Inscribed Sociality: Literacy, Learning, and Community in Montreal

Charles Grey

A thesis

In

The Department

Of

Sociology and Anthropology

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts (Anthropology) at

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

December 2014

© Charles Grey, 2014

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Charles Grey

Entitled: Inscribed Sociality: Literacy, Learning, and Community in Montreal

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

Dr Meir Amor Chair

Dr Mark Watson Examiner

Dr David Howes Examiner

Dr Christine Jourdan Supervisor

Approved by ____________________
Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

____
Dean of Faculty

Date January 5, 2015

Abstract

Inscribed Sociality: Literacy, Learning, and Community in Montreal

This thesis will deal with the social nature of both learning and literacy. It asks the question: is the feeling of community a necessary part of the process of teaching adult learners how to read and write. Drawing from New Literacy Studies (Auerbach 1989, Street 1997, Barton 2001) language socialization theory (Schieffelin& Ochs 1986), and Lave & Wenger's (1991) communities of practice to argue for a situated view on literacy. The empirical data from this paper comes from participant observation conducted at a community based literacy organization in Montreal. . Drawing from the experiences of a handful of tutors and learners this thesis underlines the social nature of the learning process and argues that for adult learners community is central to becoming literate.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take a moment to thank all of the people who contributed both directly and indirectly. First I would like to thank my research participants without you I would have had nothing to write about. I would also like to thank Norma and Alba for believing in me and for letting me join the Lighthouse as a community. I would also like to thank all of the learners, educators, tutors and other people I met at the Lighthouse, your friendship means more to me than you will ever know. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Dr Christine Jourdan who never stopped believing in me. You were a light in the darkness guiding me through the perils of thesis creation. I would also like to thank Dr Bev Best and Jody Stavely who guided me through some of the most difficult moments of my thesis calmly and gently. I would like to thank Dr Chantal Collard who encouraged me to apply to graduate school in the first place. And of course nothing comes form nothing, I would like to thank my parents, my brother, and my sister who supported me throughout the process of completing this thesis. I would also like to thank all my friends for allowing me to get away from my thesis when I needed a break and allowing me to stay sane. I would like to thank Dr Lorne Cousins whose sound advice and calming influence helped me to weather the challenges I faced along the way. Last but not least I would like to thank Lorne Abramovitch who helped me stay motivated and keep on schedule during the most critical time of my thesis.

Table of Contents

1. Chapter 1: Introduction……………………………………………………1
    1. On social learning…………………………………………………1
    2. The thesis question………………………………………………..3
    3. A word on method……………………………………………...4
2. Chapter 2: Literacy and socialization……………………………………..8
    1. Literacy in the real world………………………………………….8
    2. Literacy as a skill…………………………………………………..10
    3. Defining literacy…………………………………………………..12
    4. Literacy as a social practice………………………………………13
    5. Language socialization……………………………………………19
    6. Literacy socialization………………………………………………22
    7. Conclusion…………………………………………………………25
3. Chapter 3: Community………………………………………………………29
    1. Socialization and community……………………………………...29
    2. On defining community……………………………………………30
    3. Points of strategic ambiguity………………………………………31
    4. The ecological community…………………………………………34
    5. Communities of Practice…………………………………………...37
    6. Conclusion……………………………………………………….....40
4. Chapter 4: The context chapter……………………………………………43
    1. The Lighthouse………………………………………………….....43

2. Dr. Laubach……………………………………………………45
3. Laubach Literacy Canada………………………………………48
4. Laubach in Quebec…………………………………………….51
5. Literacy in Quebec…………………………………………….52
6. Montreal in broad strokes……………………………………. .55
7. Conclusion……………………………………………………..57
5. Chapter 5: Ethnography………………………………………………..59
1. The research participants……………………………………….59
2. Respecting learners……………………………………………..62
3. Sociality………………………………………………………..65
4. Incorporating the anthropologist………………………………68
5. Small talk………………………………………………………70
6. Teaching methods……………………………………………..72
7. Course content…………………………………………………76
8. Literacy in everyday life……………………………………….79
9. Conclusion…………………………………………...……82
6. Chapter 6: Reflexivities……….………………………………………84
1. Finding the field……………………………………………….85
2. Arrival………………………………………………………….86
3. On the paradoxes of fieldwork…………………………………91
4. Learning about the other…………………………….….……93
5. On openness in the field……………………………...……...95
6. Auto-anthropology……………………………………………..97

7. Auto-critique……………………………………………………….98

8. Conclusion…………………………………………………………100

7. Chapter 7: Conclusion…………………………………….………103

1. Return to the thesis question……………………………………103

2. Implications of research……………………………………….…...106

3. In conclusion…………………………………….……………108

8. Bibliography……………………………………………………….....110

Chapter 1: Introduction

On social learning

George Bernard Shaw's (1916) play Pygmalion is the story of a couple of English gentleman who teach a street vendor to pass herself off as a high society lady. The play begins with the meeting of Henry Higgins, a professor of phonology, and Colonel Pickering a phonologist and student of Indian languages. One evening at Covent Gardens, Henry Higgins explains to Colonel Pickering that the only difference between a high society woman and a curbside flower vendor is their accent. Higgins boasts that with his assistance any of these women could learn to speak well enough to get a job at a flower store. The next day one of the flower vendors, Eliza Doolittle, pays Professor Higgins a visit and inquires about enunciation lessons. Pickering offers to cover the cost of the lessons and challenges Higgins to pass Eliza off as an aristocrat at a High Society function. Higgins accepts the bet and the rest of the play is about the process of teaching Eliza how to be a high society woman (Shaw 1916).

In order to pass Eliza Doolittle off as a duchess, Higgins has to do more than simply work on her pronunciation. In addition to speaking a more 'high class' dialect of English, Eliza must learn how to dress, how to behave in social situations, basic etiquette, and the art of conversation. This is an involved process that takes several months but in the end they succeed and Eliza passes herself off as a high society lady at an important ball. In order to teach Eliza how to be an aristocrat, Eliza must live like one and to that effect she moves into a spare room in Professor Higgins' home. She learns the values and manners becoming of an aristocrat from Higgins and Pickering but also from the servants in the house as well as Higgins' mother. Some lessons Higgins teaches her outright but

skills have to be learned through practice and so Higgins creates contexts in which Eliza can practice the skills she will need to pass as a high society lady. He even teaches Eliza how to read and write like a lady in order to win Pickering's challenge.

At its heart, Pygmalion is a story about the social nature of learning. Most of the lessons that Higgins gives Eliza happen off stage but instead Shaw showcases the context in which Eliza learns to become a high society woman. Pygmalion is a work of art, a fanciful story created for enjoyment. It is a made up story and I do not in any way, shape, or form wish to suggest that there is any similarity between the tutoring that Higgins gave Eliza and the literacy programs operating around the world. That being said, Shaw's Pygmalion tells the story of two people who learn from each other (Shaw 1916).

There is a growing awareness in the field of education of the importance of the social aspects of learning (Street 1997, Auerbach 1989, Li 2001, L. R. Johnson 2009, A. S. Johnson 2010, J. Collins 1995, Barton 2001). This realization comes in the wake of a growing realization that illiteracy is a continuing problem in the Western world in spite of the fact that quality elementary and secondary education are both affordable and mandatory. While the robust quantitative data collected by organizations like UNESCO's Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP) and the OECD's International Adult Literacy Survey Database (IALS) have helped to shed light on the issues surrounding literacy and pointed to the breadth of the issue, we still lack qualitative data about the process of becoming literate. Data that could help us get a better handle on the meaning of the statistics. This thesis is my attempt to get a sense of how literacy learners become literate.

The thesis question

I conducted my field research in a community-based organization called the Lighthouse[1] where I observed one-on-one literacy tutoring sessions. The question that I ask today is: considering my findings can one claim that community is an important part of teaching adults how to read and write? The answer to this question is yes; community is an integral part of adult the kind of literacy training I saw at the Lighthouse.

I will begin this thesis with a discussion of methodology. I will present the method by which I conducted research and I will discuss the theoretical foundation underpinning these methods. In the next two chapters I will define the key terms of the discussion and present the theoretical basis for my work. In the second chapter I will first define the term literacy drawing from New Literacy Studies (Street 1997), UNESCO 's plurality of literacy (2009), and Li's (2001) notions of situated literacy. Then I will argue socialization approach to literacy that draws heavily from Schieffelin and Ochs' (1986) theory of language socialization. In the third chapter I will discuss the theoretical dimensions of community. In this chapter I will consider the different implications of the term community. I will draw from Amit's (2010) discussion about the conceptual utility of the term community as well as Lave and Wenger's (1991 in Steinkuehler 2005) communities of practice to establish what I mean when I use the term.

In the fourth chapter I will present the organization in which I conducted my research. I will discuss the organization's history as well as the contexts in which it currently operates. I will first consider the work of Dr Frank Laubach, the founder of the

---

[1] The names of all the people and places mentioned in this thesis are pseudonyms meant to protect the identities of my informants.

Laubach Literacy movement the Lighthouse is part of. I will then go over the history of the Laubach movement in both Canada and Quebec before talking about the Lighthouse's history. I will also provide a brief overview of the social, cultural, and historical landscape of Montreal to situate the lighthouse in its geo-historical context.

Having established my theoretical framework as well as the research context in previous chapters, I will then present my data in the fifth chapter. In the sixth chapter I will take a more reflexive position and consider the role of the anthropologist in the field as it pertains to my experiences in the field. I will return to my original question in my conclusion to answer it once and for all, and then I will point to the implications of my research.

A word on method

As previously stated, I conducted research in a community based literacy organization called the Lighthouse. The Lighthouse offers one on one tutoring based literacy services designed to help people learn functional literacy. As a researcher I opted for participant observation[2] and spent my time in the field observing tutoring sessions. These sessions could be anywhere from 2 to 4 hours long, though the Lighthouse encouraged multiple shorter sessions over regular long sessions. I sat down with three learner tutor pairings who met from between 2-4 hours a week. Every individual session I

[2] **As its name suggests participant observation is a qualitative research method that requires a scholar to participate in the society that he or she wishes to study and to observe their practices as a participant. Participant observation is one of the cornerstones of ethnographic research and thus emblematic of cultural anthropology.**

attended was two hours so the tutor/learner pairing that met for four hours a week did so in two weekly sessions of two hours each.

I spent a total of twelve weeks in the field and each week I observed four two-hour sessions. Two of the literacy learners I worked with in the field met their tutors once a week; the third met his tutor twice a week for two-hour sessions. During those sessions I followed along and participated in the sessions while also taking notes. Early in the project I considered conducting interviews but I was unable to secure formal interviews outside of the tutoring sessions. I did, however, ask most of my interview questions during the sessions over my time in the field and while I cannot count those as formal interviews, the answers I received are part of my field data.

The anthropologist, like the philosopher, is interested in the meaning of things (Geertz 1973). What differentiates anthropologists from philosophers is the means through which they approach their object of study and how they constitute it. As an interpretive science, Anthropology approaches meaning as embedded in the contexts of everyday life. Culture, the anthropological object par excellence, is in this sense public because meaning is (Geertz 1973; 12). Culture in the Geertzian sense of the term is semiotic; it is the ensemble of shared bodies of cultural knowledge that individuals draw upon to make sense of their lives. Everyday life is a process of navigation, of interpretation, and the role of the anthropologist is to make these processes intelligible outside of the contexts in which they occur (Geertz 1973). To connect individual narratives to the larger context in which they occur in order to render them meaningful to outsiders (Abu-Lughod 1991).

