Pacheco; Yosso) as central assets to the lives of many Latinx peoples. This scholarship challenges deficit-based constructions of home forwarded by many educational institutions (Alvarez).

In this article, we highlight how Henry's and Alfonso's home- and community-based literacies allow them to pursue and leverage the literacies they desire. We draw from Tara J. Yosso's theory of cultural wealth to challenge institutional perceptions that communities of color lack knowledge by highlighting their linguistic navigation and storytelling as particular sources of wealth and cultural capital. This scholarship helps us analyze Henry's ability to communicate his professional knowledge across languages and contexts as well as Alfonso's commitment to use his words and stories to offer advice to others and draw from his own life experiences to model ways of living. We also build upon these theories by expanding their focus from students and families in educational institutions to the experiences of Latino adults who work there. Expanding such theories to include adult workers highlights the knowledge participants acquire and express across the lifespan and challenge workplace conditions that often restrict or fail to recognize their experience. Like classrooms, workplaces should cultivate opportunities to leverage home- and community-based literacy practices.

Considering this scholarship, we argue that researching beyond formal paid workspaces offers an important opportunity to understand literacies within them. We draw from transnational conceptions of literacy as necessarily working across contexts because literacies are not contained by or bound to single sites but deeply connected to a variety of contexts (Marcus) in immigrants' literate and linguistic lives (Vossoughian and Gutiérrez). Following these scholars, we conceptualize literacies as moving, dynamic, connected and often in flux (Lam; Nordquist; Bolt and Leander; Vossoughian and Gutiérrez) to analyze the vast literate repertoires of people whose lives are marked by histories of movement and migration and whose literacies are constantly revalued (Lorimer Leonard) across the contexts of their daily lives. This perspective considers how home- and community-based literacies necessarily work across borders and time as Henry and Alfonso carry and transform literacies from their social histories.

Understanding literacies as dynamic also helps us analyze how institutional conditions limit participants' repertoires as a part of systems that racialize and dehumanize labor. It helps us analyze how the university "stalls" (Lorimer Leonard) participants' literacies by constructing itself as a bounded space. This boundedness prevents

participants from connecting to their literacies and lives outside of the institution. As we discuss later in the text, workplace literacy policies and conditions often restrict the use of literacies that would connect participants to the broader stories of their lives. Such workplace conditions importantly reinforce racist cultural stereotypes that depict Latinx men as workers (Molina) who are limited to their immediate university labor. This system is mutually reinforcing because those dehumanizing depictions of labor then provide a rationale for dehumanizing labor conditions. While we are not arguing that anyone needs to be literate to warrant humane treatment, we are arguing that, in the case of Henry and Alfonso, their literacies can importantly connect them to contexts, practices, and identities beyond their labor in ways that are dangerous to institutions that have a stake in denying their workers' humanities.

Following this scholarship, we recognize spatial boundaries as constructs that create a false contrast between literacies *within* and *outside* workplaces. However, we use home, community, and university-based language to highlight the institutionally constructed boundaries between participants' university experiences and their broader lives and to distinguish the predominant context in which literacies are activated. We analyze how participants negotiate their literate repertoires in the university workspace and how that (dis)connects to their broader community roles. By arguing for a home- and community-based approach to workplace literacy, we neither claim that workers' draw from practices outside of the workplace to do their work better nor that they leverage workplace practices to reach goals outside of it. Rather, we argue that it is essential to read institutional practices and experiences through those that happen outside of the institution's walls.

Beyond the Workplace in Workplace Literacy Studies

Although literacy and language studies of immigrant manual laborers have long shown how work conditions can obscure workers' literacies and literate repertoire, workplace studies of literacy and communication often center the practices of workers within workplaces (for example see Brandt; Farrell; Lauer and Brumberger; Haas and Wittee; Spinuzzi; Windsor; Wardle). In some cases, scholars in literacy studies and sociolinguistics have intentionally focused on workplaces to expose skills within work deemed illiterate (Hagan et al; Hull; Rose; Windsor; Vigoroux). Scholars of Latino work in political science, Armando Ibarra, Alfred Carlos, and Rodolfo D. Torres, have also argued that studying workplace experiences is fundamental because "work conditions every other aspect of their [Latino workers'] material lives, structuring the vast majority of their experiences" (14). Recently, however, literacy studies of writing-intensive work have begun to demonstrate that contexts beyond the workplace are also important to people's experiences of work in the current information economy. These studies urge researchers to look beyond a single work or training setting to include other sites, relationships, histories, and materials that help understand people's experiences of workplace literacy.

