

Subject to Address in a Digital Literacy Initiative: Neoliberal Agency and the Promises and Predicaments of Participation

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ABSTRACT

Bakhtin's concept of addressivity affords an investigation of why my students and I were frustrated by the seeming lack of a connection between our participation in a self-tutorial in preparation for a digital literacy initiative, on the one hand, and the benefits of the acquisition of digital literacy, on the other hand. More than one structure of addressivity emerged from the tutorial, such that my students and I found the one that provided clues to the benefits of digital literacy utterly irrelevant to the completion of the self-tutorial and future tutorials. Structures of addressivity identified herein demonstrate that the individuals involved in the self-tutorial are not poised to benefit from interdiscursive ties beyond the self-tutorial and future tutorials. Such benefits are relegated to organizations. This article thus locates what has been identified as neoliberal agency within the addressivity structures that underpin a digital literacy initiative.

In this article I join scholars who have contended that literacy's utility in diagnoses of society's ills makes literacy a particularly fruitful domain for the investigation of ideology and its relationship to discursive practice (Gee 1990; Graff 1991, 2011; Olson 1994; Collins and Blot 2003; Ohmann 2003).¹

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1. Discourse about literacy, for example, so often presupposes a dualism between "passivity and ignorance" (illiteracy) and "mental development and social equity" (literacy) (Collins and Blot 2003, 97).

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Recent social reform efforts have used digital literacy as a means to configure social change and its effects. A large number of publications, some linked to government and private initiatives, have argued that a “digital divide” exists that can be correlated with other, long-standing inequalities.² *Falling through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide*, the third of four reports of the US Department of Commerce on household access to telephones, computers, and the Internet, describes the “digital divide” to be “one of America’s leading economic and civil rights issues.” Those left behind include “minorities, low-income persons, the less educated, and children of single-parent households, particularly when they reside in rural areas or central cities.” The report argues that “closing the digital divide” will aid groups left behind in “finding a job, contacting colleagues, taking courses, researching products, or finding public information.”³

By 2000, when the last of four National Telecommunications and Information Administration reports was published, the notion of a “digital divide” and the economic benefits that would come with its removal had become commonplace in publications of mass consumption (Monroe 2004). Though the types of software (Eudora, Facebook, Twitter, etc.), hardware (laptops, smart phones, tablets, etc.), and infrastructure (servers, fiber optic cables, satellites, etc.) have grown in number, the notion that access to digital literacy can help to ameliorate poverty has been popular and unchanging. Indeed, many publications have argued that new forms of technology and their uses have made for a changing divide (Compaine 2001; Mossberger et al. 2003; Warschauer 2003; van Dijk 2005; Mossberger et al. 2008; Mossberger et al. 2013). Some have argued that the uses to which devices are put and the knowledge needed for such uses can reveal divides when accessibility to devices seems relatively equitable (Crawford 2011; Ellison 2014). Some, like Monroe (2004), are critical of representations of the digital divide for the tendency to see poverty as the result of a lack of individual initiative. Most publications, however, use the digital divide to explain the location of minorities in the lower classes and take the erasure of the digital divide to constitute a step toward equality.

These assessments of the digital divide probe data sets, policy reports, and newspaper articles in order to foreground questions about how to represent groups or ask more or less critical questions about how groups are represented.

2. A large number of books like Mark Bauerline’s *The Dumbest Generation*, published in 2008, Nicholas Carr’s *The Shallows*, published in 2010, and Maggie Jackson’s *Distracted*, published in 2008, work from the seeming paradox of the emergence of a new kind of literacy with ill effects. Such books argue that the rise of the internet has characterized a generation as having greater access to information, but less proclivity to focus on and analyze it.

3. See <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/legacy/ntiahome/fttn99/contents.html>.

This article considers an initiative meant to bring people across the digital divide and brings the circumstances of participation to bear on questions about the purposes of the initiative. Thus, it answers the call of many scholars to consider literacy not just as a means of representation, but also as a social practice more generally (Heath 1983; Street 1984, 1993; Cook-Gumperz 1986; Schieffelin and Gilmore 1986; Shuman 1986; Collins 1995). That is to say that literacy is not a singular phenomenon or skill, but is emergent in practices oriented to particular ends. Who engages in what literacy practices and how those practices articulate with institutional projects are open questions for investigation. Students and I secured funding from the liberal arts college where I teach to participate in face-to-face tutorials on the use of broadband (or Internet service) with people who had come to a social services provider for a variety of reasons. Prior to engaging people in tutorials, my students and I completed an online self-tutorial meant to prepare us to conduct the tutorials. This article focuses on the self-tutorial because, in contrast to the tutorials we would conduct with people, it bore traces of being oriented to different activities, actors, and, ultimately, purposes. Addressivity is a concept emergent from Bakhtin's (1986) dialogical approach to discourse that attends to the ways in which utterances bear traces of being oriented to others. By employing the concept, I show that the self-tutorial gives evidence that the subsequent broadband tutorials are useful to two different entities in radically different ways.