In choosing to tell stories about the process of becoming literate I work to get at what literacy means to the people I observed but also how they experienced the process itself. The stories from the field that I related here are stories about things that happened but also stories about the kinds of things that happened. This is the truth of stories, the truth that says something about something (Geertz 1972). It is the truth that remains in myth long after the story has passed out of living memory.

When I tell stories from the field I will intentionally get some of their details wrong in order to protect my informants. This does not mean that the stories that I tell in this thesis are made up, but rather that they are not perfectly accurate descriptions of the events I took part in during my time in the field. Through my stories I relate the realities that I observed in the field, they are stories about both the things I observed and encountered in the field as well as the kinds of things that happen. They are the stories of encounters between adult learners and written language. Through those stories I talk about how people learn to read and write, I talk about the place of literacy in society, and I ground the meaning of writing in the lives of my informants. These stories are true in that they are stories about the kinds of things that happen and it is this that makes them meaningful (Geertz 1972).

For Geertz (1973) the ethnographic study of culture is ultimately a hermeneutic enterprise in that it entails the interpretation of people's everyday performances in order to get at the social discourses that these performances are themselves interpretations of. In doing so the ethnographic transforms a passing event into a story, an account that continues to exist long after the event is over and the people, places, and things involved have changed, been lost, or otherwise moved on. This process of inscription is an

exercise in what philosopher Gilbert Ryle terms ‘thick description’, that is to say an accounting of the implicit and often tangled multiplicity of social paradigms, systems of signification, bodies of cultural knowledge, and ideologies that inform the events being observed so that an outsider can make sense of them (Geertz 1973).

In doing so, however, the lines between culture and interpretation can blur as the ethnographer struggles to make sense of his or her informant’s interpretations of events and attempts to present them to an eventual audience. Meaning is not simply shared, it is distributed and people can and do interpret the same set of events very differently. As interpretations of interpretations their value comes from the anthropologist’s ability to render these unfamiliar acts and situations in such a way as to seem logical or understandable. This means that anthropological monographs are fictional in the sense that they are works crafted by their authors more to explain the kinds of things that happen than the things that have occurred without being made up. The details of my stories may change to protect the identities of my informants but the stories that I tell form an account of my time in the field.

Chapter 2: Literacy and Socialization

This chapter will begin with a discussion of everyday uses of literacy that will lead into a discussion about literacy as a skill. A definition of literacy as social practice will then be presented and the implications of such a definition will be explored in concrete terms. Having established a working definition of literacy I will present the language socialization perspective articulated by Ochs and Schieffelin (1986) and argue for a literacy socialization perspective. I will then talk about socialization and education before concluding the chapter with a discussion about re-socialization.

Literacy in the real world

We live in a world that is increasingly mediated through text (Adami 2008). Written language is inscribed into the spaces and places of our everyday lives from street signs and addresses, to agendas, e-mails, clocks, text messages, phone books, etc… There is not a part of modern life that is not affected by writing in some way. There isn't a place in the city untouched by written language, texts that can be deeply meaningful to readers. These texts guide us as we go about our daily lives, informing our perceptions of the spaces we inhabit. Written language is more than simply ubiquitous, it is an essential part of our lives. Our lives are documented, our very existence dependant on bundles of writing in databases of all sorts. We use written documents as guarantors of our identities, engage in commercial exchanges using little scraps of paper whose symbolic value is

printed onto them, and even form meaningful relationships through written correspondence.

The spatial and temporal dimensions of our lives are laid out in agendas, to do lists, and other tools, functioning with the precision of the astonishing array of timepieces in our lives. Beyond the texts that shape the physical, spatial, and temporal elements of our lives are the government reports, reviews, blogs, novels, and other texts, which inscribe themselves onto the cityscape in a variety of ways. Not that the rural areas have escaped the written world, they are as affected by the textual sprawl as any urban space; in this era of globalization and digital media, writing is flourishing in all corners of the world, spreading through the technologies that transmit it. Gone are the days when an anthropologist could travel off the beaten path to find villages that had never even heard of writing. We live in a world where the ability to read and write matters in many if not most of the contexts of our everyday lives.

Writing is rapidly becoming our primary relational medium. Our relationships with the bureaucratic and commercial institutions are mediated through a variety of documents like identity papers and application forms (Adami 2008). We use government issues identity documents to access government services and to assert our rights as citizens. Even illiterate people understand the importance of these kinds of documents even if they do not always understand why these documents matter or how they work (Cody 2009, Gordillo 2006, Mitchell 1994). While one does not need to be able to read or write to find work, literacy expands one's earning potential (Statistics Canada 2008). Writing crosses the boundaries between personal and professional with ease and it is rapidly becoming our primary social medium (Adami 2008). From the heavily text based

social media that are coming to reshape the ways in which we socialize to text messages, e-mails, letters, thank you cards, and the millions of other social uses of written language, our social relations are increasingly mediated through text.

Literacy as a skill

There is a sense in which literacy can be thought of as the ability to decode strings and create meaningful strings of written signs. These are the skills that surveys designed to collect robust data about literacy measure. Currently there are two surveys that fall into this category, the IALS or International Adult Literacy Survey and the LAMP or Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme survey on adult literacy. Both LAMP and IALS are international surveys meant to gather robust data on literacy for comparative purposes. These surveys test literacy skills in three areas: prose, the ability to use and draw information from continuous texts; document, the ability to locate and use information from non-continuous texts; and numeracy, the ability to perform arithmetic operations.

Both tests evaluate literacy on a continuum divided into five levels, one being the lowest level and five being the highest level. Each of the three literacy skills: document, prose, and numeracy is evaluated separately and the average of the three scores is used to represent an individual's global level of literacy. However, it is important to consider an individual's score in all three areas of skill to get a real sense of their significance. The LAMP has an additional section designed to measure an individual's pre-literacy skills

like letter, number, and character recognition in order to get a more accurate assessment of the literacy skills of individuals who score very low on the standard booklets.

A level one difficulty prose task would be to read a small, simple text and locate a single piece of information from it. At this level of difficulty there is little to no distracting information. Similarly a level one document task would be to locate a piece of information in or enter information from personal knowledge on a document with little to no distracting information. A level two prose task might be to locate a single piece of information in a text that might require some low level inferences or contain distracting/ misleading information. Level two document tasks are more varied than those in level one. They may require low level inferences, dealing with distracters[3], or integrating information from various parts of a document.

A level three prose task might ask a respondent to find information in a dense or lengthy text or generate a response based on information in the text. At this level distracting information is still not near the correct information. A level three document task might require the respondent to integrate information from one or several documents or read tables and graphs containing information that is irrelevant or inappropriate to the task. Level four prose and document require a greater degree of inference and introduce conditional information. Level five tasks require respondents to navigate through texts or documents with many plausible distracters, make high level inferences, and/or use specialized knowledge (Statistics Canada 2005).

Clearly, if we think of literacy as a skill, then we have to expect different levels of proficiency. The picture gets further muddied when one considers the way in which the

[3] Distracting or misleading information.

language of the test and the familiarity of respondents with the kind of standardized test being administered can have a profound impact on an individual score. If it is essential to move away from binaries in order to get a clearer picture of literacy, it is because there are many variables other than level of literacy that impact individual scores. Both the LAMP assessment tool and IALS collect data about respondent socio-economic status in order to analyze and explain their results. This is an argument for a more social understanding of literacy, because it underlines the strong connection between literacy, social status, and economic success. LAMP also measures a respondent's mastery of pre-literacy skills like letter and number recognition in order to get a clearer picture of and individual respondent's levels of literacy. Robust data about literacy can only be collected when researchers are willing to recognize that the term literacy is used to describe a diverse set of skills that can have a profound impact on a person's life.

Defining literacy

The question becomes: how do we conceptualize literacy and more importantly how do we relate to it in order to talk about literacy in a way that is relevant in the real world? While literacy is commonly defined as the ability to read and write, such a definition is too vague to be of use to a scholarly debate, it does not provide a means by which to measure literacy and it is not grounded in any kind of concrete reality. I use UNESCO's "plurality of literacy" (UNESCO-UIS 2009) approach as the jumping off point for my definition of literacy. The plurality of literacy "refers to the complex interaction between literacy and many arenas of social life…" and defines literacy as

"…comprising divers practices embedded in socio-economic, political, cultural and linguistic contexts, acquired in school and outside of school." (LAMP 2009) Literacy should thus be understood as comprising diverse practices embedded in particular socio-cultural contexts (Street 2004).

Consequently I define literacy as a constellation of literacy practices (J. Collins 1995) involving the use of written language for a multiplicity of purposes in the particular social and cultural contexts of one's everyday life. Literacy in this sense is about both the ability to derive meaning from written language and the use of written language in everyday life. In choosing to view literacy as situated I argue that: "… literacy is part of the complex web of activities through which humans organize themselves socially and culturally" (Besnier 2000; 143). Literacy is more than a skill; the term comprises sets of skills that are deeply embedded in particular social practices.

Literacy as a social practice

Over the last 50 years or so, anthropologists have come to realize that literacy is more than a technology and that becoming literate means not only learning new skills but also new practices with cultural significance (Reimer 2008; 444). In an article entitled Becoming Literate, Being Human: Adult Literacy and Moral Reconstruction in Botswana, Frances J. Reimer (2008) explores the relationship between literacy and identity for newly literate men and women in Botswana. Notably Reimer links their faith in literacy's transformative potential to the legacy of the evangelical missionaries who were sent to Africa by the London Missionary Society to convert Africans. In the article

Reimer highlights the ways in which an unusually successful literacy class drew from Christian beliefs, practices, and ritual to create a space that facilitated learning in spite of the "less-than-accommodating state-sponsored literacy classes" (Reimer 2008; 444).

For Reimer's informants literacy reflected a cultural model that was introduced to Africa by Christian missionaries in the 19th century. These missionaries came to Africa with the goal of converting the natives to Christianity as part of a 'civilizing' mission. To the Africans literacy seemed to be more than just a skill, it seemed to have supernatural transformative powers (Reimer 2008; 449). These beliefs were bolstered by colonialism and while the program that Reimer's students followed was not explicitly religious the use of religious tropes to talk about literacy as well as the classroom prayer hearkened back to the missionary model of literacy.

The program itself emphasized personal freedom and national progress without explicitly connecting literacy to upward mobility or economic independence (Reimer 2008, 448). And while the learners viewed literacy as a "mystical tool needed to negotiate the tasks, challenges, and opportunities of modern life." (Reimer 2006; 451-452) The need to read and write was less widespread and pervasive than the literacy program suggested. For one thing the national literacy program was one of the only sources of reading material around beyond government receipts, passports, and the occasional letter. Similarly the job-related literacy that Reimer's informants talked to her about were bounded and minimal (Reimer 2008; 452). For Reimer "beliefs about literacy provided a way of making meaning, of maintaining hope, and of retaining a sense of self in a world that offers little consistency other than change." (Reimer 2008; 452)

Literacy provided the students Reimer observed with an increased sense of personal power as well as a few additional coping mechanisms. In linking literacy with Christianity Reimer's learners were looking for a way to realize their personhood and for them literacy was a recognizable path (Reimer 2008; 459). As a social practice literacy is embedded into the systems of meaning that people draw upon to make sense of their everyday lives. Situating these practices in their socio-historical context is key to understanding them.