Literacy and language studies of immigrant Latinx workers have demonstrated how work conditions tied to English and white supremacy neither reflect work-

ers' full literate repertoire nor their motivation to learn and use literacies. Gabriela Ríos argues migrant farm workers are often seen as illiterate because of the "persistent privileging of traditional literacy," which includes the negative claims made against immigrant farm laborers due to their limited or lack of reading and writing skills as well as their inability to speak English, especially for those who have been in the US for many years. Yet farm workers in Ríos' work explain how "due to the transient nature of their labor, learning English is the last thing on the list of important needs" (60) and instead they turn to their own literate repertoires even when these are not valued in their place of work. Such was the case with Luis Valdez's El Teatro Campesino during the farmworker's strike in California during the 1960s and 70s. Current work conditions for farmworkers privilege traditional English-only literacies and thus devalue farmworkers' "knowledge as skilled laborers" and "their ability to organize themselves and build movements for social change" (Ríos 61). And in his seminal work, *Illegal Alphabets*, Tomás Mario Kalmar tells the story of Mexican migrants who create phonetic English dictionaries and translation tools to communicate and advocate to management after the death of their friend. Kalmar's scholarship shows how participants' motivation for using literacies is not tied only to their immediate work but to the racially motivated murder of a friend—an incident and context that happens beyond their workplace. These studies reveal how racism and xenophobia become tied to literacies in interlocking community and workplace experiences.

In the current information economy, recent workplace literacy studies have begun to draw from contexts outside of the workplace to better understand experiences of literacy within it. As they do so, scholars reveal how literacies and the workers who produce them are affected by broader materials, histories, and relations connected to contexts outside of work. For example, in her study of corporate ghost writers, Elisa Findlay finds that workers' experiences of writing and their identities as writers are deeply shaped by ideologies promoted throughout their schooling histories (Findlay). Deborah Brandt highlights how workers in writing-intensive positions tend to bring their writing home such that personal and professional writing boundaries begin to collapse within the current conditions of the information economy's constant demand for writing. And in his study of African American coders in a coding bootcamp program, Antonio Byrd offers ecological mapping as a method to track the materials and relationships supporting participants' workplace coding preparation amidst systemic racism and inequality. These studies demonstrate the value of examining materials, practices, histories, and ideologies that are predominantly located outside of the immediate work and training context to better understand experiences of workplace literacy. These recent examinations, however, have largely focused on roles that are writing intensive. Further examination is needed to understand how people in manual service and labor positions—those that remain deeply racially, ethnically, and linguistically stratified and are often not writing-intensive—access and connect to literacies beyond those tied to their immediate workplace labor.

In light of theories that assert home- and community-based contexts as potential sites for highlighting the literacy assets and desires of Latinx peoples, there is a need to look beyond the literacies practiced in university workplaces to understand

people's experiences of workplace literacies. For Latino immigrant men who are employed as university custodians, how does understanding literacies in home- and community-based contexts inform understandings of their workplace and community experience?

Studying Workplace Literacy Practices Across Contexts

As an introduction to our methods and data, we provide brief introductions to individuals most directly involved in the creation of this article through their participation, research, and writing. We describe some of our roles and how we relate to one another.

Alfonso

Alfonso's life is motivated by his family and his faith. He is the proud father of daughters and a son as well as a grandfather to several grandchildren. He was born in a rural area of Mexico and worked on his family farm before working as a carpenter and custodian. Although he left formal education after grade school, he achieved high grades throughout his formal education. He speaks English and Spanish and is a talented and funny storyteller. He participated in the article through observations, interviews, photographs, and as an author of this article. He considers Lupe and Calley his dear friends.

Henry

Henry is a trained electrician. He immigrated from Cuba to the US as an adult after he participated in the military and attended college. He is a father and grandfather and enjoys working on electrical projects. He speaks Spanish and is also studying English. He participated in the article by sharing his lived experience and expertise through interviews, observations, and videos. Although Henry was not able to collaborate as an article author because of some personal issues that had arisen, we sent him a Spanish translation of his section and the introduction of the article by email and requested any changes and suggestions. In addition to his original permission to participate in the study, he gave us permission to include this writing about his experience in the article and to submit to this journal.

Lupe

Lupe is a dissertator in the English, Composition and Rhetoric, program at The University of Wisconsin-Madison. Lupe's identity as a researcher is heavily grounded on her lived experiences as the daughter of Mixtec migrant farmworkers in the U.S. Her position as a Mixtec woman in academia has influenced her dedication to expanding how we understand literacy by acknowledging the practices of groups and individuals beyond native-English speakers. Lupe speaks, reads, and writes English and Spanish fluently and understands some Mixtec, her parents' native language. This position allowed her the opportunity to work with Calley in interviewing, transcrib-

ing, and translating between English and Spanish. Lupe is committed to validating the literacy practices of individuals like Alfonso, Henry, as well as that of her parents in order to recognize the knowledge and values such practices can bring to our own communities.

