Reviewed work:

Literacy Research for Political Action and Social Change. (2007). Mollie V. Blackburn and Caroline T. Clark (Eds.). New York: Peter Lang. Pp. 291. ISBN 9780820486796. $32.95.

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Brandt and Clinton (2002) warned that recent studies were overindulgent in searching for the complexities of local literacy practices in local contexts, because they fail to take into account "literacy's transcontextualized and transcontextualizing potentials" (p. 338). They argued for concentrating on global literacy practices since they are applicable across contexts. In *Literacy Research for Political Action and Social Change*, the editors, Blackburn and Clark, respond to and problematize Brandt and Clinton's binary concepts of local and global literacies, as well as the applicability of the notion of macroliteracies. They argue that literacy is constituted historically and therefore inseparable from either the local or global, and it is not an outcome of local practices but a participant itself that is not only created or used by people but also participates in social practices in the form of objects and artifacts. Blackburn and Clark's volume is composed of 13 chapters, with a series of 11 studies and 2 theoretical statements. It explicitly articulates the authors' theoretical framework and illustrates methods to carry out studies that show literacy as potentially transformative for social change and political action.

Most of the 11 studies in the book adopt ethnographic methods (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Purcell-Gates, 2004). The studies are varied, depending on their theoretical

frameworks, research questions, research methods, and context. The studies are categorized into three parts. Part 1 uses either microethnographic analysis (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005) or case study to complexify what is meant by *local* and *global* (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). Collective and collaborative methodological aspects are highlighted in Part 2 to uncover the local practices that challenge a traditional view of what counts as literacy, to provide a counter-story as a powerful response to master narratives, and to show possibilities for change. Finally, although the writers in Part 3 do not fully articulate their methods, it is possible to infer from their goals and research contexts that most of the studies are conducted as participatory classroom action research (Miskovitz & Hoop, 2006). Each study attempts to dismantle hierarchical norms of literacy situated in institutional systems and suggests ways to transform oppressive situations for the marginalized. With its data-driven ethnographic studies, the book blurs the arbitrary binary distinction between local and global literacies put forward by Brandt and Clinton and puts them on a more concrete footing, which orients to actual literacy practices.

Part 1focuses on theoretical concerns and methodological approaches that attempt to guide literacy research for political action. In chapter 1, Blackburn and Clark theorize links between global issues and local actions, arguing that literacy is not a tool or an object that is restrictively used in a limited context, but an actor and a participant of the social practices in the forms of objects and artifacts. According to the editors, literacy can transcend context, depending on the purpose of its use. In order to unravel the link between global and local and present roles of literacies, for example, literacy as participant and actor, they argue for the necessity of ethnographic research and imagination as significant tools. They believe that this methodological approach allows studies to provide well-grounded and fine-gained interpretations of literacy practices. In chapter 2, Dixson and Bloome apply the *critical race theory* as an analytical framework, and *microethnographic discourse analysis* (Bloome et al., 2005) as a methodological tool to capture how race is constructed through language use and how students' racial identities play an integral role in how they read and understand both printed texts and the world. Microethnographic discourse analysis successfully captures the reconstruction of human agency with a specific focus on classroom discourse and informs the ways in which literacy pedagogy can play a socially transformative and reconstructive role. Jacobs in chapter 3, drawing on her 2-year ethnographic case study, problematizes the New Literacy Studies notion of context that divides literacy simplistically into local and global. Jacobs argues that in her study, context is constantly constructed by digital literacies both online and offline. Thus the notion of context as local and global is difficult to sustain. Rather, the context was organized and reorganized by the participant and the literacy artifacts (e.g., instant messaging) in which the participant was engaged. Finally, in chapter 4, Allen concludes Part 1 by asking important "so what?" questions, for example, "so, what do we learn from investigating and examining the local?" and "what are the consequences of the research?", among others (p. 77).