My college students and I assumed that the self-tutorial would address us as tutors and would refer to us, our future students, and the work that we would be doing with them. We found, however, that the training tutorial addressed us as we expected only briefly, and then again only after we had quickly skimmed a series of web pages, believing that they had no relevance to the tutorial work at hand. As we progressed through the self-tutorial, my students and I became increasingly anxious that we could see no connection between the activities we were to undertake with our future students and their growing ability to use computers with broadband to escape poverty. Only when reflecting on the self-tutorial later would we realize that the web pages we had skimmed held the key to what was valuable about the software package, what seemed to mediate the agency of entities involved in the self-tutorial and what would be accomplished by engaging in the subsequent tutorials. The pages we skimmed established that organizations could use the software to improve their services and expand their client base. Later, the self-tutorial presented cases of two individuals who had become better people through literacy programs. I argue that, in the self-tutorial, organizations and individuals are linked by modes of agency that have been identified as neoliberal because individuals become responsible for their own

improvement by increasing their ability to build contacts and relationships with organizations. The self-tutorial left my students and me confused about how our future tutorials would bring about change in people's lives, and the subsequent tutorials did not offer the people tutored contacts and relationships with organizations. By considering the ways in which structures of addressivity unfolded in the self-tutorial program, this article explores the mismatch between what was promised—engaging as a tutor with people to help them across the digital divide—and the entity that is identified as the agent of transition.⁴

Differences between the addressivity structures of the digital literacy self-tutorial can be used to demonstrate that the tutorial is underpinned by different conjunctions of time and space, what Bakhtin calls “chronotopes,” through which people's activity emerges. Just what entities do in the tutorial depends on the addressivity structure in which they are involved, and this difference, in turn, has ramifications for the transformation that the self-tutorial promises for the people whom my students and I would tutor.⁵ The lack of resonance between the addressivity structure wherein tutors help students to learn to use a computer to gain access to the internet and wherein organizations improve their services and expand their client base was never resolved. My students and I were left frustrated by the lack of a connection between tutoring and the promise of transformation. This article considers the structures of addressivity of the self-tutorial and the chronotopes that underpin them in order to make sense of our frustration as an index of our exclusion from participation in the self-tutorial's promise of transformation as well as a cue to look outside of what we understood to constitute participation in the self-tutorial for evidence of the benefits of crossing the digital divide.

The Ethnographic Context and Its Infrastructural Complexities

The college paid my students and me for eight weeks of face-to-face tutorial sessions that took place in one of four locations during the summer. All three of the students had declared anthropology as their major, but the students were

4. The existence of multiple addressivity structures in the self-tutorial explored herein differentiates the case from the grant applications at a number of federal agencies, the notions about research modeled therein, and the normalization of reading practices illustrated in their discussion, described by Brenneis (1994, 1999, 2006). In short, neoliberal agency does not underpin the addressivity structures of the federal research grants that Brenneis describes.

5. In Peircean terms, the “interpretant,” the transformative consequence of participation in the digital literacy tutorial, of the addressivity structure my students and I recognized was left unclear, whereas the interpretant of the addressivity structure that seemed utterly irrelevant to my students and me emerged in the self-tutorial in a way aligned closely with the transformation that underpinned the digital literacy initiative (*EP* 1:300–324, 2:1–10).

drawn to the project for different reasons. One student had participated in volunteer tutoring with an organization different from the ones described herein which offered recently arrived refugees classes in English and the acquisition of citizenship. One student wanted to become a health professional and sought experience conducting interviews. One student wanted to participate in a research project generally. All had taken courses in anthropology, and two students had taken courses in linguistic anthropology.⁶ The participants in the sessions were drawn from classes being taught by paid employees of a state-funded adult education initiative designed to offer tutoring for the GED exam, classes for the teaching of English as a second language, and classes in which attendance is necessary to receive public aid. Most of the teachers were women in their twenties who were working on graduate degrees in education and who wished to attain certification to teach in schools. One employee was a retired grammar school teacher who had become restless and had returned to the classroom in a part-time capacity. People who had come to the locations for tutoring varied widely in age. Many were single mothers in their twenties who wished to finish their high school education with the acquisition of a GED. Some were people in their fifties and sixties who had been laid off and had found that a GED had become necessary to apply for many jobs. Some people were recently arrived refugees who were seeking to learn English. The refugees varied more widely in age than the other groups. Thus, long-term employees were joined by short-term grant recipients to work with unpaid students who were engaged in a variety of activities all understood to be useful in the acquisition of employment. The teachers at the sites asked my students and me questions about the source of the funding and the authority responsible for the online tutorial work in which my students and I were engaged. We explained that the college had provided us with funds to engage in the tutorials as part of a research project on digital literacy, but the teachers also wanted to know about the source of funding and administrative authority of the tutorial. With some internet research, my students and I discovered that a complex set of institutional structures and grant applications provided the context for the online tutorials.

Most of the teachers initially believed that the source of their funding applied to the online tutorials. Using a metonym of the state, they described the

6. There was a second grant from the college enabling another set of students to tutor for the digital literacy initiative, but those students had less patience in engaging with the self-tutorial than the students described herein. Nevertheless, I thank both sets of students collectively in the acknowledgments.

source as “Albany.” One teacher commented on the time keeping software that we would use to access the tutorial software program online with our students with the utterance, “Wow, Albany really is watching.” Her remark was meant to juxtapose the temporal exactness and immediate accessibility of data involved in our online registration to the pen-and-paper sign-in procedure involved in her tutoring. But her utterance made particularly apparent that she believed the state to be the relevant body in both of our activities.

That the employees understood the state to be the relevant authority in our tutoring endeavor was reasonable. Our activities were housed in their places of employment, and our students were drawn from the pool of students whom they were teaching. Furthermore, the four locations were called “Literacy Welcome Centers,” a designation that had origins in monies made available by the state. In a “reform initiative to close the achievement gap in urban and rural communities of concentrated poverty and high concentrations of families and adults with limited literacy skills or English language proficiency,” the New York State Education Department had made available 5 million dollars of federal Title II funding.⁷ Organizations that could establish the need for a literacy welcome center to be located in a literacy zone characterized by long-standing and concentrated poverty would receive funds. By 2011 there were twenty-seven literacy zones in New York City and an equal number elsewhere in New York State. The small city in which we tutored had organized four literacy welcome centers in two literacy zones. Each welcome center was rented from a not-for-profit organization already operating in the city. The funding was made possible by the grant writing efforts of a state wide adult education initiative with offices and programs in the area. Though the activities taking place in the literacy welcome centers were not entirely funded by the establishment of the literacy zones, the organizations that had written the grants for the establishment of the literacy zones and the organization that had overseen the distribution of the funds were both associated with the state.

