**Annotated Bibliography**

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| Needs to be revised for flow (cohesion) and APA formatting as well as assignment formatting |

This collection contains entries from three areas: literacies, funds of knowledge and cognitive science. Despite the differences in the fields, these articles share a common concern: validating students’ outside-of-school knowledge and using this validation to change pedagogical practices. Literacies theory argues that all literacies are contextual, none necessarily superior to another, and that a literacy’s value itself depends upon context. As a consequence, literacies scholars advocate incorporating various literacies into the classroom. Similarly, funds of knowledge scholars argue that the knowledge students gain from their personal lives can be used as a way to connect students out-of-school knowledge to school knowledge, as well as bridge their personal and school lives. Recent studies about writing and cognition strongly suggest that inexperienced writers be allowed to write about what they know in order to reduce their cognitive loads and to facilitate writing development. With this central concern for incorporating students’ practices and knowledge into the classroom, the works cited here support one another and imply that some reasonably simple changes to our pedagogy might have far-reaching benefits for our students.

Adler-Kassner, L and Harrington S. (2006) *Basic Writing as a Political Act: Public Conversations about Writing and Literacies*. Research in the Teaching of Rhetoric and Composition. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton,

Adler-Kassner and Harrington investigate how basic writing and literacy are perceived by the media, the university, and students. A central concern of the book is how the autonomous model of literacy plays out in the public sphere and contributes to the political nature of basic writing. The authors argue that basic writing is already political because of its negative reputation and because it marginalizes and stigmatizes students. One solution is to make basic writing a political act by increasing students’ awareness of various literacies and the issues of power and hegemony in dominant literacies. While they refrain from offering a specific curriculum, stating that to do so would be against the spirit of their book, the authors do offer advice as to how one can make basic writing a political act: by “Putting literacy definitions in the center of the curriculum” (102). In addition, they propose the development of students’ transitional literacies, the ability to produce appropriate texts under a variety of contexts. Resonant chapters include the final one, which suggests ways to make basic writing a political act, and two central ones that examine students’ perceptions of academic writing and reading versus the writing and reading they do for themselves.

Alexander, J. (2009). Gaming, student literacies, and the composition classroom: Some possibilities for transformation.” *College Composition and Communication,* *61* (1) 35-63.

According to the author, the world of video and computer games demands a variety of literacy strategies from its adherents. For instance, during the playing of games, offline gamers must often deal with text, determining which text is most relevant; online gamers use instant messages and other textual means to plan attacks, often writing 1,000 word essays justifying certain strategies. Websites devoted to gamers often demand that their members make weekly contributions to community forums as well as follow standards of grammar and behavior. According to Alexander, gamers also develop trans-literacies, “literacy and rhetorical skills [that] might transfer to other writing environments.” The author’s proposal to center a composition class around gaming and gaming literacies might seem a superficial approach and certainly would not appeal to everyone. Alexander, however, claims that his assignments closely parallel traditional composition assignments, making use of research, interviews, scholarly sources, and critical literacy. Teachers unfamiliar with gaming might actually be at an advantage, according to Alexander, for they could learn along with the students, showing the students how a “master learner” approaches new literacies, while sharing their knowledge of rhetorical strategies. While he never refers to Paulo Freire or his terminology, Alexander presents a good example of teacher-student co-investigation. He does not offer a satisfactory answer as to the weaknesses of the approach, such as what students would be missing by his curriculum.

Barton, Angela Calabrese, and Edna Tan. Funds of Knowledge and Discourses and Hybrid Space. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 46 (2009): 50 – 73.

The authors rely extensively on Gee’s Discourse theory and their take on Moje at al’s Hybrid/3rd Space theory (itself a combination of Discourse theory and funds of knowledge) to conduct a study of 6th grade science students in a Title 1 school. The authors claim that, because science is such a different Discourse for minorities, many students find that the science classroom is as much about crossing borders as it is about learning content. According to the authors, valuing students’ funds of knowledge can be a way of transitioning them into the classroom. The authors were particularly interested in the effects of certain pedagogical strategies—which they never identify—on female students. During the design phases of an alternative pedagogical unit, they and a teacher met with 5 students, four of them female, to come up with experimentation questions that tapped into students’ funds of knowledge. The students and teacher then designed a multifaceted unit on nutrition, where students, among other things, interviewed family members about food and cooking, prepared food for their classmates, went to fast food restaurants and convenience stores to purchase meals for under $5.00, and compared their purchases for nutritional value. The experience was empowering for students, motivating even the most reluctant, and at times resulting in 100% discussion participation instead of the usual 50%. Despite the successes, the teacher and the authors acknowledge that it just is not “feasible or practical” to run these types of units throughout a semester. They conclude that we need to find additional ways of incorporating funds of knowledge into the classroom.

Carter, Shannon. “Redefining Literacy as a Social Practice.” *Journal of Basic Writing*. 25.2 (2006): 94 – 125. Web. 16 September 2011.

This article is a distillation of Carter’s book, *The Way Literacy Lives.* It presents the essence of her curriculum and her theory of rhetorical dexterity—the ability to take the skills of one literacy and apply them to others. The article details how students analyze and write about the literacy practices they use at their workplaces. Through a series of assignments, they come to realize that all communities of practice have rules about appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and practices. The students then write a culminating essay where they compare their workplace literacies to academic ones. In providing ideas for a literacies curriculum, Carter demonstrates how Gee’s concept of semiotic domains (or what Carter prefers to call “communities of practice”) can be extended for practical writing purposes.