Part 2 takes Allen's questions from Part 1 further to consider consequences and implications for literacy research and for the political actions of local participants. All of the studies in Part 2 advocate engaging with research participants through collective and collaborative methodological perspectives. In chapter 5, Carter uses a case-study approach (Mitchell, 1984), in which Mitchell defined cases as sets of events or as social situations and emphasized "the theoretical connection between the events rather than in the attributes of the events themselves (p. 238)." As for data analysis, Carter used microethnographic analysis (Bloome et al., 2005) and

found that nonverbal communication, including silence, does not reflect emptiness and a void of interaction, but rather, is highly contextual as it is negotiated and influenced by culture. Based on the data from her 10 years of ethnographic studies, Compton-Lilly, in chapter 6, explores different forms of "reading capital" (p. 119) of two of her participants, addressing how having or not having aspects of mainstream views of reading may exclude some students in school. In chapters 7 and 8, de Castell, Jenson, and Halverson respectively focus on street youth, questioning discourses around lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer issues. De Castell and Jenson conducted short-term ethnographic participatory action research and found that ethnography not only can be used to generate knowledge but can also provide ways to engage in active community works through literacy practices. Similarly, Halverson studied youth homosexuality using narrative analysis of data (e.g., Schiffrin, 1996). While sharing in groups, their stories were told, adapted, and performed to reconcile difficulties among queer youth participants. This approach explores the global consequences of policies and practices of the wider world especially in relation to those who are openly stigmatized and publicly ignored in traditional educational institutions. Chapter 9 by Leander and Mills, the final chapter in Part 2, explores their ongoing study of digital literacies. The study describes how people's social world and life experiences change and expand across time and space and challenges the limited definition of local and global context proposed by Brandt and Clinton. With consideration of how local literacies shed light on marginalized voices, how they interrogate the grand narratives of the global and document ways to redefine local and global context, Part 2 highlights the lives of the local participants who are influenced by global policies and practices in the wider world.

Part 3 illustrates possibilities for research that strives to address global issues through local literacy studies and political action. Joseph and Duncan exemplify one such case in chapter 10. Through ontological and epistemological explication of the dimensions of love, power, and justice, the authors interrogate how their presence or absence results in different outcomes for students' academic literacy and social experiences in the classroom. Similarly, Campano and Damico in chapter 11 demonstrate how children collaboratively assemble their cultural identities to scrutinize larger societal issues and take intellectual and ethical stances. This realization of their cultural identities allows them to generate mutually shared social knowledge about the wider world they live in. In chapter 12, Morrell provides an example of research and practice in a teacher training program, and explores how critical literacy teaching can be used to frame popular culture to connect the interests of youth and develop academic skills. This action-oriented approach comes together in a class that enables students to work together to transform both school and society. Finally in chapter 13, Weltsek and Medina explore a transformative and critical pedagogy of embodiment in drama classes with pre-service teachers. In their study, pre-service teachers took a children's picture book and analyzed and interpreted the characters and content of the story. Then, they engaged in redeveloping the story to create different forms and genres to construct the meaning of a particular situation. The process of developing collaborative critical performative pedagogy (e.g., Giroux, 2001; Pineau, 2002) through children's literature allowed both the participants and the researchers to broaden and transform their understandings of literacy practices. In sum, all the chapters in the Part 3 highlight the implications of literacy research and political action for the local participants.

Although every study takes an ethnographic approach, each chapter does not deal primarily with one particular research method or engage in explaining how to do a particular type of research.

Therefore, the book can be viewed as an edited volume that consists of a series of interlocking research studies. According to the editors, all the studies focus on literacy research for social justice and political action, and they include both theoretical concerns and methodological approaches to support their goals. Therefore, the authors link theory and methods in order to accomplish their purpose. For readers, the book shows how particular methods can achieve a researcher's purpose, and consequently I came away from it having read it as an application book for methodology and theory within language and literacy education.

Prior to reading this book, I thought that research studies involving political change were typically framed as critical participatory action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Miskovitz & Hoop, 2006; Udas, 1998), collaborative ethnography studies (Lassiter, 2005), or critical ethnography (Foley, 2002). This was because these critical methodologies explicitly highlight how participants learn about themselves in relation to their connected social world and actively work towards social action (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). According to Udas (1998), Lassiter (2005), and Foley (2002), for example, these research methodologies create reflexivity of epistemological and narrative practices and deconstruct the stereotypes that people hold. However, Blackburn and Clark's edited collection serves to convince readers that these critical methodological approaches are not the sole methods. Given the variety of theoretical and methodological accounts contained within it, this book provides another lens for social change and political involvement. Like other socially driven methodologies (e.g., Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), researchers in this book also do not initiate their studies from a judgmental point of view; rather, their research was motivated by a desire to work together with their participants to share ownership of research projects, articulation of community-based analysis of their social problems, and an orientation towards community action. For those who are eager to conduct research for social action within language and literacy education, including reading as a foreign language, and for those who want to investigate New Literacy Studies (e.g., New London Group, 1996) further, I strongly recommend this book. I believe that such approaches can guide first, second, and foreign language teachers, researchers, and students to take a more active role in social change and political action.

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