The entities responsible for the creation of the training self-tutorial and the tutorial software package that we would complete with each student are located outside of the state. As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the Department of Commerce formed the Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP), a \$7.2 billion initiative meant to foster broadband access

7. 2011–2013 Literacy Zone Initiative: WIA Title II Federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/funding/2011-13litzone/home.html>.

through infrastructural and education projects.⁸ An academic department at a large university secured over 3 million dollars from the BTOP—in addition to almost 3 million dollars from other sources—to design the self-tutorial in which we were initially engaged and the software we would use with students. Several “project partners” had signed on to implement the tutorial and software when the grant was written. The partners included not-for-profit organizations working at the national, state, or smaller regional levels. They included literacy councils, universities, community colleges, library systems, and well-known social service organizations.

In our own case, a community college served as the liaison between the federally funded and university-derived tutorial package and the literacy welcome centers. While my students and I did hear from workers at the welcome centers that the state’s education department was receiving reports about the time we spent in tutorial sessions with students, we knew that only those literacy zones and welcome centers near the community college providing the liaison were implementing the tutorial and software. We were never able to discover the incentives for participation by the literacy welcome centers, nor were we able to discover who would receive and evaluate the data we ostensibly provided about our sessions with students. We simply knew that workers at the Welcome Centers simplified an extremely complex set of associations between funding sources, grant applicants, and “project partners” by transposing their own source of authority onto us.

Addressivity Structure I: “You’re in it right now”

Bakhtin’s notion of addressivity aids in this account of how my students and I engaged with the self-tutorial, our first experience with the software package. Bakhtin writes of the notion: “An essential (constitutive) marker of the utterance is its quality of being directed to someone, its *addressivity*” (1986, 95). Bakhtin’s concern with addressivity emerged from his much more encompassing project to understand language conceptualized as “concrete utterances (oral and written) by participants in the various areas of human activity” (60). Addressivity is not to be understood, Bakhtin noted explicitly, by means of the speaker-listener dyad that underpins many renditions of communication. Anticipating Goffman’s (1981) arguments for the multiplicity of possible role configurations that mediate relationships between participants and utterances, Bakhtin wrote, “Still current in linguistics are such *fictions* as

8. Broadband USA: Connecting America’s Communities, <http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/contact>.

the ‘listener’ and ‘understander’ (partners of the ‘speaker’), the ‘unified speech flow,’ and so on” (1986, 68).⁹ Lempert and Silverstein make explicit that the notion of addressivity can involve, but does not require, the copresence of actors: “addressivity involves a two-place relationship: some utterance in the here-and-now speech event is understood to be ‘oriented’ toward someone else (a constituency, a critic, a competing candidate), who may be physically there, copresent, or else located in a spatiotemporally distinct event (a past or future time, a near or distant place) as in cases of ‘interdisursive’ addressivity, address across speech events” (2012, 110). Addressivity is thus a key concern in the circulation of discursive forms generally. Examples will be considered in the discussion below that demonstrate that the notion of addressivity includes attention to a set of semiotic features such as deixis, which involves temporal and spatial dimensions of the “here and now” (and there and then), and also semiotic features such as register, which do not in themselves include cues of their situation in time and space.

Once we had logged onto the DataTeach self-tutorial using the web address, user names, and passwords given to us by the community college liaison, a web page appeared with the following text:¹⁰

Navigating the [DataTeach] System

OVERVIEW

In this Plan, you will learn to navigate content within [DataTeach]. This will help you proceed through the online component of your tutor training and ultimately help you assist the learners in labs who will be using it to complete their own online learning.

INSTRUCTIONS

You’ve heard the [DataTeach] mentioned, and you’re in it right now. But what is it exactly? And how can you use it to move through this tutor training and to help learners use it to work on their goals?

Click the **Next** button to continue on to learn more about [DataTeach] and how you’ll be using it through your tutor training.

My students and I had no trouble understanding ourselves to be the addressees of what we found on the web page. The first line of the page used the name

9. Irvine characterizes “the classic linguistic model of the communicative act: the isolated sentence tossed (like a football) by an anonymous Speaker, whose qualifications for play are specified only as ‘competence,’ to an even more anonymous Hearer who supposedly catches it” (1996, 131).

10. The names used herein for the software package and software developer are pseudonyms. When the pseudonyms are used within quoted material, they appear in brackets.

of the tutorial program we were to use with students and intimated that one might make a voyage into—even find one’s way around in—the tutorial. Within the section labeled “Overview,” the page presents the reader with an array of deictic expressions whereby what is referred to largely depends on contextual factors (Silverstein 1976; Mertz 1985; Hanks 2005). The page addressed us with the pronoun *you* and used other deictic elements to invite us to understand what we were reading to constitute a section of the self-tutorial (“this plan”) as well as describe the purpose of participation (“you will learn to navigate content”). In addition to deictic elements, the page used referential expressions not so closely tied to the specific literacy event in which we were engaged. The page named our participation “tutor training,” using a word that literacy center personnel had used for us and that we had used for ourselves—*tutor*. The page thus achieved an “interdiscursive” relationship with previous discussions in which we were involved (Silverstein 2005). The page also invoked the other implied by “tutor,” “learner.” In preliminary discussions with the literacy center administrators, everyone consistently used the word *student* to refer to those people with whom my students and I would work. Indeed, *student* was the word we heard used to refer to the people in the various activities at the literacy centers during the course of our tutorials and we too came to use the word. My students and I had no trouble, however, treating *learner* as a substitute. Whether the learner is learning from the tutor or learning herself with the tutor’s help, incidentally, was left by the initial web page as an open question. The ambiguity in the description, “help you assist the learners . . . who will be using it to complete their own online learning,” remained unresolved throughout the self-tutorial. The ambiguity left my students and me wondering whether our role was directed at the learner or at the online tutorial.