Similarly, Guofang Li (2001) argues that an understanding of the home literacy practices of minority children is crucial for understanding how they perform in school. Li talks about the home literacy practices of a Chinese-Canadian girl named Amy Ye. Drawing from her observations as a participant observer in the Ye family restaurant, Li presents and discusses the different ways in which Amy encountered written language. Like Reimer, Li painstakingly presents the literacy practices she observes and then connects them to the larger socio-cultural context in which she writes. Children like Amy whose literacy practices are different from those taught in school have trouble integrating into the classroom because they are required to learn a whole new set of literacy skills to do so. Li argues that schools fail these students when they fail to recognize the literacy practices that they bring with them from home (Li 2001; 70-71). A situated understanding of literacy is required to help better integrate children who come to the classroom with non standard literacy practices into the school system (Li 2001).

In an essay about the role of literacy in the social integration of immigrants, Adami (2008) recounts the cases of three immigrants with limited literacy skills that he worked with as an educator in a literacy organization in France and their struggles with

the vagaries of French bureaucratic culture. The three learners: Asmaa, a Moroccan woman, Rachid, a Moroccan man, and Jules, a Senegalese man spoke French though not as a first language and all of them had received some formal schooling. All three were taking literacy classes in the organization Adami was working with and their misadventures highlight the cultural nature of literacy practices. Adami uses Noiriel's (2006) expression "le choc des papiers" or 'document shock' to describe the encounter between less educated immigrants from less developed countries with the heavily bureaucratized societies of Western Europe (Adami 2008).

Adami first talks about Rachid's struggle to use the telephone book. He came to Adami's organization wishing to find the phone number for a person he had already met before. The phone book that he was provided with was in and of itself discouraging but when he finally began using it they realized that he didn't understand how the phone book was organized. With some help he found the section in the phone book which corresponded to the right city but he was not able to find the phone number he wanted. Adami later learned that the person that Rachid had met was a social worker and that he should have looked for the service that this individual had worked for rather than his name. The arbitrary and abstract conventions by which a phone book is organized make it a useful tool for those who are familiar with them, conversely these conventions confuse and frustrate those who are unfamiliar with them (Adami 2008).

Jules had similar troubles finding his way around a French administrative centre. The centre in question housed a number of different public services on different floors and it is important to know what one is looking for to find the right person. To help him, Jules was provided with a map of the city and a schedule for the bus that would take him

to the administrative centre. For Jules, who navigated the city using landmarks, the maps seemed like squiggles on a paper divorced from anything he knew. When he finally found the building the signs, notices, and other markings designed to help people find their way around the building confused him. These markings and signs made up of both linguistic and non linguistic characters made the administrative centre seem like a semiotic maze to Jules who chose to go home rather than show up to his meeting an hour and a half late (Adami 2008).

Asmaa had the bad habit of not showing up to her appointments with social services she maintained that it was social services that often refused to see her. After a few discussions it was discovered that she showed up when it was most convenient for her to do so and not when she was supposed to because she had not realized that appointments came with a date and time. Asmaa was then provided an agenda to help her keep track of her appointments, a tool that was designed to help her but ultimately confounded her. She struggled to grasp the abstract way that time is represented in an agenda where each day is not put in relation to every other but rather represented as blocks of time. She could not conceive of her life fitting into the abstract representation of time of the agenda and refused to use it. "I do not want to put my life into that thing" she explained when she returned the unused agenda (Adami 2008).

For the three immigrants Adami (2008) worked with the process of becoming literate was about more than learning how to read and write, it involved grasping the underlying organizational schemas that underpinned the tools that they were given. It was not enough to provide Jules, Rachid, and Asmaa with a map, a phone book, or an agenda, they had to be taught how to use those tools and more than that they had to understand

their significance. When she understood what was being asked of her, Asmaa rejected the agenda and the particular understanding of time that it represented. All three of Adami's cases highlight the ways in which cultural schemas underpin writing. Being able to read means knowing the conventions of written language as well as the conventions of the document that one is looking at. To become literate one has to do more than learn to read and write, one has to become familiar with the social and cultural conventions of written language. In other words, becoming literate means learning how to use written language. Adami's findings are echoed in Dyer and Choski's (1997) account of a literacy program for a nomadic people called the Rabari in the state of Gujarat, India.

In the face of a solidifying global economy it is becoming increasingly difficult for nomads to maintain their lifestyles. As outsiders they are unfamiliar with and excluded from the institutions of modern society becoming increasingly marginalized and downtrodden as their modernity renders their way of life obsolete. For the nomads modern society seemed like an intimidating labyrinth of text and norms, something alien. This is not to say that the nomads had never seen written language before, quite the contrary they recognized the instrumental uses of literacy and were intrigued. In fact, the Rabari showed a keen interest in learning how to read and write but when Dyer and Choski got into the field they realized that there had been a misunderstanding (Dyer and Choski 1997).

When Dyer and Choski asked their informants about the problems of being illiterate they discovered that the Rabari did not pay attention to the presence of writing in their environment. They were more concerned with immediate tasks like reading a map or bus schedule and did not think of reading as having much use beyond that. The Rabari

saw these literacy practices as discrete unconnected practices and did not realize that there was an overarching concept underpinning those activities. In other words, the Rabari did not have a frame of reference that would allow them to understand all of the implications of literacy. They had to understand the social work of writing in order to understand the value of literacy, and when they realized what becoming literate entailed they found literacy much less interesting (Dyer and Choski 1997).

As social practice literacy is embedded in everyday life in a wide variety of ways people interact with and make sense of the world. Literacy practices are a bridge between the individual and the larger social, cultural, and ideological dimensions of written language (Besnier 2000). Literacy enables a whole host of different kinds of social relations from the personal (A. S. Johnson 2010) to the political (Cody 2009, Gordillo 2006, Mitchell 2004). If the discovery of written language has a profound impact on a culture, cultures also find ways of integrating writing into their existing social and cultural practices. If literacy often comes with a particular ideological and cultural heritage, there is evidence that local ideologies have a hand at shaping literacy practices. McKeown's (2006) article about the incorporation of literacy into local social practices in Papua New Guinea presents a strong challenge to the view of literacy as a monolithic phenomenon (McKeown 2006).

Language socialization

This thesis is founded on two separate yet interrelated propositions about language and society: "that language acquisition is deeply affected by the process of

becoming a member of a community … and that the process of becoming a competent member of a community is realized largely through the use of language" (B. B. Schieffelin 1990), As per Schieffelin and Ochs's theory of language socialization, I argue that we are taught how to use Language and through the use of said Language we learn the values, norms, and cultural models that enable us to be come competent members of society. Language socialization theory is particularly suited to the study of literacy because literacy, unlike spoken language, is entirely learned behaviour.

In choosing to approach literacy training as a form of language socialization, I argue that the everyday literacy practices that we engage in on a regular basis are " …in fact socializing activities, the basis for the transmission and reproduction of our culture" (Schieffelin 1990; 1). That literacy plays a fundamental role in the production of meaning in Western societies and that through literacy (in part) that we develop social relations and participate in the everyday exchanges that make up life in the West (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986). We are socialized through written language but we are also socialized to use written language, and it is in understanding how we come to be literate that we can grasp the cultural work of literacy (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986). In order to talk about literacy socialization, however, I have to first discuss language socialization theory because of the way that it underpins literacy socialization.

Socialization is an interactive process through which more knowledgeable members of a community encourage and support the efforts of novices to become competent members of the community. Socialization is highly interactional and shaped more by the participants than any pre-existing process or entity even though there are organizations, relationships, and contexts more amenable to socialization than others

(Rafkey 1971). Regular, routine social interactions are a large part of the socializing process that is by its very nature highly intrapersonal. This means that there is an important relational and affective component to the process that plays an important role in the organization of knowledge and experience. The everyday quality of socializing practices means that they are necessarily informed by the socio-cultural contexts in which they occur even though they are ultimately shaped by needs of participants in relation to the community or social group in question. More knowledgeable members may make explicit "what everybody knows" (Cicourel 1973; 39), model appropriate behaviour or practices, correct of guide novices when necessary, and even present techniques or tricks that the novice might benefit from (Schieffelin 1990). The novice does more than passively internalize information, he or she works actively with others to develop an understanding of community practices or beliefs that is both shared within the community and grounded in their experiences, knowledge, and beliefs (Schieffelin & Ochs 1986).

Language plays an important role in socialization because it is through language that participants are able to communicate with each other, in other words language "…is a powerful socializing medium" (Schieffelin &Ochs 1986; 172). It is through language that the novice is instructed, given feedback, and forms relationships with other members of the community; but more fundamentally it is through language that actions become meaningful (Lindstrom 1992). The process of becoming a competent member of society is deeply affected by an individual's communicative competencies (Hymes 1967) because it is realized in great part through the use of language (Schieffelin 1990). So when considering the socializing process it's important to examine not just what people communicate but how they choose to do so (Schieffelin &Ochs 1986).

Language is a resource for socialization and its various features can be used to convey all manner of social meaning. Social meaning covers any socially relevant information about a particular speech act such as setting, genre, goal, and tone. Members of a social group generally share an understanding about the ways in which the social, syntactic, and semantic features of their language can be used to transmit social meanings. These understandings can be thought of as resources that they can draw upon or use for a variety of purposes in their everyday lives and they include everything from conventions like turn taking to grammatical and lexical structures like negation or terms of address. These features shape the kinds of interactions that people can have with each other and in doing so play a very important role in the socialization process and they are the kinds of knowledge that novices can only really learn through regular interactions with other community members (Schieffelin& Ochs 1986).

Literacy Socialization

Though much of the literature on language socialization focuses on the mastery of spoken language it is possible to talk about literacy socialization if we think of literacy not as a set of skills but rather as “a way of taking meaning from the environment” (Heath 1982; p 49 in Schieffelin & Ochs 1986). One of the most important notions in the study of literacy socialization has been the literacy event, that is occasions where writing plays an integral role to participant’s interactions or interpretive processes (Schieffelin & Ochs 1986). The term literacy event here does not imply that literacy is practiced in specific contexts but rather that any event in which people use, refer to, or draw from a

piece of writing can be considered to be a literacy event. In other words we have to understand literacy events as occurring in particular social contexts and varying in relation to cultural ideologies as well as patterns of interaction and socialization (Schieffelin & Ochs 1986; 181). Moreover, we have to consider the way that the literacy event blurs the line between speech and writing by considering the ways in which written language can inform every aspect of human life.