Calley

Calley is a mother, a writing professor, and a former K-12 special educator. She was the original researcher on this project. The project grew out of her experience working in education institutions which systemically undermined Latinx and Latin American students' and families' rich literate repertoires. Calley's position as an academic provided her access to resources to modestly compensate participants, colleagues to collaborate with who have vast skills in linguistic translation, and the ability to work with management to get approval to do on site observations. Growing up Catholic also gave her access to some of Alfonso's religious teachings. But as a U.S.-born, white, monolingual English speaker, Calley lacks the cultural and linguistic intuition awarded by a shared linguistic and cultural position with participants (Delgado Bernal). In addition to learning from scholars in Latinx and Chicanx studies, Calley strives toward cultural humility and equitable participation by seeking collaborators like Lupe, Alfonso, and Henry whose relationships she has been fortunate enough to grow over several years of working together. She is grateful to call them friends and teachers.

Methodology

Context and Recruitment for the Broader Study

At a time when immigrants have and continue to experience heightened discrimination within educational institutions and workplaces (Iwama, Immigrant Legal Resource Center, Gomez), the broader study associated with this article took place at a midwestern public research university with a particularly racially and linguistically stratified custodial staff. The focal crew worked on the second shift and was made up of fifteen men and women and a lead worker while the institutional hierarchy for custodial staff managers was almost exclusively white and male. Approximately half of the specific custodial crew members were Latinx and Latin American. Six male immigrants who were born in Mexico (5) and Cuba (1) participated in the study.

After contacting all the second shift managers by email, one manager opted into the study and Calley recruited participants at his crew's daily staff meetings. Participants received materials in Spanish and English including transcripts of interviews depending on their preference. Participants were also given the option of using a Spanish translator and interpreter who facilitated three participants' interviews and translated and transcribed their materials. This article is informed by the broader study with six participants.

Methods Across Contexts

Based on participants' activities and descriptions, we define literacies here as the multimodal (Gunther and Kress; Gonzales), multilingual (Canagarajah), embodied (Haas and Witte) practices (Heath) and materials (Pahl and Roswell; Vieira) participants employed to read, write, listen, speak, and compose. To account for literacies activated in multiple contexts and to decenter the institutional gaze in the broader study, Calley used data collection and analysis methods that specifically accounted for literacies outside of participants' university work context.

1. Observations allowed Calley to trace literacy practices as participants moved across contexts like the university, cars, and churches. She observed two participants in their religious community spaces for a total of seven hours. These observations were among the seventy-five hours of observations across the study.

2. Videos (Cardinal; Konignstein and Azadegan) and photographs taken by three participants allowed them to construct, compose, and identify reading, speaking, writing, listening practices to center their perceptions. Participants were given an iPhone and, in total, submitted ten video clips ranging from one to five minutes and twenty photographs.

3. Twelve- and-a-half hours of focused interviews, each of which lasted an hour to an hour-and-a-half and were semi-structured, individual, and audio-recorded, investigated participants' literacy experiences and practices within and outside of the workplace and provided brief literacy histories (Brandt) to ground participants' workplace experiences.

Across the data collected, Calley used closed coding (Saldaña) to track the literacy context including university, home, and community. Then, to privilege out-of-workplace practices in analysis, Calley coded for purposes and audiences across home- and community-based literacies and then analyzed participants' literacies within the institutional context for overlap and divergence from those codes. Another round of coding focused on workplace conditions like policies, messages, and practices that *connected* and *disconnected* participants from other parts of their literate lives. These codes served as the basis for our argument which was shared for feedback and extended by Alfonso.

Collaborative Writing Process

The article's collaborative writing process is inseparable from its content. Amidst important differences in our relations to power and the long history of racial, linguistic, and ethnic exploitation and colonization associated with ethnographic work (Smith; Tuck; Tuck and Yang; Fine) and writing studies scholarship (Ruiz et al.; García and Baca), Calley and Lupe write collaboratively with Alfonso to be accountable to him (Patel) and to center what matters to him in the text. Alfonso follows other scholars

(Rosenbaum) by adopting a pen name to assert his essential role in the production of this article while also maintaining his confidentiality.