Finally, the page labeled the context of our future activity, “labs,” which seemed to refer to the activity of tutors assisting learners in navigating through the software in front of a computer connected to the internet. Indeed, the software that we would use with learners would achieve interdiscursivity with the self-tutorial by being organized in plans. In the tutorials, the learners would log on to move through plans just as we had in the self-tutorial. We found it easy to step into the position offered by the web page’s structure of addressivity constituted by deictics and other referring expressions and see ourselves engaged in a self-tutorial aimed at engagement in a future tutorial. While the significance of our presence vis-à-vis learners (students) remained problematic, we understood that the discourse in front of us was meant for us and was

oriented to forthcoming discourse, and that the names used for participants, self-tutorial and tutorial sections, and activities corresponded to what we were experiencing.

The first line of the section labeled “Instructions” introduced a number of deictic expressions to reinforce the recognition that our presence and act of reading was meant to be co-textual with engagement with the self-tutorial (Agha 2007, 49). The web page left ambiguous the origin of the “mention” of the self-tutorial name but combined temporal and spatial deixis to assert, “You’re in it right now.” In a didactic move common throughout the self-tutorial, the web page posed a question that cued our expectation of an answer. To get the answer, we had to perform an action, and the web page was explicit about this. The web page instructed us about the relationship between, on the one hand, the succession of forthcoming web pages to be accessed by clicking the appropriate area on the screen with the mouse-controlled cursor and, on the other hand, the discovery of aspects of the self-tutorial that would be utilized in future tutorial sessions with students.

Addressivity Structure II: “Become a partner”

The next web page my students and I encountered in the self-tutorial announced—in bold, oversized type—“2007 IMLS National Leadership Grant Recipient” and included the logo of the Institute of Museum and Library Services just below the announcement. The web page contrasted sharply with what we had been reading in that no attempt was made to use deictic expressions to position our attention with the notion that the web page in front of us would refer to forthcoming web pages and that navigating through them would help us to help learners navigate through the tutorial. On reading the web page about the grant award, one of my students mused that the page reminded her of the display of funding sources that precede public broadcasting productions. We began to skim the web page and a few subsequent ones. The sequence of web pages did not mention its addressee until the last page of the sequence.

The first page in the sequence explained, “In Fall of 2007, [Northwestern State University] was awarded a National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum Library Services (IMLS) for a Demonstration Project. This was the first large grant that [DataTeach] received.” The web page thus established a connection between the university where the tutorial was developed and another national organization, using the name of the type of grant that was received. The concept of register can be used to understand a crucial aspect of the addressivity structure underpinning the web page. Agha explains that

“registers are cultural models of action that link diverse behavioral signs to enactable effects, including images of personal, interpersonal relationship, and type of conduct (2007, 145). Interrelated in the notion of register are “types of conduct,” “classifications of persons whose conduct it is,” “performable roles,” and “relationships among them [roles]” (147). The use of proper names for a grant and the activity to be accomplished, for example, is an indication that the web page involves a register that is oriented to the construction of a (successful) grant application.

The involvement of a register of grant applications is glaringly apparent in the first bullet point offered as an example of what was done as a result of the grant. Indeed, the bullet point itself helps to make apparent that the description engages a register of grant applications. The involvement of a register helps in the entextualization—to render a token of text such that it can be recognized as belonging to a type, often belonging to a genre—of a description of the activity that the grant made possible such that the activity is presented appropriately within the context of a grant application and report (Bauman and Briggs 1990; Jacquemet 2009; Urciuoli 2009; Eisenlohr 2010). The contents of the bullet point read as follows: “The web-based software platform was re-designed with scalable architecture, adding important new functionalities and a plan for re-distributing it under open source license by the end of the grant period.” The engagement with the register as well as temporal deictics make it likely that addressees of the contents of the bullet point were, originally, employees of the Institute of Museum and Library Services. One can imagine that the sentence was taken from a grant report and inserted into the web page. In turn, one can imagine that the bullet points were compiled to entextualize a document that might be useful in presentations about the funding origins of the tutorial and about its success at getting its developers grants.

In addition to making apparent the entextualization of the activity of applying for and reporting on grants, the web page reported on the ability of the tutorial developers to have institutions “collaborate.” The last bullet point on the page stated, “Successful models of community collaboration have been demonstrated, linking libraries, education and social services.” The paragraph that followed the bullet points focused on the granting agency, not the software and the institution where it was developed and revised with the grant. The paragraph explained that the grants on offer are oriented generally to collaboration between institutions: “National Leadership Grants help libraries and museums collaborate, build digital resources, and conduct research and demonstration projects.” The tutorial developer used the rubric of the National

Leadership Grant to describe its own, more particular use of the grant. At the same time, the tutorial developer depicted itself at a stage of infancy, looking for opportunities to collaborate, through grants, with partners.

The next web page was titled “The Partnership” and subtitled “A Multi-State Support System for Broadband Adoption for Digitally Marginalized Adults.” Whereas the first web page in the sequence about grants did not include the financial details of the National Leadership Grant, the second one mentioned the specific dollar amount (in millions of dollars) received from the United States Department of Commerce’s Broadband Technologies Opportunities Program. Signs that this web page marks the maturation of the software tutorial program and an expansion of its implementation include a description of a grant with a sizable award amount, as well as a more specific and elaborate account of the entities that have become partners.

The first web page about grants represented the tutorial program in the rubric of the grant and mentioned generally that collaboration is a goal. Incorporation of the rubric of the Broadband Technologies Opportunity Program in the second web page included mention of the populations left behind in the digital divide. Under “Executive Summary,” the second web page first included a section called “Problem/Need Addressed”: “The [DataTeach] Partnership addresses the primary barriers to broadband access and use among adults in the United States: affordability, lack of digital literacy skills, and a perceived lack of content relevant to their daily lives, needs, and future aspirations. These barriers are exacerbated among populations that have the lowest levels of broadband access: primarily low-income adults who lack a high school education. This includes a growing—and increasingly diverse—population of adults from immigrant and language-minority communities.” The orientation of the description of the software tutorial to the rubric of the Broadband Technologies Opportunity Program grant makes the description of the tutorial interdiscursively resonate with the reports of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration briefly described at the beginning of the article. There is a digital divide; certain populations are implicated; and the software tutorial is meant to help overcome the divide.