In talking about the ideological dimensions of literacy I draw on Silverstein's notion of linguistic ideologies as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as rationalization or justification of perceived language structure or use" (Silverstein 1979; 193). These ideologies play an important role in the creation of linguistic resources and consequently are central to the formation and continued existence of linguistic communities. There is very seldom a single ideology of language in any group situation, rather one is likely to find a multiplicity of competing and sometimes contradictory ideologies which are used to justify particular linguistic and social practices (Schieffelin and Doucet 1998) and thus underpin the politics of Language. So the ways in which a language is represented matter, these representations are critical to the formation of personal and collective social identities because of the way they transmit social, political, and cultural values. Furthermore as a graphical representation of spoken language, written language is necessarily a manifestation of group identities for literate communities as well as a powerful tool for creating those communities (Schieffelin& Doucet 1998). In other words there is a very powerful ideological component to literacy and the process of becoming literate requires the learner to navigate through a

multiplicity of different, occasionally conflicting, often incongruous language ideologies in order to master sets of socially acceptable literacy skills.

As with the study of other forms of language socialization, the study of literacy socialization “has as its goal the understanding of how persons become competent members of social groups and the role of [literacy] in this process” (Schieffelin & Ochs 1986; 167). Literacy socialization concerns literacy as a medium for socialization, and the process through which people are socialized to be literate. It emphasizes the interactional and relational qualities of socialization by connecting the everyday interactions between learners and educators as well as other related literacy events to the larger contexts the learners are socialized into and in doing so links language behaviour with cultural ideology (Schieffelin & Ochs 1986). It argues human beings use language to frame and in some sense constitute reality together and moreover that the process of being part of a community with all that entails is mediated through interlocutor interpretations of how linguistic practices can be used to construct the fabric of everyday social life (Ochs 1993). Furthermore it purposes to connect these practices to the linguistic and cultural ideologies that underpin both language use and language acquisition in order to get at the cultural work of literacy.

I will go one step further and suggest that through specific literacy practices individuals participate in what Gee calls "big D" Discourse. Discourse here being the "different ways in which we humans integrate language with non-language stuff... so as to enact and recognize different identities and activities, give the material world certain meanings, distribute social goods in a certain way, make certain sorts of meaningful connections in our experience, and privilege certain symbols and ways of knowing over

others (Gee in Steinkuehler 2005; 58)". In other words that literacy is more than a skill or a way of transmitting information, it is a linguistic medium through which we connect with others, organize things in order to make sense of them, and interact with out surroundings. Moreover, Gee's Discourse invites us to consider how the material, relational, and other non-linguistic elements of the socializing encounter contribute to the sense making process. In doing so Gee's "big D" Discourse theory invites us to consider the relational aspects of the sense making process and by extension, literacy.

Conclusion

Socialization theory views learning as a fundamentally social practice. From a socialization perspective people learn in broad variety of contexts through everyday or regular interaction. Socialization is not defined by the contexts in which it occurs or as range of socializing practices or behaviours but rather as the process through which individuals learn through regular and repeated interaction. There is a sense in which virtually all learning can be thought of as socialization simply because learning occurs in particular social contexts. It is important to recognise that socialization can occur without there being any kind of explicit instruction, that learning does not imply teaching or at least explicit teaching. Just as it is possible to communicate something without stating it outright, it is possible to teach something without explicitly teaching it. Given the focus of my research, however, I feel I must talk about socialization in instances of explicit instruction.

Given than socialization is the process through which individuals learn how to become fully functioning members of society and this is the purpose of formal education in the West, it should come to no surprise that the school system is a powerful socializing institution. There are no socializing practices unique to the classroom setting but the particular relational dynamics of the classroom do shape the way participants interact with each other. There are a number of factors that shape the interaction between teacher and learner including the topic at hand, the relative ages of participants, teacher-student ratio, the degree of formality of the setting, and many more. One thing that holds constant through most classroom-type settings is the expectation of explicit instruction. This is not to say that socialization in an educational or classroom setting is the product of nothing but explicit instruction, instruction is simply one way to transmit knowledge. It is also important to recognize that socialization is not restricted to situations of one on one interaction but rather that learning is interactive and that the kind of structured interactions that take place in the classroom are part of a socializing process.

Language socialization, and by extension literacy socialization, "…views the acquisition of linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge as integral to one another… (Poole 1992). In arguing that literacy training constitutes a form of literacy socialization I argue that the process of becoming literate is highly social. Teacher-learner interactions encode cultural norms and beliefs that shape the ways in which learners will use language but also the ways in which they view the world around them. The language that we learn in school reflects a larger ideology of language prevalent in society (Cook-Gumperz 1993). Because of the ways in which the literacy practices taught in school are a reflection of

dominant language ideologies, they at odds with the ways in which literacy is used outside of the classroom (Auerbach 1989, Li 2001).

Learning to read and write means more than simply grasping the connection between written and spoken language, it means mastering particular literacy practices, and it means understanding and coming to grips with the relationship between written language and culturally dominant dialects of a language. The prescriptive formality of classroom literacy makes the transition from speaking to writing challenges speakers of non dominant dialects to master new and often unfamiliar linguistic practices and to wrestle with the ideologies that come with them (Cook Gumperz 1993, Li 2001). If, as Schieffelin (1990) has argued, the process of becoming a competent member of society is actualized largely through language then the difficulties certain groups face in acquiring these skills speaks to their continued marginalization. If the purpose of adult literacy instruction is to get learners to actively engage in many varied literacy practices (Purcell-Gates et al. 2002; 91) it is with a view of integrating them more fully into society.

Language socialization theory points to the role of Language in the transmission and use of cultural knowledge (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986). It points to the interplay between knowledge and culture and more than that it positions language as a resource for social theory (Schieffelin 1990). More than that it points to the social work of language and explores the relationship between community and communication. Language socialization provides a solid theoretical framework with which to think about both the social nature of learning and the role of language in the process of social integration. Furthermore, socialization connects the process of language acquisition to the process of becoming a member of a community and suggests that it is through the use of language

that individuals assert membership in a community (Schieffelin 1990). In arguing for literacy socialization I argue that community is central to the process of becoming literate for the adults that I observed in the field.

Chapter 3: Community

This chapter will open on a discussion of the role of community in socialization. I will then discuss the possibilities of a literacy-based version of the speech community. At that point I will take a step back and examine the concept of community in order to meditate on the difficulties it presents. I will then draw from Vered Amit's writings on the topic to get at some of the productive ambiguities embedded in the notion of community. Then I will engage with the ways in which I encountered the term in the field and point to the community of practice. Finally, I will suggest that the Lighthouse is a community of practice and end with a meditation on community and re-socialization.

Socialization and community

Socialization, the process by which an individual becomes a competent member of society, implies community. Socialization is an interactive process through which more knowledgeable members of a community encourage and support the efforts of novices to become competent members of the community (Schieffelin 1990). Socialization is highly interactional and shaped more by the participants than any pre-existing process or entity even though there are organizations, relationships, and contexts more amenable to socialization than others. Regular routine social interactions are a large part of the socializing process, which is by its very nature highly intrapersonal. This means that there is an important relational and affective component to the process that plays an important role in the organization of knowledge and experience. We often

associate socialization with childhood but socialization takes place or can take place at any moment in the life course albeit in different forms (Mortimer and Simmons 1978).

On defining community

The question is: what is a community? Community is a word that is used a lot both by scholars and by writers outside of academia. It is a term whose liberal usage has rendered it "..so vague that it may seem to have no analytical use whatsoever." Fog Olwig 2010, 363) Consider the following two statements about community:

1. "Efforts to define community and to build a body of theory around the concept have been a dismal failure.
2. But, some of the best social science produced over the past decades has been our community studies." (Barrett 2010, 113)

Community is a term that has become difficult to define in a satisfactory manner, largely because of its use in a broad variety of contexts. Yet if scholars commonly bemoan the proliferation of the term community as fatally undermining the analytical value of the term, the concept remains productive (Amit 2010, 357). As per Amit (2010), I suggest that the continued use of the term community implies that it is this ambiguity that makes community a useful analytical resource, one that is "good to think with". What is needed is an approach to community that recognizes this ambiguity as productive. For Amit the multiple and multiplying uses of the community suggest that as a term community is 'a

useful vehicle for thinking about certain classes of sociation." (Amit 2010, 358) Ultimately Amit not only points to the possibilities such a perspective might offer but provides a model of how such an approach might look, drawing from her own work to illustrate her point.

The problem, however, with using Anderson's (1983) imagined communities is that the imagined community is a community in the most abstract sense of the term. Such abstraction can make for a great way to understand events but they tell us little about the modalities of working communities. To paraphrase Amit (2010), community has to be more than an act of the imagination or attribution, an effective working model of community has to focus on the interplay between imagination and social interaction. In other words we need to consider community first and foremost in terms of sociality. In lieu of defining community, Amit draws out three elements of community "(1) joint commitment; (2) affect or belonging; (3) forms of association" (Amit 2010, 359). It is important not to view these elements as distinct and separate from each other but rather to embrace them as points at which ambiguities arise and any overlap between these concepts comes from the fact that they are interrelated (Amit 2010, 359).

Points of strategic ambiguity

Of the three points that Amit discusses, joint commitment is the strongest because it recognizes the ways in which individuals work or try to maintain or be part of a community. With the rapid spread of communication technology it is possible to share common knowledge with another, going so far as to coordinate actions based on that

shared knowledge without necessarily having or forming a strong social bond (Amit 2010, 359). Amit gets the notion of joint commitment from Gilbert (1994), who describes it as a unifying principle or mechanism. "If we have a joint commitment, each of us is committed, but we are committed independently […] each one's "individual commitment" stands or falls with the "individual commitment" of the other" (Gilbert 1994; 14). This is not to say that joint commitment is greater than or equal to the sum of its parts, but rather that it is the interdependence between commitments that gives it motivational force (Amit 2010, 395). Gilbert (1994) views joint commitment as the highest form of sociality because it can engender unity, for Amit (2010) joint commitment is interesting because "…joint commitments do not necessarily, or even often, generate consensus or even collegiality. Nor, for that reason, can they always be successfully mobilized or sustained." (Amit 2010, 360)

When I joined the Lighthouse I felt like I was joining a community. As a volunteer I was invited to Lighthouse social events like the Lighthouse Christmas party, and the administration checked up on me to see how the volunteering was going. Given the fact that rapport was an important part of the learner-tutor relationship it was important to match up tutors and learners that felt could work well together. The administration also worked to manage commitment by making sure that both learners and tutors felt that the Lighthouse appreciated their contribution. The Lighthouse worked with the skills and talents that learners and tutors brought with them to the organization when planning workshops. When I asked one of the tutors I observed in the field what she liked most about the Lighthouse, she told me that she thought it was great that the Lighthouse gave ordinary people like her an opportunity to use what they know to help others rather

than turning to specially trained educators. There were always opportunities to get involved in the different activities and workshops organized by the Lighthouse and participation always came with recognition on the part of the administration.

I would argue that joint commitment was apparent both at the level of the organization and at the level of the learner/tutor pairings, albeit differently. The student-centred approach favoured by the Lighthouse meant that it was the student and tutor who set their learning objectives together which favoured the kind of shared commitment that Gilbert (1994) and Amit (2010) are talking about. The student's goals and learning objectives shaped the kinds of socialization they received in their tutoring sessions. The kinds of specific goals that learners had, the skills that they were interested in acquiring, determined the socialization that they received even as it they shaped their tutoring sessions. These goals were also clearly central to the shared project that the tutor and the learner were embarking on by agreeing to work together.