Writing together has been an interactive, collaborative, and recursive process. Calley and Lupe predominantly typed on a shared Google Document and Alfonso communicated over the phone using video, call, and text. Lupe translated from English to Spanish verbally, transcribed audio in English and Spanish, read aloud, and often texted paragraphs so that Alfonso could see and read the writing as well as listen to it aloud.

For each paragraph, Alfonso shared what he found most important, clarified anything that did not feel true to his experience, and added any additional relevant information in detail. For example, there were times when he stated "No se si le dije a ella (I'm not sure if I told her (Calley)," and then went on to share a long and detailed story using the opportunity of having a live translator to provide additional detail that ensured we were getting his story right. In the introduction, he wanted to highlight how important it was that so many people could not practice the work they wanted to do and how differently workers of color were treated than their peers.

On occasion, Alfonso would also call Calley and Lupe to share an idea that he wanted to incorporate. When Alfonso was not present on the phone during work sessions, Calley and Lupe typed questions to him directly in Google Notes that Lupe would then translate. Calley and Lupe also highlighted any new writing in a different color to translate. Alfonso would give feedback, Calley and Lupe would revise, and Lupe would translate again for his further review. In Google Document comments, Lupe and Calley wrote directly to each other and Alfonso and defined any academic terms in plain language so that Lupe could translate and so that Alfonso could continue to be central to each part of the text. Calley and Lupe also worked with Alfonso's daughter to give him full copies of the text by email.

Reading Workplace Literacies through Home-and Community-Based Practices

In this section, we share some of Henry's and Alfonso's home- and community-based literacy practices. We do this to demonstrate the strengths and desires they are able to activate in those contexts connected to their own professional and vocational goals. But we also do this to trace how university work conditions shape, and often limit and conceal, how those literacies can show up in their formal work context. We discuss how Henry uses self-sponsored workplace literacies in his home with the hopes of serving his local community and his university workplace. Through these literacies, Henry repositions his home as a workspace that he uses to extend his professional history and sustain his intellectual inquiries and community commitments. Then we discuss how Alfonso teaches and connects with his religious community through storytelling as a part of his broader life work. But we also share how he is prevented from using these literate talents in the university workplace. In both cases, Henry's and Alfonso's experiences in home and community spaces provide insight into how literacies become potential vehicles for integration and (dis)connection across the contexts

of their lives. These experiences also highlight workplace systems and cultures that would need to change for them to pursue the broader work and community literacies they desire in the university workplace.

Taken together, these cases demonstrate the complex relations between home-, community-, and institutionally based work and how literacies become tied up in those relations. The cases present important distinctions. Henry and Alfonso hold different positions and histories in relation to paid and unpaid work. Henry's innovations are connected to his previous paid employment while Alfonso has never been monetarily compensated for his church practices. And perhaps because of these differences in position, Henry tries to integrate his home-based literacies into his university work, while Alfonso considers his church-based practices to be more separate from his job. Both cases, however, demonstrate how analyzing workplace literacies through a particular paid work context like the university offers a limited perspective on literacies related to work. Both Henry's and Alfonso's experiences highlight how university workplace conditions obscure aspects of their literate repertoires and how understanding their home- and community-based literacy practices provides insight into literacy desires across their lives. As such, these cases show that a nuanced understanding of literacies associated with work requires an understanding of literacies beyond a single context of paid employment.

Henry: Innovating at Home

While transnational literacy scholars have highlighted how immigrants' literacies are revalued by formal workplaces as they cross national borders (Lorimer Leonard, Vieira), participants like Henry shared how their homes became self- and family-sponsored workspaces where they used literacies to learn, innovate, and create local businesses in informal (Cintron) and sometimes unpaid ways. In this section, we discuss how Henry uses his home space to work on electrical projects that extend his professional and intellectual inquiry. First, in a video recording translated from Spanish and taken in his home, Henry shared projects he uses to continue to learn in a profession he does not currently work. Then, Henry demonstrated how he negotiates his university conditions to utilize and assert his professional wealth across contexts. By doing so, he expands conceptions of workplace literacy to account for practices outside of institutionally sponsored work and demonstrates how researchers can better incorporate the professional work of immigrants who are often not—at least not yet—able to practice their vocation as a part of US formal economies.