The next section of the web page was titled “Approach.” This section read as follows:

The [DataTeach] Partnership proposed by [Northwestern State University] involves coalitions in two states (Minnesota, New York), two regions (Central Texas and South Texas), and two cities (New Orleans,

Louisiana, and Richmond, California). The project will increase broadband use among low-income, low-literate, ESOL, and other vulnerable populations by implementing [DataTeach], an innovative online system of self-paced Learning Plans. Over 30 months, the project will develop and implement Learning Plans focused on digital literacy (at home, at work, and in the community), education on how to be an informed consumer of broadband technology, and orientation to career pathways. These Learning Plans will also be available in Spanish. Two additional Learning Plans will be developed to train volunteer and paid tutors and computer lab assistants to support new broadband users. A Learning Plan Design Team comprising the Minnesota Literacy Council, Pro-Literacy Worldwide, and experts in adult learning, computer-delivered education, and strategies for language-minority and other populations will oversee work on these new Learning Plans. An important hallmark of the [DataTeach] system is its emphasis on providing self-paced online learning and the face-to-face support of trained tutors and computer assistants. Another important feature is its potential for sustainability: it is built on an open-source software platform and its Learning Plans will be distributed to interested organization before, during, and following the federal grant period.

In this section of the web page, sentence breaks—rather than bullet points—marked shifts in what aspect of the tutorial was described, from the involvement of coalitions in named areas, the target population, the duration of the project, the language offered, the development of new plans for tutors, the involvement of other named agencies in the development of new plans, the importance of self-pacing and the involvement of tutors, and the offer of the software to interested organizations.

The most obvious way in which the web page differed from the previous one is that the second web page elaborated on the partnerships and software developments of the first. Thus, the web pages' differences constitute an expansion through elaboration. In the second web page the tutorial software was divided into named parts (plans), had been situated in various areas and cities, and had a self-paced tutorial for tutors—not just students—being developed by yet other not-for-profit entities oriented—in very different ways—to literacy initiatives. In moving from the first web page about funding sources in the self-tutorial to the second, one can imagine a maturing tutorial meant to “provide education on how to be an informed consumer of digital technology” and to

provide an “orientation to career pathways” that will be provided in areas around the country and for which other organizations—of experts—will develop self-tutorials for future tutors. Growth is evident in terms of the complexity of the software program, the number of roles for which the software is being developed, and the organizations involved, all underpinned by an orientation toward the notion of the digital divide. Indeed, the web page later explained, “Sixty-three (63) community anchor institutions in the six national partner areas will collaborate to identify and recruit potential new broadband users.” The second web page represented the fruition of the promises of the grant described on the first web page and offered a set of register items such that “new broadband users” can be attracted to “anchor institutions” in “partner areas.” This set of register items was specific to the software package and not to the seed grant received from the Institute of Museum Library Services.

A subsequent web page contrasted with the first two because its title included an imperative, “Become a Partner—License [DataTeach].” The deixis in the second person pronominal address (you) underpinning the imperative (“become”) was maintained later in the same web page by the use of other imperatives and second person possessive forms. Thus, this web page, unlike the two preceding it, addressed the person reading the page explicitly.

Following the web page title were three ways in which one might “utilize the [DataTeach].” The three were differentiated primarily by whether there are fees involved and whether one can work with an existing organization already paying fees. One could “acquire a free open source license to the platform software and host its own implementation for non-commercial purposes”; “license one or more [DataTeach] Regions from [Northwestern State University]. . . . License fees depend on the number of portals hosted, the number of concurrent users and the amount of customized training”; or “negotiate use of new or existing [DataTeach] Regions (portals) licensed by another organization.” The notions of licensing and fees were new in this web page, but the terms used to describe parameters for licensing recalled the previous web page.

The web page proceeded to list “benefits” to three types of organizations: “Community partners” would be able to “increase organizational capacity by collaborating with other service providers,” “broaden and coordinate services provided to . . . clients,” and “leverage national partnerships for resource development and funding.” “Adult education programs” would be able to enjoy “enhanced student recruitment with referrals from the internet and other partners,” “combine educational support with case management to better meet student needs,” and “track and report participation and learning outcomes data

organized for WIA Title II funding.”¹¹ Finally, “postsecondary institutions” could expect to “customize placement to meet individual student needs,” “help some students avoid developmental classes and succeed,” and increase “student retention and success.”

The license structure and benefits presented on the third web page presupposed the fact that organizations are the entities that are relevant to the use of the software package. The benefits listed hinted that people already being served by organizations might become students of the software tutorial or that the organization might expand its base by working with other organizations. The organization might benefit from the software by enhancing the effectiveness of whatever it is already doing. The organization might collect and organize data in such a way that new funding opportunities might be sought. And should the organization be a post-secondary educational institution, the loss of students might be curtailed with the software’s use. The third web page had thus extended the benefits of the software package beyond organizational collaboration to include enhanced service provision and funding opportunities, whatever those services and funding might be.

In the web pages about funding, the developer of the software package underwent an evolution from grant recipient (first web page) to service provider (second web page) to potential partner (third web page). By the third web page, the software developer has come to be in a position to enhance service provision—its own state of development in the second web page—as well as to enhance organizations’ ability to receive grants—its own state of development in the first web page. The progression of web pages parallels the growth in organizational complexity of the software tutorial developer as the focus shifts from the rubric and parameters of the initial grant (first web page) to the tutorial software and its organizational complexity (second web page) to the organizations that might find the software beneficial (third web page). The first web page demonstrates legitimacy, the second illustrates organizational expansion, and the third provides an invitation. Working backward, the third web page invites an organization to expand—as in the second—and to enhance its ability to secure grants—as in the first.