Amit's second strategic point is affect-belonging, an aspect that has been central to the discussion of community for a while. Anderson's (1991) imagined communities are an example of the pride of place given to the affective dimensions of community. While it is clear that a "sense of community" is part of community, community is more than a feeling. For one thing it is not enough to feel like one is a member of a particular community to belong to it. For another a robust accounting of community, one that moves beyond definition to investigation needs a point of departure that gets at the affective dimensions of community in a concrete manner. Inspired by distributed models of culture advocated by scholars like Barth and Hannerz, Amit argues for a distributed affect-belonging (Amit 2010, 361).

Amit (2010) couples this with an understanding of commitment as being distributed, unevenly shared among members of a community to explain why the interdependence engendered by joint commitment is or can be a source of tension. In doing so Amit finds a way to represent the uncertainties and risks that make human interaction both rewarding and frustrating. During my time in the field, the tutors and learners I observed that the learners and tutors I worked with felt liked they were members of the Lighthouse community to varying degrees. Some of them attended every event hosted by the Lighthouse while others were content to show up to their tutoring sessions and didn't participate in the life of the community outside of them.

Amit's third point is about forms of association and she argues that it is the lack of specificity that makes community a concept that is "good to think with". Her argument here is that not defining community as particular kinds of associations or sociality leaves the field open for more robust investigations of human sociality. More precisely, she argues that this understanding of community is the perfect object with which to explore the dimensions of different forms of plural subjecthood (Amit 2010, 362). For Amit, community is about joint commitment and the tensions that come from interdependence and collaboration. While Amit does not define community per se she does get to the heart of what a community is; an association of individuals brought together through joint commitment and a "sense of community" for a variety of reasons that are largely specific to the context in which they occur.

The Ecological community

It would be a mistake, however, to ignore the way community was used at the Lighthouse. Given that the Lighthouse is a community based organization this term cropped up many times during my stay in the field and the contexts in which it was used said something both about the person who used the term and the organization itself. Looking back on my time in the field I noted two common uses of the term community in reference to the Lighthouse: the Lighthouse as a part of the local community, and the Lighthouse as a community. The former was used in official documentation to situate the Lighthouse in Montreal, the latter was used more informally to describe the Lighthouse as an organization. These two uses of the term community didn't describe mutually exclusive states of being so while they were generally not used in the same breath they were both acknowledged as being true by the people I worked with in the field.

The Lighthouse got a lot of mileage out of the ecological understanding of community. For one thing this was the organization's official status, it was as a community based organization that it applied for funding and/or assistance. In most of its official documentation, the Lighthouse positioned itself as an actor within the community whose goal was to promote literacy development within the community through a variety of literacy services. The Lighthouse office was located in a particular region of the Montreal urban area and it was in this area that they recruited both volunteers and learners. As a volunteer based organization, most of the services offered by the Lighthouse were provided by volunteers, the Lighthouse had a small core of paid employees who coordinated the Lighthouse's different projects but most of the people who worked for the Lighthouse did so as volunteers.

This understanding of community is heavily grounded in the notion of place. Community in this sense was the place and the people who lived in it: the complex array of institutions, practices, beliefs, and social networks that emerged from living in the same place. It's easy to adopt an ecological perspective of place when talking about a small community where everybody knows each other and as a result life in society fosters a sense of kinship. This concept is much more difficult to apply in urban settings where people may work in one part of town and live in another, and where anomie and population density mean that people may not know their neighbours[4]. This doesn't mean that an ecological perspective on community or at least life in society is without merit or interest. The Chicago school of urban ethnography, which flourished between 1915 and 1953 and favoured an ecological perspective, produced a large number of high quality works (Barrett 2010).

The ecological perspective on community represents community at is most frustratingly vague because the human social field is too complex and multilayered to be charted out on any map. At the same time the geography of community is not without interest. Location matters, the physical location of a building, the resources and structures as well as their relative placement in an area, the demographics of a region, all of these things shape the communities that form in it. "If one has chosen to live mindfully," writes Bell Hooks, "then choosing a place to die is as vital as choosing where and how to live." (Hooks 2009; 6) Place matters even though we may not always be able to conflate place with community in a meaningful way. Distinct from and yet connected to the idea of the

[4] This is the case for the Lighthouse, which operates out of a large metropolitan center.

Lighthouse as a part of the local community was the idea of the Lighthouse as a community.

The Lighthouse was not so much as place as it was an organization, an organization made up of people. There was its administrative structure populated by a mix of volunteers and paid employees and there was the body of volunteers who provided the Literacy services offered by the organization with the support of its administrators. The Lighthouse had an office, a location in the physical world but it was an organization made up of people; people who came largely from one area and who were connected to each other through their involvement in the organization.

This second view of community was more in line with social science literature on community than more ecological perspectives because of the way that it points to a network of individuals connected through social links (Amit 2010). One of the volunteers I worked with told me that the thing she liked best about the Lighthouse was the community. “We’re a good group of people.” Both understandings of community informed the daily practices of the Lighthouse in a variety of ways, that they were different didn’t in any way invalidate either one, I suppose largely because they were both true in their own ways.

Communities of practice

So the Lighthouse was viewed both as an agent in the broader community and as a community itself. As a community the Lighthouse was a pretty heterogeneous group, it had members who were literate and members who were not and it welcomed people from

all walks of life, all levels of education, all nationalities, and all socio-economic statuses. The only thing that an individual needed to join the Lighthouse was a willingness to learn and some free time. Individuals who came to the Lighthouse to benefit from literacy services were assessed before being placed with a tutor and tutors were given some basic tutor training before being matched with a learner. Given that the tutoring sessions were one on one and the tutor-learner dynamic was central to the process, the Lighthouse administrators worked to match learners and tutors that they felt would work well together. They also worked hard to ensure that learners and tutors were paired up quickly, within a month of the assessment for learners and within a month of tutor training for tutors. During my time in the field I came to think of the Lighthouse as a community of practice.

Communities of practice are "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interaction on an ongoing basis" (Wenger 2002; 4) Communities of practice are informal associations of individuals have as their key focus the creation and management of knowledge (Pirius 2007). The membership and the kinds of sociation that come to characterize a community of practices are largely by-products of the kind of knowledge at their core. As communities, they exist to "create, expand, and exchange knowledge, and to develop individual capabilities" (Wenger 2002; 42). Members of a community of practice share a joint commitment to the body of knowledge that the community has been created to create, manage, and disseminate. Knowledge is an integral part of any given community of practices daily operations and through

membership in a community of practice individuals expand their skills, knowledge, and identities (Pirius 2007; 16).

Membership in a community of practice entails participation and participation entails interaction (Wenger 1998, 2002). While it is possible for two individual members of a community of practice to have no direct social connection they are part the same social network and are connected indirectly through common friends or acquaintances. Given the dynamic nature of knowledge, a degree of mutual respect and trust are necessary for the right kind of interactions and knowledge sharing to occur (Pirius 2007). Given the centrality of knowledge and learning to the community of practice, it should come as no surprise that membership in a community of practice is dependant on the relevance of the community for individual members (Wenger 2002). A community of practice that ceases to be relevant for all of its members will most likely disband. Some communities of practice are evanescent and others are more enduring, either because they remain relevant to the lives of their members or because new members join the community at about the same rate that more experienced members leave.

When newcomers join a community of practice they learn through interaction with more knowledgeable members of the community. Gradually these novice learners become competent members of the community and are able to actively contribute to the community's knowledge base (Pirius 2007; 17). In other words, communities of practice are socializing institutions. Because of the centrality of the creation and management of bodies of knowledge in communities of practice, they can be thought of as having a culture in the Geertzian sense of the term. The bodies of knowledge communities of practice create and manage are shared knowledge relevant to the lives of community

members. Moreover through the process of learning and working together members of a community of practice develop a group identity, one which new members must learn and internalize to become full members of the community.

So what does that mean for the Lighthouse? After all, people join the Lighthouse for a variety of reasons, some to learn literacy and others to teach literacy. And while it would be a mistake to conflate learning literacy with teaching literacy both processes do feed into each other. One has to be able to read and write in order to teach another how to do so. Furthermore, I would argue that teaching literacy is the central focus of the Lighthouse. To that end the Lighthouse administration has created a library of literacy workbooks and manuals. They give tutor-training workshops and provide tutors with the opportunity to get further training and they provide literacy services. Literacy training informs all of the Lighthouse's programs and practices and it is through participation in the Lighthouse that novice learners learn both how to read and write and how to teach reading and writing to others. Returning to Amit's (2010) points of ambiguity, the Lighthouse was marked by a shared but distributed commitment to the cause of literacy. Literacy was the Lighthouse's raison d'être and community was the means through which the Lighthouse pursued the goal of spreading literacy.

Conclusion

We often associate socialization with childhood but socialization can take place at any moment in the life course albeit in different forms (Mortimer and Simmons 1978).

This isn’t to say that individuals are constantly joining new communities but rather that they change over time. With the exception of primary socialization, socialization is additive. That is to say, the socializing process draws upon the skills and knowledge that the novice learner brings with him or her. This is why having relevant knowledge facilitates socialization processes. Sometimes, socialization helps us to adapt to new environments or communities but as often as not the purpose of socialization is to help us get use to the changes in social status that arise during the life course. This socialization isn’t a fresh start because with the exception of little children (and even that is debatable) people are not blank slates; they are individuals with identities that have developed over time.

A widow, for instance, may not need to learn how to live in society after the death of her life partner but she may have to relearn how to live in society as a single woman. A young adult who joins the workforce for the first time may need to adjust his or her ways of interacting with others to fit into the workplace. This kind of adjustment is a form of socialization called re-socialization. Re-socialization emphasizes the integration of new skills and practices into an established identity over the creation of a new identity. It is additive in that it builds on the skills and knowledge that an individual has mastered to add new dimensions to their identities. Re-socialization doesn’t imply a new or fresh start but rather an in situ adjustment, particularly when we’re talking about secondary socialization (Wright and Mahiri 2012).

It seems to me that this is the kind of socialization that the Lighthouse offers its members. Learners are offered literacy training and by joining the Lighthouse they are taught how to integrate reading and writing into their everyday lives in meaningful ways.

Volunteers who join the Lighthouse are taught how to help others learn how to read and write, they are made aware of the place of literacy in their everyday lives but also learn how to teach and integrate their identities as tutors into their everyday lives. As members of the Lighthouse they build on the community knowledge through the practice of teaching literacy. The Lighthouse doesn’t prepare its members to join a community; it is a community. Tutors re-socialize learners by helping them to integrate literacy skills meaningfully into their everyday lives. And this happens because the Lighthouse is a community, a community of passionate, committed individuals working together to promote the cause of literacy.

Chapter 4: The Context chapter

In this chapter I will present the context in which I conducted my research. I will give a brief overview of my field site. The Lighthouse is a Laubach organization and to understand what that means I have to examine the work of Dr Frank Laubach. I will then go over the history of Laubach Literacy Canada as well as the history of the Lighthouse more specifically. I will then present Lighthouse as a research site and conclude this chapter with a discussion about context and situatedness.