Before analyzing Henry's professional projects in his home, we will briefly describe what he explains in the video which is also reflected in Image One. Calley asked if he would take a video in his home to demonstrate some of the projects he was working on after he said he spent his weekends working on electrical projects at home. In the video, he shared images of his tools propped on top of a washer and dryer. First, Henry spans across the space to show the bulbs and wires in the broader context as he introduced what he called his "innovations." He explained the project was "a twenty-Watt fluorescent cold light lamp" that helps with energy consumption. Then he went on to teach Calley via the video step by step, first on the elements that

make up the project: he said, "I'm going to stop for a moment right now so you can see. I'm going to, to start by dismounting the fluorescent lamps and the transformers..." Then he connected to the broader purpose: "It's more efficient and less expensive, and it doesn't affect the ecology either and, hence, it's more cost-effective." He explained this would make an important difference to benefit people's lives, because "it's going to be cheaper for the energy consumption in each household."

Figure 1. A still image from the video Henry took to demonstrate his electrical innovation.

In this instance, Henry's home context provides conditions to pursue his desires: to learn and teach about his electrical innovations by drawing on his professional knowledge he accumulated in Cuba. At home, he has the space and time to draw from his years of study and experience as an electrician in various professional contexts in Cuba to thoroughly explain his invention. He cultivates conditions where he can be seen and valued as he was in his country of origin, especially when current work conditions in the U.S. provide a very different experience. In doing so, he can hold on to and develop his previous profession and identity as an electrician even if he no longer practices this for a living. As he describes, this work continues to be his "vocation" even outside of formal U.S. economies and constructions of work.

This video also reflects how Henry's home workspace allows him to connect and leverage his professional experience in combination with skills he has built in the U.S. by communicating across languages. He reflects rhetorical skill developed from moving between languages and audiences (Martinez et al.) to invest Calley (his viewer) in the project's broader importance. He also draws from multimodal visual affordances of the video with the materials available to him (Gonzales) as a process of translating both the content and language for Calley, a monolingual English speaker with very little content knowledge in the area he is discussing. In other words, in his home, Henry not only demonstrates his professional literate repertoire but also the specific literate and linguistic strengths he has built from his linguistic experience—the rhe-

torical awareness and translation expertise required of multilingual people in his position. The video thus demonstrates how, in this case, his home allows him to express aspects of his literate repertoire that he connects to his professional literacies.

Finally, these video clips demonstrate how Henry's professional-, home-, and community-based literacies become tangled and intertwined in terms of their contexts and purposes. While Henry's home allowed him to display his electrical knowledge and the vast literacies and knowledge attached to that professional identity, this demonstration was not only about his role as an electrician—it was also about his desire to help communities, a desire he continues to act on in his current work at the university. He focused on how the project would benefit people at the household level but also the broader *ecology* and environment around them. This currently unpaid work serves not only him but a broader community. In this way, Henry's home becomes a workspace for broader community impact. His video demonstrates the variety of connections between his contexts and roles and the importance of accounting for and supporting those connections across the contexts of his daily life.

While Henry creates opportunities to express aspects of his literate repertoire and knowledge within his home workspace, he described how those aspects were consistently undermined and undervalued within the university. He shared how, within the institution, it was difficult for him to be recognized as a professional electrician because of the racism tied to his language and class of work. He said other people at the university doubted his knowledge because he was a Spanish-speaker and a Latino who cleaned. To exemplify this experience, he described an instance in the university when he saw a man working on some lights. He watched to see what he was doing and if he could help. But when the man noticed, he said, "Would you like something? Do you want to know about something?" And Henry said "No, no, no, no, no, just looking, knowing, I like electricity, I'm just looking." He told Calley he was frustrated that the man had assumed he was there to learn rather than teach— that he presumed Henry had no knowledge to share. Finally, Henry asked another worker for a pencil and drew the circuit to help the electrician. He said "Oh my God! How do you know that?" And Henry told him, "Because that's my life, I studied it, I went to University." In this way, Henry expresses how his position within the university often prevented him from showing literacies related to his formal education and profession—the literacies that he used to define himself.

Institutional conditions related to monolingual English ideologies (Alvarez; Canagarajah) similarly positioned Henry as a learner rather than a bearer of knowledge. In the institutional context, Henry was constructed as an English-learner rather than a Spanish-speaker. English was promoted through safety policies that required English reading comprehension assessments. It was also sponsored through free institutionally run English Language Learning courses. Although Henry said he had attended and appreciated the classes, he preferred to learn on his own—to engage in self-directed learning that met his specific desires and goals. Despite over half of the crew speaking Spanish, English was the language spoken by managers and thus the classes helped build communication in a way that catered to managers' linguistic repertoire as opposed to those of non-managerial workers. Within the context of his

class work, Henry was positioned to go over his English homework with his manager and, during team meetings set in an actual classroom, to literally sit in the seat of students. These conditions reinforced the labor hierarchy by emphasizing English as the institutional language and positioning workers like Henry as learners. These conditions contrasted how Henry constructed himself in his videos as an inventor and teacher. Henry's home-based workplace videos highlight how institutional monolingual ideologies, not Henry's linguistic repertoire, created barriers for him to express his knowledge in the university.