Addressivity Structures and Chronotopic Difference

One of my students likened the first web page about funding to the announcement of funding sources that precede certain documentary films and

11. Title II of the Civil Rights Act (1964) is the section responsible for issues of equal access to institutions that serve the public.

television sources. This, in itself, indicated that we noticed a radical shift in the structures of addressivity underpinning, on the one hand, the initial set of web pages—such that we felt we were being addressed—and, on the other hand, the subsequent set of web pages that we could ignore as a generic package inserted in the self-tutorial as an acknowledgment of support. The invitation to “become a partner” issued in the third web page in the second sequence further supported our inclination to skim the web pages about funding. One member of our group remarked that organizations—not individuals—are the entities relevant to the invitation. Others joined in and discussed that fact that we were already affiliated with an organization, a partner, ostensibly using the licensed software in a region, a portal. Someone concluded that the second sequence was not meant for us, nor would it ever be useful.

The interdiscursive situatedness of the readers vis-à-vis the self-tutorial (and subsequent tutorial) entails that readers progress through a set of web pages. Yet, my students’ and my feeling that some of the web pages were more relevant to us than others, and were grouped as such, provides evidence that the unfolding of web pages cannot account for the interdiscursive dynamics among them. In order to explore the differences in addressivity between the two groups of web pages, I employ Bakhtin’s coinage of “chronotope,” or time-space.¹² Writing about novels, Bakhtin defined the chronotope as “the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events” (2002, 22). Writing about discursive production more generally, Silverstein defined the chronotope as the “temporally (hence, chrono-) and spatially (hence, -tope) particular envelope in the narrated universe of social space-time in which and through which, in emplotment, narrative characters move” (2005, 6). The structures of addressivity identified herein presuppose different “envelopes” of space-time through which (different casts of) “narrative characters” move.

The two addressivity structures mark very different means of engagement with the tutorial program. The first addresses the person sitting in front of the computer. She has gained access to the tutorial by logging in as an already-registered user. In this structure of addressivity, the self-tutorial involves the use of deixis that treats the succession of web pages as a temporal progression coinciding with the completion of learning plans the students will eventually undertake in the tutorial. The web pages address the tutors often, with imperatives, second person pronouns, and second person possessives; refer to

12. A select list of publications not cited elsewhere herein that use the concept include Basso (1983), Keane (1995), Dick (2010), and LaDousa (2013).

future students using second person possessives (implying that the addressee is a tutor) and the future tense; and refer to other pages with the use of temporal and spatial deictics. All this contrasts sharply with the set of web pages about funding. Therein, no deixis presupposes participation in the self-tutorial or the existence of its tutor-student dyad as its indexical anchor. Rather, two agencies' grant periods serve to mark the temporal boundaries of what might be or has been accomplished.

Whereas the first set of web pages addresses the current reader as a tutor and directs the tutor's attention to the web pages to come for the importance they will have in future tutorial sessions with students, the second set of web pages demonstrates the growth in complexity and usefulness of the software package. The chronotope of the second structure of addressivity does not depend on a reader engaged at the interactive task at hand. In the second structure of addressivity, the use of the software package becomes a possibility, but a possibility that excludes the here-and-now of its reading, in the case of my students and me, at least. This partly accounts for the reaction of my students. The discursive activity of the first addressivity structure presupposes the dyad of the tutor and student and the forthcoming web pages, whereas the discursive activity of the second addressivity structure remains inadequately recontextualized in the software tutorial. Its chronotope is the future of other organizations, "outside" of the work of tutors and students.

Chronotopes of Addressivity and Neoliberal Agency in the Software Package

The sequence of web pages about funding that we skimmed offered the key to the question that would remain unanswered in our engagement with the structure of addressivity that we believed was meant for us as tutors: How does time spent on the tutorial at the literacy center bring about transformation in the student's life, specifically the escape from poverty? After reentering the addressivity structure that presupposed that second-person address was meant for tutors, we continued to be frustrated by the expectation that progression in the self-tutorial would enable us to help our future students cross the digital divide—that is, use a computer in job-getting pursuits. Sometimes, for example, the self-tutorial asked us to write and submit statements about what we imagined to be the usefulness of computers with access to broadband. Preserving the ambiguity identified in the first addressivity structure, the self-tutorial mentioned at various moments in the progression of web pages that we tutors might

learn more from our students about aspects of broadband technology and its uses than our students might learn from us.

The self-tutorial did make explicit that we would be helping our future students acquire an e-mail account if they did not already have one, but the purpose of having an e-mail account was related primarily to the requirement that one access the tutorial software with an e-mail address. The self-tutorial made explicit that tutors were to send students e-mail messages and were to have those students respond, but the relationship between e-mail and the amelioration of poverty by any means was never made explicit. A section of the self-tutorial stressed broadband security and issues of identity theft, but never did the self-tutorial make my students and me feel that taking students through a similar set of web pages would enhance their ability to move out of poverty. Several of my students expressed dismay on reading the closing set of web pages in the self-tutorial. Our final task with our future students would be to discuss whether they would prefer to buy a used personal computer (PC) or a Mac. The self-tutorial pointed out that a new machine would likely be too expensive for our students and that used PCs would be cheaper than Macs. One of my students wondered aloud how purchasing a computer was supposed to help students get a job. Another student asked whether our role was tutor or used computer salesman.