The Lighthouse

I conducted the research for my project at a community based literacy organization located in Montreal. In concert with the local school board, other literacy organizations in the area, and government agencies as well as volunteers, the Lighthouse works to promote English language literacy in Montreal. A volunteer organization, the Lighthouse trains volunteers to provide literacy training to members of the community in need. The Lighthouse is one of eleven Laubach literacy councils that make up the Quebec section of Laubach Literacy Canada (Ministere de L'Education 2002), the Canadian branch of Laubach Literacy International a non-profit NGO that works to promote literacy worldwide. When I contacted the Lighthouse in the spring of 2012, however, all I knew was that the Lighthouse was a volunteer organization whose tutors worked one on one with learners. Given that I was approaching literacy training as a form of language socialization, this more interactional style of education appealed to me.

The one on one sessions promised to be more interactive than a more formal class environment but also less artificial than the typical classroom. In other words the literacy services offered by the Lighthouse seemed to be perfectly suited to the kind of research I wanted to conduct. The Lighthouse was not the first literacy organization that I contacted, nor was it the first that I visited, but after my meeting with the organization's director at the site of one of the programs she had set up in collaboration with the district school board I knew this was going to be my field site.

A caveat, while Frank Laubach was one of the early pioneers of the global literacy movement it is important to recognize that he was not the only one. In 1936 Russia announced that one hundred million Russians had become literate over the past 15 years and James Yen, who had begun literacy campaigns on Mainland China in the 1920's declared that by 1935 over five million Chinese people had become literate in the intervening time. Laubach had no way of knowing these things when he arrived in the Philippines in 1929 (Norton 1990).

Similarly, it is important to recognize that there were literacy organizations in Canada before the founding of the first Laubach reading council and that these organizations have contributed much to the advancement of literacy in Canada. That being said, the Lighthouse does not exist in a vacuum and placing the organization in its social and historical context is integral to appreciating the unseen contributions that the Lighthouse and organizations like it make to the communities in which they operate (UNESCO). The story of the Laubach literacy movement is the story of people who saw literacy as a way to help others and who dedicated themselves to promoting literacy out of the belief that they could make a difference.

Dr Laubach

Dr. Frank Laubach was a teacher, a reverend, and a sociologist with over ten years of teaching experience when he travelled to the Philippines in 1915. He intended to work with the Maranos, a Muslim minority still resisting American rule in the province of Lanao but initially was not allowed in the province (M. C. Collins 1996). When Dr Laubach first started working in the Philippines most if not all the pedagogical material available to him was developed in the West for use in Western contexts without thinking about how those lessons could be rendered more culturally appropriate (Norton 1990). For over ten years he taught literacy in the Philippines, working with the materials available to him. In 1929 he got permission from the United States government to move to the Lanao province and open a school there. His first attempt to teach literacy among the Maranos was an utter failure. His students had no patience for this memorization based approach widely used in the United States at the time and quickly gave up. Meditating on his failure, Dr. Laubach realized that he needed to approach his students differently in addition to finding a new way to teach literacy.

To remedy the situation he contacted Marano religious leaders in order to study the Koran with them and began learning as much about Marano culture as well as the Marano language (Collins 1996). Laubach also worked with fellow educators to develop a phonics-based approach to literacy and created a Latinized alphabet for the language (Laubach 1938). As he learned Marano stories, poems, and history he wrote them down so that he could reference the works when he needed to. When the Marano found out that

he'd done this, they found a reason to learn to read (Norton 1990). The new program that Laubach had developed had short easy to learn lessons that gave quick results. "An illiterate adult knows a great deal more than a child of six… [if] in teaching we lean heavily upon his experience and his reasoning, […] the adult can read within his own old vocabulary in far less time than a child. " (Laubach 1938, p.40) The key to this was short lessons that were easy to grasp and east to teach, that gave quick results, and that worked to build the learner's confidence.

Instead of the memorization heavy methods that were used for children and in second language classrooms at the time, Laubach decided to adopt a phonics based approach to literacy which taught learners to decode the sound/symbol relationships in the language which permitted learners to start reading quickly (Norton 1990). Teaching should be one on one whenever possible, to minimize the learner's discomfort at making mistakes and the teacher should facilitate learning rather than direct the learner or lecture (Laubach 1938).

Laubach advocated for culturally appropriate reading materials, in Lanao he published volumes of Marano stories and poems as well as a newsletter because lessons had to be both simple and engaging for them to be effective. At first Laubach worked with paid instructors but the great depression hit his operation in 1932 and after that there was not enough money to pay any teacher. When he presented this bad news to the Marano chiefs one of them proposed that instead of working with teachers, those who learned to read through the program would teach others. This meeting gave rise to the saying that is the motto of the Laubach movement "each one teach one." (Collins 1996)

Dr Laubach's success in the Philippines got him requests for assistance from other countries and he worked tirelessly along side educators to elaborate teaching methods and organize literacy campaigns all over the world (Norton 1990). Laubach's work convinced him of the viability of a phonics-based program taught by volunteers and he did his best to help interested parties set up similar programs. The method that Laubach created in Lanao was adapted for use all over the world. The phonics-based program was adapted to a variety of different languages and regardless of language; Laubach always emphasized overall effectiveness of a method over the use of a particular teaching method or style (Laubach 1970). He also emphasized the importance of providing literature for adult learners pointing out that literacy was a skill that had to be maintained.

Dr Laubach worked with a variety of authorities to help organize literacy campaigns and he believed that it was only when schools, governments, churches, and other interested parties worked together that the problem of illiteracy could be resolved. In 1945 the Laubach program was adapted into English and introduced to the United States and in 1955 he founded Laubach Literacy International (Collins 1996). By this time the Laubach method had been adapted in to hundreds of languages and been a part of literacy campaigns all around the world. The core elements of Laubach literacy were and still are: volunteer tutors who work one on one with learners, a program that is easy to learn and easy to teach that aims to teach literacy in an individual's native language, the use of culturally appropriate reading materials, and local ownership of the campaign.

The year before Laubach Literacy International was incorporated, Dr Laubach spoke to a group of Canadians about what they could do to help promote global literacy and in 1955 World Literacy of Canada was incorporated to help promote literacy

overseas (Collins 1996). It would take close to 15 years for the Laubach method itself to be adopted in Canada. It is important for me to point out that there were literacy organizations operating in Canada before the first Laubach councils were founded. Frontier College, for instance, has been operating in Canada for over a hundred years to promote literacy. The history of the Laubach reading councils of Canada is the history of the Lighthouse and as such is an important part of contextualizing the organization but it is not the history of Literacy in Canada. The story of Laubach literacy in Canada is the story of people who dedicated themselves to the cause of literacy out of a conviction that they could make the world a better place.

Laubach Literacy Canada

The story of Laubach literacy in Canada begins in the 1960's with a woman named Illavere Tubbe, the wife of a Lutheran minister in Nova Scotia. Through her involvement with the churches her husband served as minister, she discovered that a number of her husband's parishioners were illiterate. Few people in Canada were concerned about literacy at the time because most provinces provided free and mandatory schooling to the age of 16 so it was assumed that all Canadian adults were able to read and write (Collins 1996). In 1994, 30 years after Ms Tubbe became aware of the problem of illiteracy in Canada, the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) revealed that close to 50% of Canadians could not read or write well enough to function in Canadian society and in 2003 the Adult Lifeskills and Literacy survey (ALL) provided similar results. Ms Tubbe's own research uncovered 1400 adults in her county that she felt could

benefit from the kind of literacy services the Lutheran Church Women's literacy aides could provide and set out to bring the program to Canada (Collins 1996).

As part of a new generation of literacy measurement tools, the International Adult Literacy Survey or IALS was designed to create robust statistics about literacy that could be used in comparative analysis. The IALS (and later the ALL) measured respondent skills in three categories grouped into three broad categories: prose, the ability to use and draw information from continuous texts; document, the ability to locate and use information from non-continuous texts; and finally numeracy, the ability to perform arithmetic operations. Test scores were broken down into five categories or levels of literacy the lowest level being level 1 and the highest level 5. To break it down further, a person with a level 1 literacy would be considered to be a true illiterate, at level 2 this person would be considered functionally illiterate, an individual with level 3 literacy or above is considered fully literate, the higher one's score the more literate one is. The Canadian government estimated that to function well in Canadian society one had to have level 3 literacy or higher. The IALS suggested that about 47% of Canadians had a level 1 or 2 literacy level; in 2004 the ALL estimated that 48% of Canadians would score under level 3 on the literacy survey.

The ALL and the IALS generated a ton of data that was used to look at the state of literacy in Canada. Given that I conducted my research in 2012, I will focus largely on the data that comes from the ALL in 2003 simply because it is more recent and thus more contextually appropriate. The data showed that level of literacy increased with education level as a general rule given that more than three-quarters of people who had received post secondary education had literacy scores of level 3 or higher. The data also showed

that older Canadians were less likely to be literate, and that vulnerable populations, like Canada's First Nations populations, and immigrants whose first language was neither English or French (the two languages in which the test was administered), and those who chose to take the test in a language that was not their first language tended to score less well on average. The Provinces that scored the lowest on the ALL were New Brunswick with a 44% literacy rate, Quebec with a 45% literacy rate, and Newfoundland with 45% literacy rate. The region that scored the lowest was the territory of Nunavut, with an estimated 27% of its population scoring level 3 or above on the ALL. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the province or territory that scored the best overall, Yukon with 67% of the population scoring level 3 or above, also had the First Nations population with the highest literacy scores (45% of the Yukon First Nations population scoring level 3). (Statistics Canada 2005)

Even without having statistics like this to turn to, Ms Tubbe researched literacy in her husband's parish and was disturbed by what she found. As the chairperson of the Atlantic chapter of the Lutheran Church Women, Ms Tubbe was in a unique position to help her husband's parishioners. The Lutheran Church Women had a literacy program, a volunteer based program she'd read about from the Lutheran Church Women's newsletter. She had also attended a talk given by the director of the literacy program, a woman named Norma Brookhart who had worked with Dr Laubach in the 1940's (Collins 1996). In the spring of 1970, with the support of the Lutheran Church Women, Ms Brookhart came to Nova Scotia to give a tutor training workshop and while she was there she helped found the first Canadian Laubach reading council and trained twenty-two of tutors. By the fall it was clear that more tutors would be required, however, Ms

Brookhart would only be able to come to Canada again in April of 1971 where she trained forty tutors. Given the cost of bringing American tutor trainers over, she recommended that the Canadian reading councils should develop their own tutor trainers and offered to help with the process. Once Canada had it's own tutor trainers reading councils began forming, first in Atlantic Canada and gradually they spread until there were Laubach reading councils in all of Canada's provinces. Ten years after the first Canadian Laubach council was formed, Laubach Literacy Canada was incorporated in 1980; there were fifty-three councils in eight provinces at the time. (Collins 1996)

Laubach in Quebec

The first Laubach workshop in Quebec took place in 1972 and it gave birth to the Montreal Literacy Council, which ceased operations in 1976 (Collins 1996). In 1979 another Laubach workshop was organized, this one by an employee in the outreach department of the Greater Montreal Protestant School board. The employee in question was trained to become a tutor trainer in New Brunswick and came back to Quebec eager to help found reading councils. People came form all over Quebec to attend this workshop. There were people from the South Shore, Laval, and Western Quebec, but the bulk of attendees came from Montreal. The workshop took place on Friday evening and all day Saturday and after it was done the attendees were to go back to their respective areas to set up councils there and that's what happened. Eleven reading councils were formed from that meeting including the Lighthouse. Initially all of the reading councils in

Quebec used space provided to them by their local school board but as they grew in size many of them eventually got their own space.