A home- and community-based approach to workplace literacy makes evident how, even within university conditions that deny Henry a knowledgeable status, he uses his literate repertoire to negotiate his professional knowledge across contexts. One day while waiting for a crew team meeting to begin, Calley noticed Henry sitting at a table in the front row with a piece of cardboard in his hand. Calley asked him what it was. He walked over to her seat and held up an empty light bulb container, bending down to her level and resting the container on the table in front of her. He pointed to the wattage number explaining that the university was wasting a lot of electricity because they were using the wrong kind of light bulbs. He had brought bulbs that would save the university money and was planning to show John, the manager. Just like he had used the video to teach Calley and drew the circuit to teach the electrician, he would use the container as a multimodal teaching tool to educate John, another monolingual English speaker. This, again, shows his linguistic wealth on multiple levels. It shows the rhetorical awareness and multimodal translation work (Gonzales) he uses to draw upon materials and embodiment to make his point clear to his audience. While he could not carry his innovations in their entirety into the institutional workplace, he used the lightbulb container as a literacy prop to teach and benefit his workplace. He leveraged his professional knowledge and experience so that he could demonstrate it within a workplace where conditions so often denied him the ability to do so.

Henry's experience shows the importance of expanding workplace literacies to include those that, because of white English supremacy, cannot always be expressed in workplaces like educational institutions. To fully appreciate Henry's literate repertoires and desires in the workplace, we argue, his workplace literacies should be read through those he practices at home. From his home workspace, Henry illuminates his vast linguistic and professional wealth and how workplace conditions shape the extent to which he can share his experience and knowledge. The literacies he shared from home function to challenge the identities and literacies the institution constructs for him. While inequitable socioeconomic and ideological forces continue to shape experiences of workplace literacy, Henry's work at home positions home as an important site of workplace literacy that exists outside of the institutional gaze. His experience also encourages teachers, researchers, and employers to seek opportunities for working people to engage their full literate repertoires and define for themselves the workspaces and literacies they want to use across contexts.

Alfonso: Storytelling at Church

Similar to the way Henry utilizes his home context to engage in his desired literate practices and purposes, Alfonso pursues his chosen literacies within the context of his church community. In this section, we discuss how Alfonso leverages his religious community-context to engage in storytelling practices as a part of his broader life work. Then we explain how his university work conditions deny him opportunities to act on those particular desires. Alfonso's experiences extend Latinx studies that have highlighted storytelling as a specific cultural and linguistic strength for Latinx peoples (Yosso; Farr; Hurtig amongst others), by showing how his religious storytelling could also be an important workplace literacy practice that potentially improves people's experience of work. Alfonso's desire and talent for storytelling have important implications for how he can connect to others and serve his life's purpose across the contexts of his life—including his university work. The section demonstrates how Alfonso's community-based literacies provide insight into his work experience because, through their absence, we can better understand the limitations of his university workplace conditions and what he might need from those conditions instead.

Alfonso sees his storytelling as a vehicle for teaching people how to pursue a good life. He explained how, in his youth in Mexico, he would "hang out with the elderly men" during community occasions like wakes or around school meetings and "they would start to tell stories, different stories, and I enjoyed listening to them." He was particularly drawn to stories with drama and danger. As he listened to these stories, he would often think about how storytellers told stories, including the different moves and choices they made and the thoughtfulness that they put into them. He began to identify as a storyteller when he realized how his stories affected others and that he could use storytelling to help people choose better "life paths." He described how, as a child, he used La Llorona—a Latin American folktale about a grieving ghost mother dressed in white—to teach other children not to be mischievous or harmful. The tale of La Llorona is vastly popular in Latin American culture and is often used by parents or adults to scare children and get them to listen or change their ways. Alfonso begins his story by describing how he convinced his cousin to help him teach other children a lesson,

> "Those kids, we are going to get rid of them because they are killing the turtle doves, and the morning doves, and we are going to scare them." And he asked me, "But how?" "No, you, you don't worry about that. I know how." We went up, there was a tree, a tree known as socono, a tree that is always good. When they were about to kill the doves, we jumped out at them with the sheets and the wind blew the sheets up and we started to scream, "oh my children." And the kids were frightened. They were going to hit us with the slingshots, but they just froze. The slingshots fell to the ground. They dropped the slingshots and stones. And it was very windy and there was a thunder of trees and branches. And we were like, "Bye my children. They killed all the small animals. They will not leave them in peace." They took off flying (Alfonso laughs). Then we got down from the tree. We got in front of

them and… it was dark. The next day at school we heard them telling others, "The other night, the Llorona appeared to us. She appeared to us. We went to the doves." And they began to tell their friends. "At night, the Llorona appeared to us. We went to kill doves to eat and the Llorona appeared to us. And we left, we came running home. We are not going back."