I cannot attest to connections between student participation in the tutorials and subsequent uses of computers and broadband. After taking the self-tutorial, my students and I met often to discuss our tutorial sessions with our students and shared how our students reacted when moving through the tutorial's web pages. We did experience what the self-tutorial predicted: some students found the tutorial helpful in learning to use a mouse, learning the position of keys, or acquiring an e-mail account, while others found the tutorial too elementary to continue for long. We discovered that our students often had very specific requests that emerged at various points in the succession of web pages: One wanted to print labels for a scrapbook she was making for her mother. Another wanted to know how to download music videos and burn them to a DVD. Yet another wanted to know how to erase browsing history. One student brought a copy of her resume and asked me to scan it so that she could print more copies. A couple of other students asked us to help them create a resume with the computer. These were exceptional requests because they did seem to relate interdiscursively to the production of textual artifacts needed for the acquisition of jobs, but the requests were not prompted in any explicit way in the tutorial.

Reflection on the chronotopic dimensions of the two addressivity structures identified herein helps to explain how my students and I missed—yet again—the significance of clues offered by specific web pages in the self-tutorial that might inform our frustrations about the purpose of participation. A pair of web pages appeared approximately halfway through the self-tutorial and served as illustrations of changes people had undergone in the wake of participation in family literacy programs. In retrospect, I can guess that part of the reason that my students and I largely ignored the two web pages is that they were accessed in a segment of the self-tutorial about the importance of literacy—and not digital literacy with the use of broadband—and appeared under the logo of an organization sponsored by a major telecommunications corporation devoted to “providing access to over 60,000 educators and experts in curriculum enhancement, along with thousands of award-winning digital resources for K-12—aligned to state standards and the common core.” The relationship between the people and organizations described in the web pages and the corporation whose logo appeared on the pages was never explained, but the corporate logo made the web page seem irrelevant to my students and me. Just like the description of grants in the second addressivity structure, we understood the two web pages to be irrelevant to the self-tutorial we were in the process of completing.

The two pages were alike in format with the name of the featured person serving as the web page title. Each web page included a picture. The text of each page was organized into paragraphs as follows, beginning with “Hanelly Serrano”:

Being part of family literacy has helped my daughter and me in so many ways. It touches so many parts of our lives!

Hanelly had a difficult childhood, moving with her mother between New York City, Florida, the Dominican Republic, France and Spain. She began using drugs and alcohol by age ten, but was able to keep others from knowing for a while. She began to have trouble in and out of school and her mother sought treatment for her in hospitals and rehabilitation facilities. Hanelly even contemplated suicide.

The changing point in her life was the birth of her daughter. “Before I had my daughter, I didn’t care about anything. Not even watching my best friend die of AIDS changed me. It took looking at my beautiful daughter to make me want a better life.”

While visiting her sister in Maine, Hanelly decided to stay and signed up for the family literacy program at the Biddeford Adult Learning

Center. Her daughter received children's education services just down the hall while Hanelly worked toward completing requirements for her high school diploma. Hanelly found the parent-child interaction time with her daughter very rewarding. She built on her own language skills as she and her daughter read books together. "We both really love our story time together, and I have learned that we're making reading a lifelong habit for my daughter . . . and for me!"

Hanelly's time spent with other parents has increased her confidence, and she now expresses her opinion and asks questions of others. She has learned coping skills that allow her to respond to her daughter's temper tantrums in a positive and supportive manner.

Hanelly received her high school diploma and has passed the entrance test for the University of Southern Maine where she plans to take courses on mental health and drug abuse. She volunteers in a mental health facility three times a week.

Hanelly says, "being part of family literacy has helped me and my daughter in so many ways. It touched so many parts of our lives!" She feels that because of family literacy, their lives are happier and fuller, and their futures are brighter.

And the page for "Senitila McKinley":

I'm not only becoming a better mother, but a better person. . . .

Senitila McKinley grew up in Tonga, a group of islands in the South Pacific. "In Tonga I went to a very small school which taught basic English . . . hello and goodbye . . . but there was never any opportunity to have conversations," Senitila explains. "When I moved to America, I realized that what I thought I knew about English was very limited."

When her two American-born daughters started school, Senitila saw that it was time for her to learn English. "I needed to be able to write notes to the teacher and understand the children's papers coming home from school!" Senitila first attended a local adult basic education class, and then became part of the Lincoln County Coalition of Oregon Literacy, Inc. In the years since then, Senitila has served on ProLiteracy America's national committees, has chaired the Oregon State Literacy Congress, and has also served as a board member of Oregon Literacy and of her county literacy coalition.

Senitila is the creator and director of Waldport's Seashore Family Literacy Program. In 1994, her town named her Outstanding Citizen. In

1996, the National Institute for Literacy awarded Senitila and another adult learner a joint fellowship to conduct a national survey of “best practices” in adult learner advocacy activities. “I will never forget my reason for going back to school: to be a better mother for my children,” Senitila said, “I’m not only becoming a better mother, but a better person for my community and the world. What more can I ask?”

At first glance, there are several ways in which the web pages about funding and the two biographical web pages differ, both in terms of their structures of addressivity and their deictic grounding. The web pages about funding all involve (in different ways) the developers of the self-tutorial package, while the people featured in the later web pages serve as entities that encounter separate sets of organizations. The temporal dimension of the web pages about funding shifts from the past to the future, whereas that of the biographical pages is structured by the recounting of a past that has been changed by various events. The set of web pages about funding are about digital literacy whereas the biographical web pages are about literacy more generally, but also about motherhood and its incompatibility with bad habits and ignorance. The set of pages about funding are oriented to the improvement of service provision whereas the biographical pages involve what has been identified as the “salvific” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000, 293; 2001, 2) underpinnings of neoliberal modes of imagining the potential “to transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered” in the period of millennial capitalism (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001, 2). That is to say, the biographical web pages bring together motherhood and a decreasing selfish disinterest in the world to intimate paths to improvement. The web pages about funding mention people only as populations who might become clients for organizations, organizations that serve as addressees of the web pages. The biographical web pages contrast with both addressivity structures identified herein because they provide comparatively few cues about who their addressees might be. This partly explains how they are so easily inserted into the progression of web pages in the self-tutorial, but to such insignificant effects for the people reading them in that context.