Much of the Lighthouse's administrative structure has remained constant through the years. There is still a board of directors that meets on a regular basis to write reports and to do some of the administrative work. While the Lighthouse works mostly from volunteers, the organization has two full time employees: Norma the program director and Carla an administrative assistant. During my time in the field, the Lighthouse had hired a third part time employee named Alba who worked as volunteer coordinator so that Norma could get the social integration program she'd been working on for the past couple of years off the ground. In addition to a library and administrative offices, the Lighthouse office had a front room that they used for a variety of purposes. It is where they held volunteer training sessions, on a few occasions Norma used the space as a boardroom, and tutors could book the space for tutoring sessions and it is here that I conducted my fieldwork.

Literacy in Quebec

Literacy services in the Province of Quebec are offered by School Boards and by community based literacy groups like the Lighthouse. Literacy services are available largely in English and French, although it may be possible to receive literacy services in Inuktitut in the North of Quebec. The Ministry of Sports, Leisure, and Education provides literacy services through the various school boards in the province. The Table des responsables de l'éducation des adultes et de la formation professionelle des commissions

scholaires du Québec (TREAQ-FP) works with French school boards in the province to develop adult and vocational education. The Quebec Literacy Working Group (QLWG) and the Centre for Literacy (CFL) play a similar role for Quebec's English school boards, ensuring that Anglophone school boards have the resources they need to pursue their commitment to literacy. The Ministère de l'Éducation is increasingly working with other ministries in order to work on projects of interest to both ministries. Since the application of the Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training was adopted in 2002, these partnerships have become more important to the Ministry of Education's efforts to promote literacy in Quebec. (Ministère de l'Éducation 2002)

Many of Quebec's Francophone community based literacy organizations are members of the Regroupement des groupes populaires en alphabétisation (RGPAQ), an organization set up to provide a voice for community groups involved in literacy. The Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition feminine (CDEACF) gathers, organizes, and circulates information about literacy in French. The CDEACF also runs a web site dedicated to literacy training. And the Fondation Quebecoise pour l'alphabétisation raises awareness, it acts as a reference centre for people interested in literacy and it enables communities to become involved in literacy training, it runs a help line that provides information about locally available literacy services. The Quebec Literacy Alliance is made up of representatives of Quebec's English language literacy networks and it speaks for the Anglophone literacy sector at the provincial and national levels. The Literacy Partners of Quebec is a provincial organization formed to manage English language literacy training in Quebec and Laubach Literacy Canada-Quebec/ Literacy Volunteers of Quebec (LLC-Q/LLQ) is made up of volunteer based English

language literacy organizations. It was founded in 1980 and restructured in 1993 to integrate volunteer groups that were not part of the Laubach literacy network. As a Laubach organization the Lighthouse is part of the Literacy Volunteers of Quebec. (Ministère de l'Éducation 2002)

For a number of socio-political reasons not particularly germane to this thesis, French second language training for immigrants has been a priority for the Quebec government while literacy has only more recently come to the forefront as an issue (D'Anglejan 1994). Francisation, a social project to integrate immigrants to the province's French speaking population, is an important fixture in the landscape of language education in the province and it impacts literacy training in the province. Many of the French literacy service providers offer literacy services as part of Francisation, and the government of Quebec will provide financial assistance to newcomers to the province who wish to learn French. Francisation is not simply about the social integration of immigrants; it is also about the preservation of the French language in Quebec.

Up until the 1960's Quebec's economy was largely agrarian and Quebec Francophones could count on a high birth rate to maintain a Francophone majority in the province. The quiet revolution, a movement that modernized state powers and shifted control of the economy from Anglophone to Francophone hands (Bourhis 1983, Estman 1987, and Levine 1990) changed everything. The sudden shift from an agricultural based society to a society of industry resulted in a dramatic decline in the birth rate among Francophones, where it was once common to have families of twenty children, it became common for Francophone families to have two or three. Combined with the fact that most immigrants went to English school and integrated into Quebec's Anglophone community

demographers projected that Francophones could become a linguistic minority in Montreal, the economic heart of the province (d'Anglejan 1994).

This concern over the status of the French language in Quebec led to the adoption of the Charte de la Langue Francaise, a charter designed to protect or preserve French as the language of the majority in the province. The charter made French the sole and official language of the province; it mandated French schooling for the children of all immigrants, and made French the language of the workplace. These policies radically reshaped Montreal's landscape by requiring that all advertising, storefronts, and signs of all sorts be written in French. These language policies made a working knowledge of spoken and written French an absolute necessity for those who want to live in the province. There is a French language requirement for the certification of professionals in Quebec, meaning that anybody who wishes to practice a profession in the province must pass a test designed to measure written comprehension and expression. (D'Anglejan 1994)

Montreal in broad strokes

With a population of over to three million in its greater metropolitan area, Montreal is Canada's second biggest city. The inner circle of the city, the Montreal Metropolitan community is made up of the Island of Montreal, Laval, and the Urban Agglomeration of Longueil. Though neither Laval nor Longueil are on the island of Montreal they are considered to be part of Montreal because of their proximity to the Island. Montreal is the biggest city in the Province of Quebec and that makes it an

important economic and cultural hub for the province. Montreal also has the highest concentration of non-francophone populations, only about 63.3% of Montrealers claim French to be their mother tongue (Statistics Canada). Given these demographics, it is hardly surprising that the Montreal area would have many community based literacy organizations including a number of Laubach reading councils. The presence of Anglophone and Allophone (individuals who's first language is neither French or English) communities especially given their concentration in certain boroughs informs language politics on the island and the province more generally.

The Lighthouse's office is located on Montreal's South Shore. Because their main office was in an apartment complex, I almost didn't find it on my first visit. The only sign that I was at the right place was the image of a Lighthouse in the window overlooking the street. While the Lighthouse didn't provide French literacy services, Norma, the Lighthouse's director, had contacts in the Francophone literacy sector and will refer a learner who came to the Lighthouse to an organization that provides literacy services in French should they want to. Though French was not Norma's first language she was convinced that a working knowledge of French was necessary for life in Quebec and she advocated for increased collaboration between French and English community-based literacy providers. She worked to provide French language education to the learners in her social integration program and during her time as Lighthouse director had picked up a working knowledge of the language.

Given the Lighthouse's mandate to provide basic literacy services to Longueil's Anglophone community, Norma would refer potential learners who came for English second language instruction to ESL programs run by the local English language school

board. Her organization only worked with individuals who could be considered to be level 1 or 2 literates. The role of the Lighthouse was to provide learners with the basic skill sets needed for life in Canada and if they wanted more it would be up to them to find more advanced classes. Because the social integration program that she set up was organized in collaboration with the local school board, Norma had to elaborate a program that was structured differently from the other ones run by the Lighthouse. The program that she created was student centred in that it challenged the learners to set their own learning objectives and provided them with the resources to accomplish them. Literacy was a big part of Norma's project in that she encouraged all the learners who participated in the program to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. She encouraged learners to develop the literacy and life skills that would grant them the greatest degree of autonomy in their everyday lives in much the same way she encouraged volunteer tutors to help the learners they were partnered with.

Conclusion

To sum up Lighthouse as an organization is more than the sum of the different contexts in which it was created and exists. It is a Laubach literacy council, a community based literacy organization, and an organization located in the South Shore. All of these things inform the Lighthouse but none of them can or should be considered to be more significant than any other. The Lighthouse is a Laubach organization, which means that it is a volunteer based organization that works with the Laubach workbooks but at the same time the use of these workbooks was not mandatory. One of the tutors I observed in the

field didn't use the books during her sessions and the Lighthouse library had a large collection of workbooks and other teaching materials from a variety of programs including the Laubach program. As a Laubach organization the Lighthouse was and is part of a network that has branches in all of the Canadian provinces. As a local organization, the Lighthouse worked with other organizations in the community to promote literacy. Locating the Lighthouse means situating the organization in its historical, social, and geographical context as I have.

Chapter 5: Ethnography

Having established the theoretical and methodological framework within which I conducted my research I will present and discuss my data. I will present my findings as little vignettes or stories, which will illustrate some of the more abstract and theoretical dimensions of literacy and community that I discussed in previous chapters. I will begin this chapter by introducing my research participants and the social relations that constituted my field site. Then I will talk about respect and its importance in the field. This will allow me to discuss rapport and sociality in the field. After that I will connect the practices I observed in the field with what my informants said about themselves during their sessions to hint at the social work of literacy. Finally I will summarize my findings and conclude with a meditation on the social nature of learning.

The research participants

The first person I met when I entered the field was Simone. A retired educator, Simone was the person who assessed all of the Lighthouse's incoming learners both to measure their level of literacy and to facilitate their placement with prospective tutors. Simone was also one of the Lighthouse's tutor trainers, in fact she not only trained prospective tutors, she also trained tutor trainers. Simone was a friendly and very approachable woman, she had to be in order to get prospective learners she'd never met to let her assess their reading and writing skills. Simone was significantly older than my other research participants and she was not ashamed or embarrassed about her age.

Though Simone did not stand on ceremony, the reverence and affection with which the other members of the Lighthouse referred to her spoke of her importance within the organization. Simone founded the Lighthouse and was the organization's first acting director. In addition to assessing incoming students, Simone was a tutor to three learners and a member of the board of directors.

Adam was a tall, heavyset man whose solid torso was a testament to a lifetime of manual labour. Adam carried himself with a solid grace that inspired confidence, his handshake was firm, and he greeted me in a friendly tone. He informed me that Simone had talked to him about my project that that he was fine with me sitting in on his tutoring sessions. Given that this was their first tutoring session in a while they began by talking about their respective summers. This led to a discussion about what their families did over the summer, which in turn led to a discussion about their respective children. Adam and Simone took care to include me in the conversation by taking care to make sure that I could follow the conversation. I listened to them, taking note of the topic of conversation in my notebook, and collected informed consent from them during a lull in the conversation.

Kim was a Korean immigrant who had immigrated to Canada as a skilled worker more than ten years ago after being recruited by a Canadian company. He had studied English in high school but spoke with a very thick Korean accent that made it hard for me to understand what he was saying. His tutor, Lily, was a South African ex-pat who worked as a chartered accountant for several non-profit organizations as well as a church. Though both Kim and Lily were older than me I assumed that they were around Adam's age and was ultimately surprised discover that I was the same age as Lily's son. I told

them about my research and asked if they would be willing to participate. They agreed to participate in my research after asking a few questions about my thesis and I collected consent from them. With consent obtained, the session started, I took out my notepad and pen and began jotting down observations.