Here, Alfonso expressed his skill and passion for storytelling both by extending the tale of the Llorona and through his theatrical retelling of the event. In the retelling, Alfonso built suspense by withholding details of his plan until he jumps out of the tree and in his description of the boys freezing and that "The slingshots fell to the ground." He embedded symbols of goodness like the tree and the doves which emphasized the underlying themes. Laughter was audible in his voice as he shared how his friends would always say "Tu tienes unas historias que dan risa, dan alegría" (You have stories that make us laugh, that give joy). The word *tienes* indicates the stories belong to Alfonso to which he responds, "yo tengo historias buenas que contar" (I have good stories to tell). Overall, this instance reflects Alfonso's desire to use storytelling for purposes of justice in the world—to right wrongs and put people on what he considers to be the right path. He draws on the cultural tale of the Llorona to teach the boys a lesson. This instance reflects how, for him, storytelling is a deeply social act that has the potential to impact his communities for the better.

As an adult in the US, Alfonso's church has become a space where he can use his literacies to tell stories that impact his community.[3] This context gives him an opportunity to tell his story because his church community expresses how they value his knowledge and experience. In Alfonso's church, like many Latinx Protestant churches, there is a calling for believers to share the good news with others. Using one's testimony, lived experiences, especially those before coming to know God, is strongly encouraged. This work gives Alfonso an opportunity to make use of lived experience to teach others. Alfonso specifically explained how the church leaders and members recognized and valued his ideas. During Bible study, he said, the leaders asked his opinions and really listened to his response. They encouraged him to write and share his life history. And when Alfonso did give testimony in church, he felt "awe" from the audience and received positive feedback during and after he shared. Thus, the church awarded a platform for storytelling and, importantly, an audience who was moved by his testimony. These experiences demonstrate how, for Alfonso, his storytelling practice is about more than speaking—it is about being heard and affecting an audience. Much like his storytelling as a child, Alfonso hopes to use his life story as a means of inspiring others to choose a better path. He wants to achieve this purpose by drawing connections and a sense of unity between him and his audience. He evokes a definition of testimony that relies on a reader or listener with whom to share, and ultimately, to establish solidarity. For Alfonso, this work expresses the message of testimonio: that "I am you," (Beverly), or in his own words, "If I can survive, you can survive too." Alfonso's storytelling is driven by this message—a message that proves to be essential for understanding his experience of literacy across the contexts of his life.

Alfonso's experiences telling his life stories at church provide insight into his university workplace experiences and how workplace conditions limit his ability to live

out his broader life's work. University workplace structures and conditions specifically undermine his position of storyteller by limiting his identity. Several institutional conditions stripped Alfonso of his broader identities and largely reduced him to his labor. For example, during new staff training, new members of the custodial staff were told to introduce themselves their shift, their crew number, and the name of their manager before their own names. This position associated workers with their immediate labor and direct supervisor while alienating them from their individual identities. And this alienation was compounded when, each team meeting, his manager explained substitutions by naming whose run or route a worker would be completing. Rather than describing the space they would clean, he said that Alfonso would *be* the absent worker. For example, if Alfonso were covering Henry's area, he would say, "Alfonso, you are Henry today." This messaging suggested that, for the institution, Alfonso's identity was interchangeable with Henry's. Alfonso expanded on this observation saying, "A lot of people have brought that up--that we should have substitutes," because custodial staff that assume another worker's responsibilities are still only compensated for a single person's work. As Alfonso explained, on one hand, these systems sent the message that he was exchangeable and even less than human. What mattered was the work, not the person doing it. And on the other, it positioned him as more than one person because he was both Alfonso and Henry. Constructed as both sub-human and super-human, these conditions threated the common humanity he sought to convey through his stories.