While it is true that neither of the structures of addressivity identified early on in this article corresponds exactly with that of the two biographical web pages, the identification of the chronotopic difference between the addressivity structures of the early web pages affords the recognition that only one of the structures resonates with that of the biographical web pages chronotopically. This insight, in turn, allows me to bring the addressivity structures and

chronotopes to bear on the identification of the neoliberal as a mode of governmentality (Foucault 1991; see also Urciuoli and LaDousa 2013), resting in part on salvific forms of individual improvement but also on particular conceptualizations of agency. Laura Ahearn has defined agency broadly as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” and invokes a “dialogical” approach to culture in which “action” is always “emergent” and “situated” (2001, 112).¹³ Questions about the capacity to act can be related to the identification of addressivity structures and chronotopes herein because the self-tutorial program gives evidence that just who gets to do what depends crucially on how a person is situated with respect to organizations as well as the self-tutorial.

Ahearn states that “multiple types [of agency] are exercised in any given action” (2001, 130). On the one hand, participation in the self-tutorial involved my students and me, and participation in the tutorial involved our students and us, in a progression of web pages, grouped into so-called learning goals, toward completion of the tutorial. Agency was constituted in both self-tutorial and tutorial by logging in and out and completing learning plans. None of these features makes any sense of the way in which agency was constituted in the web pages about funding and in the biographical web pages. In those sets of web pages, agency is constituted by the enhanced ability, whether on the part of organizations or persons, to engage with something like a literacy program, digital or otherwise, to increase the number of organizations with which one interacts and to improve one’s ability to interact successfully with other people, one’s children, and organizations too. The web pages about organizational funding and the biographical web pages share a chronotopic dimension wherein organizations offer the key to improvement, advancement, and growth, either for organizations—as in the set of web pages about funding—or for individuals—as in the set of biographical web pages.

The agency that emerges in the web pages about funding and in the biographical web pages includes aspects of what Gershon has identified as “neoliberal agency”: “A neoliberal perspective assumes that the actors who create and are created by the most ideal social order are those who reflexively and flexibly manage themselves as one owns and manages a business, tending to one’s own qualities and traits as owned and even improbable assets” (2011, 542). The identification of assets enables their improvement such that they “can serve as a

13. Her discussion foregrounds Tedlock and Mannheim (1995), especially Mannheim and Tedlock (1995), Hill (1995), McDermott and Tylbor (1995), Basso (1996), Hill and Irvine (1993a), especially Hill and Irvine (1993b), and Besnier (1993).

basis for or enhance people's alliances with others" (543). Assets identified in the biographical web pages, for example, resonate with those identified by Urciuoli (2008), "skills" that one improves, often with such "improbable" sources as motherhood.

Already noted is the difference whereby the web pages about funding presuppose that organizations are the entities that stand to benefit by use of the software, whereas the biographical web pages presuppose that individuals are the entities to benefit by the onset of motherhood and its involvement of the women in family literacy programs. Both cases are alike, however, in that both hitch notions of growth and improvement onto growingly complex associations with other organizations. It is through the involvement with other organizations that one grows, whether in size of client base or qualities of service provision, in the case of organizations, or one's ability to handle one's child's temper tantrums or be recognized as a valuable citizen, in the case of people.

In the end, organizations are the entities by which people grow and prosper, unless one is an addressee of the tutorial program as tutor or student, of course. The biographical web pages illustrate cases wherein this happens differently. Hanelly Serrano's life improves as she increases the number of organizations with which she is associated. She remains in a position of student or client of these organizations and the other person for whom she becomes an agent is her daughter. Senitila McKinley, in contrast, becomes involved in organizations initially, like Hanelly Serrano, but then attains increasingly important positions in a number of organizations of expanding scope. Eventually she founds her own literacy center, is recognized for her efforts by her town, and is offered a fellowship at the national level.

An analogy exists between the web pages about funding and the biographical web pages in that progression through the web pages corresponds to increasing geographical scale and organizational complexity. Initial focus in the web pages about funding is on another funding source to which the software developers are oriented, just as Hanelly Serrano improves her lot by association with other organizations. The next web pages about funding depict the software developers to be expanding and growing, eventually able to offer other organizations a tool for growth. Senitila McKinley rises in the ranks of various organizations until she is enabled to offer something of value to other organizations, not just her family, in the form of a fellowship for conducting a national survey of best practices. These parallels are especially striking given that the websites emerge from different organizations.

Conclusion

The provision of literacy has long provided an ideological mechanism for the improvement of lives, and the provision of digital literacy is no different. The digital literacy initiative considered herein draws on a number of institutional structures to be able to offer participants a chance to cross the digital divide, to learn how to improve their socioeconomic position and escape the poverty that partly determines their status as left behind. The self-tutorial software presents the cases of two people in particular whose involvement with a literacy initiative is presented as enabling them to become better mothers and better citizens.

Attention to the circumstances of participation of the self-tutorial taken in preparation for participation in the initiative reveals that the structure of addressivity meant for the people engaged in the tutorial does not lead to the interdiscursive realizations they anticipate. Attention to the partial chronotopic resonances between the web pages that my students and I found irrelevant in the self-tutorial, however, reveals that access to improvement and expansion comes with engagement with an increasing number of organizations. One can only come to enjoy the promises made by the offer of digital literacy if one is an organization or if one comes to engage with an increasing number of organizations, but students are never addressed as such in the tutorial. One might imagine that students are becoming examples like those presented in the biographical web pages by virtue of their engagement with the tutorial software, but the frustration on the part of the tutors and students alike indicates otherwise. Organizations grow, but the people associated with them and for whom their programs are meant merely progress through web pages.

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