In contrast to his experiences at church, Alfonso's work conditions made him feel like his knowledge and experience did not matter and these conditions ultimately impacted how he could fulfill his role as a storyteller. Alfonso called Lupe and Calley one day because he wanted to include a specific instance in the article. He had been on a one-week vacation and returned to work with much more work because the person who had replaced him had not done his work correctly. Alfonso went to HR and told them they needed to talk to supervisors about this, but he felt like no one was really listening to him. He explained how this reflected a larger institutional problem of creating "more rules and less training" for custodial staff as well as a consistent feeling of not being heard when they asked for change. For Alfonso, this instance made him feel like the university did not care what he knew or what he thought because they believed he could be replaced by someone who could not complete the work. These conditions, he explained, reminded him the university views him as the lowest rank of labor. These dehumanizing conditions denied Alfonso the role of storyteller because, for Alfonso, that role required having a human story to tell.

Institutional conditions and hierarchies also prevented Alfonso from fulfilling his role as storyteller by restricting contact and connection with his potential audiences. Like most custodial staff at this institution, Alfonso works in the evenings and such regulations around time segregated him from students, faculty, and staff who work during the day. Similarly, university conditions require him to work alone and thus segregate him from other custodial staff who work on his crew. These conditions prevent Alfonso from talking to his colleagues who speak Spanish or English outside of the daily team meetings—even on breaks. In addition, institutional policies prevent

him from using both his personal phone and any institutional phone in an office or institutional building without permission. He was also prohibited from using personal or institutional computers outside of work or break time. In new staff training, custodial staff are discouraged from leaving the building during shifts because doors upon exiting the buildings. Without access to keys and phones, it is difficult to arrange for others to open doors. These restrictions further limit Alfonso's contact with audiences beyond the institution and reify boundaries between within- and outside-of- university work contexts. By isolating workers from their stories and audiences outside of the university, these university literacy conditions support exploitative labor systems that define workers like Alfonso by their labor alone.

By sharing experiences at home and in his church context, Alfonso demonstrates how literacies allow him to express connections to his broader history and life's purpose. At the same time, these experiences also provide insight into how institutional conditions prevent him from drawing upon his repertoire in ways that separate him from his human story, his audience, and his role as storyteller. Examining Alfonso's experience of work at the university through his home and community-based literacy practices exposes how the absence of his desired literacies shape his experience of university work.

Looking Beyond the Institution

Extending a long history of Latinx scholarship, Henry's and Alfonso's experiences urge writing studies researchers to center home- and community-based literacies in workplace literacy studies by reading literacies that take place in the context of work through the lens of workers' broader lives. Within economic systems that exploit racialized workers and privilege English and practices associated with white middle-class culture, a home- and community-based approach to workplace writing exposes literacies that have been overlooked, undervalued, and misunderstood when researchers, teachers, and employers in higher education focus on workplaces alone. Additionally, this approach offers a way to bring community and workplace literacy studies into conversation to help people who work carry the literacies that matter to them across the contexts of their daily lives. While scholars invested in community literacy have long argued for more connection between classroom-, home-, and community-based literacies, in this article, we argue that workplaces are also an important context to apply that framework. We argue a home- and community-based approach to workplace literacy provides important possibilities for creating workplace literacy conditions that allow people to integrate their innovations and even miracles into their work experiences.

Supporting workers' literacies across contexts directly challenges systems of oppression that position people as labor so this kind of shift would require higher education institutions to stop dehumanizing and exploiting workers. The systemic nature of these problems encourages Alfonso and Henry to direct their literacy energies outside of the university workspace. Following their lead, Lupe and Calley have supported their home- and community-based efforts such as helping Alfonso share this

article and broader testimonio with his church community. That is not to say that university spaces cannot be informed by this scholarship—they can and should be. Universities can start by asking participants in positions like custodial staff about the literacies they desire to practice and build space and conditions for them to practice those literacies regardless of institutional benefit. For Alfonso and Henry to practice the literacies they desire like their innovations and personal stories, the university would need systems and cultural shifts that position them as university actors with valuable knowledge to share. That would require systems that cultivate communication and trust between participants and engaged and receptive university actors. These conditions ultimately require all university actors including administrators, faculty, students, and staff to challenge the white English supremacy embedded in university culture that undermines these just literacy conditions.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Here we are distinguishing formal from informal work taking place within homes and communities but outside of sanctioned and recognized formal US economies.

2. Following recent work by Garcia and Delgado Bernal, we do not want to romanticize or idealize home which is often the site of gender-based inequity. Rather we are arguing it is an important site to examine to better understand participants' workplace literacy experiences.

3. Transnational literacy studies have demonstrated how church spaces can be spaces to establish literate and professional identities for immigrants who are often denied that status in other institutions. See Vieira.

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Alfonso Guzman Gomez (he/him) is a man of faith and family. He is a proud father and grandfather. He is a storyteller and an active member of his church community.

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