John was an older gentleman who had immigrated to Canada from the Caribbean in the 1960's at the age of 20. Cindy, his tutor was an English teacher who was about the same age. Both Cindy and John were soft-spoken individuals who asked a lot of questions but didn't speak much. Like the other participants, they listened politely to a short introductory spiel and asked questions about my research and me before consenting to participate in the research. Unlike with the others, the small talk did not continue after my recorder was turned off. After a brief discussion of their progress, Cindy and John opened their workbooks and began the session At the end of the session Cindy assigned John homework and informed me that they this was to be their regular meeting time for the foreseeable future.

Of the three learners in my study, Kim was the strongest reader and writer. He was a high school graduate from Korea familiar with both the Korean and the Western alphabet. He qualified for literacy services because his lack of fluency in English and French rendered him functionally illiterate in a Canadian context. Kim needed language lessons more than he did reading and writing, so his tutor, Lily, used the Lighthouse's workbooks to help him work on pronunciation and diction and set aside a sizable portion of their lessons for conversation. Adam, who dropped out of high school to work, was functionally illiterate. He could read and write well enough to get by in everyday life but he was intimidated by long words or texts longer than a paragraph. He also had trouble

with the more formal grammatical requirements of English and the vagaries of English orthography. Adam hoped to eventually go back to school and possibly get a university degree. John was the only participant in this study with no formal schooling. Because John came to literacy much later in life than the others, it was harder for him to master the skills and techniques Cindy taught him. His goal was to become more independent in his everyday life. Adam, John, and Kim all had very different needs and goals as learners but in their own ways they helped me to better understand the social dynamics of the Lighthouse.

Respecting learners

During my second or third week in the field I was observing one of John's sessions when a glance at one of the exercises in the book they were working on made me laugh. It was a run of the mill fill in the missing word exercise, but glancing over the exercise I mismatched the words in a way that seemed like the height of comedy. When I failed to contain my mirth, Cindy and John looked up at me, unsure of what was going on. They did not find the mistake nearly as funny as I did; I apologized for the outburst and the lesson continued as scheduled. At the end of the session, John gave me a stern look and said " Don't laugh at somebody just because they don't read well, it's disrespectful. Not everybody has the opportunity to go to school so being unable to read doesn't mean that a person is stupid." Because this was the end of the session, I nodded in agreement with him as I was packing up my things and headed home.

His words haunted me through the bus ride home and throughout the week that followed. When we met up again, one week later, I explained to John that I did not find illiteracy funny. I explained to him that I had been raised to look down on ignorance in all its forms because people choose to remain ignorant but to tolerate illiteracy because not everybody in the world had the opportunity to go to school and that was not their fault and I quoted Maya Angelou on the subject[5] (1993). John nodded and talked about his childhood in the Caribbean. As the child of a farmer, John had always worked hard and there were always chores for him to do around the house. There was never enough time to go to school let alone money for books, uniforms, and other trappings of formal education. This meant that he did not get much formal education, he was taught the alphabet and he knew how to count but not much beyond that.

Respect is one of the central dynamics of a community of practice, because without mutual respect the kinds of interaction central to a community of practice do not occur. Communities of practice create, manage, and transmit knowledge through interaction; this means communication is central to the everyday working of the community. Given that communication is only really possible when all parties involved enter into the encounter in the spirit of mutual respect it should come as no surprise that it was central to the tutor learner relationship. When he told me that it was wrong to laugh at illiterate people, John was telling me that he had found my behaviour unacceptable. The fact that I went out of my way to assure him that I did not think less of people who couldn't read or write went a long way to assuring him that I meant no offense. After I

[5] One " …must always be intolerant of ignorance but understanding of illiteracy. […] some people, unable to go to school, were more educated and even more intelligent than college professors"(Angelou 1993; 99).

assured him that I would never laugh at somebody just because they could not read, he told me about some of his strengths.

Even as a child John had always had a good head for figures, he learned to count easily[6]. In fact, John told me that sometimes he would work the till at a shop owned by one of his father's friends because he could calculate the totals faster than the machine. John also had a good working memory and a solid work ethic. When he came to Canada, he got a job making dye at a factory. He could not read but he had a good memory so he memorized the dye recipes and ended up knowing them better than most of the other employees. After the first few months, he was employee of the month pretty consistently at the factory because of his memory and his work ethic. I nodded and Cindy reminded us gently that there was a lesson to cover. John was a motivated and diligent learner who never lost sight of his goals. He might be shy but has not going to tolerate disrespect, not when he was working hard to make up for lost time.

John was not the only participant who was concerned about how I might view people with limited literacy skills. Simone made sure that I knew that Adam was very 'hands on' and as I got to know him I realized that he followed the news and knew a lot about the larger world around him. And Lily informed me that Kim was literate even though his poor English limited his ability to read and write in the language. Kim seemed the least concerned about his performance in the sessions, perhaps because he attended his tutoring sessions to learn English rather than reading and writing.

[6] Numeracy is a form of literacy and in talking about his aptitude for mathematics, John was gently reminding me not to make assumptions about his level of literacy based solely on what I observed in the sessions.

Though I did not think too much of it while I was in the field, I realized later that it was important for the learners I had worked with to know that I respected them as individuals. One of the first things that Simone told me about Adam was that he'd built a pizza oven in his back yard from scratch with no instructions or manuals. Adam laughed a little and insisted modestly that he'd watched a 'how to' video online before building the oven but Simone pointed out that she couldn't have done what he did. Adam grinned and shrugged it off but I knew that our praise had pleased him. Part of the learning process is making mistakes and little would come from a session where the learner was unwilling to try. Learners needed to know that their tutors respected them as people, without that foundation of trust there could be no learning.

Sociality

Rapport was an important component of the learner tutor relationship, Alba, Simone, and Norma worked to match learners and tutors together not simply based on availability but also on compatibility. It was important for the learner and the tutor to have a rapport that would enable them to build a relationship based on trust and respect that would make teaching possible. It is important for the learner and the tutor to be comfortable with each other, during my time in the field I was matched with a learner whom I realized was not comfortable working with me. I spoke with Alba about the issue and she and Norma worked together to match that learner with a new tutor, one with whom the learner ended up getting along with better. When I think back on it, it is clear to me now that Adam and Simone had established a rapport from the very beginning.

Adam greeted Simone warmly and it was clear that these were two people who respected each other and who enjoyed spending time together. Both Adam and Simone were friendly forthright people and it was easy to feel at ease with them. They both tended to speak their minds and since this was their third year together as learner and tutor they knew each other well.

The tone of their lessons was playful and they often teased each other. Sometime when Adam got a particularly challenging word by himself Simone would say "good guess", Adam would grin when she said that knowing it meant he had done well. Simone was a stickler for good grammar. During that first lesson, Adam pointed to a word and said, "They don't use that word no more." Simone turned to him and asked "What?" Adam elbowed me gently and told me in a conspirational tone "When a woman says what like that, it's cause you made a mistake and she's giving you a chance to fix it." I chuckled and he replied "They do not use that word anymore." Simone nodded and they moved on to the next exercise. Simone did not always correct his grammar so directly, a few weeks later she brought out some old Christmas cards for Adam to correct. After correcting one card, he commented, "She (the card's author) didn't do so good." "She didn't do well either" Simone replied looking through her stack of cards to find another one for them to correct.

Though the lessons were structured, the sessions were informal and the lessons sometimes gave rise to playful banter between learner and tutor. Adam and Simone often played a little as they did worksheets together. Sometimes when reading a sentence Adam would unintentionally rewrite the sentence and when he did Simone would correct him or ask him to reread the word saying "Read what you see not what you think you see."

Sometimes Adam would reply, "I like it better my way." Simone would chuckle when he said that. If Adam had trouble with a word, Simone would note that word down and bring it back later to test him on it often through a dictation. After a dictation where Adam made no mistakes Simone said "And I was hoping you'd make a couple of mistakes I could put in today's lesson, I'll have to try harder to challenge you." Adam chuckled and she continued. "He's a sharp one, forces me to work to keep one step ahead of him every lesson."

Simone always checked to see if there were words in the exercises that they did together that he didn't understand. During my time in the field I think they encountered one or two unfamiliar words and Adam was usually able to get their meanings from the contexts in which they were found. Simone did not just ask him if there were words he did not get, she would test him on the meanings of words challenging him to put them in sentences, sentences that demonstrated his knowledge of the word's meaning. If the word had a homonym, sometimes she would ask him to place the homonym in a sentence too. If they encountered a compound word she sometimes asked him to identify it as a compound word and break it down into its component parts. Sometimes Adam would identify a compound word before Simone could ask him to and break it down into its root words. At such occasions Simone would chuckle and call Adam a show off.

The other learner tutor pairings I observed were less outwardly playful but that didn't stop them from having fun with the lessons in their own ways. At the end of one of their sessions Lily told Kim "You're doing well Kim, soon you'll be speaking English with a South African accent." He grinned and nodded before heading off. One day Kim skipped over a section of exercises and Lily said, "Hold up are we doing these or are you

’forgetting’ to do them?” Kim chuckled and insisted that he had not noticed the exercises, which they proceeded to work on together. Cindy and John joked less but they would often talk about the content of their lessons. After they read a story about cats in the United States they talked about the merits of cats as pets and John concluded that he was more of a dog person. They also sometimes commented on the interest of the subject of the lesson, they were less then impressed by a lesson about sneezing. When they read an article about cassettes, John said, “This story is a bit old, we don’t use cassettes any more.” Cindy chuckled and said, “Yeah, even CDs are going out of style.”

One day Simone asked Adam if he knew why she made him do worksheets in their tutoring sessions. He shrugged, saying, “I’m curious but I figure you have your reasons.” Simone nodded and said, “It’s because I want to see what you can do, I know that at home you have people who can help you with your homework and that’s fine but I need to know what you are capable of on your own.” Adam nodded “Makes sense to me.” Simone then pulled out a worksheet from the stack of ones she’d prepared for that day and they started on the first exercise of the sheet. All that we had of the exercise was a set of sentence fragments and Simone decided that it was a missing verb exercise since the sentences were all missing conjugated verbs. Adam worked on the exercise while Simone and I watched. He completed the exercise by himself with a few hints about word choice form Simone. At the end of the exercise, Simone looked over the exercise and said “Well done, I secretly wanted you to put all the verbs in the past tense, good job picking up on that.” Adam nodded, smiling, “I thought so.”

Incorporating the Anthropologist

It is impossible to sit in on tutoring sessions and not participate in some way. As the third wheel of a two-person team I could not simply fade into the background and observe the proceedings. This is not to say that I participated in each of the different sessions in the same way. With Adam and Simone I was incorporated into the sessions as a sort of assistant tutor and with Kim and Lily I participated mostly in the conversation portions of the sessions and observed the more formal lesson portions of the sessions. I participated less actively in Cindy and John's sessions, but both of them were open to my interventions, they graciously made time for my interview during their sessions and they were receptive to my comments and questions. At first I tried to participate less in the sessions because so that I could get a better sense of the learner and tutor dynamics before venturing to participate in lessons. As I got to know the tutors and learners better it seemed more natural for me to participate in the sessions or maybe I simply grew less shy about doing so.

One day, during one of Simone and Adam's sessions I drifted off and started daydreaming. When Simone caught me she scolded me gently and they both laughed, after that Simone started providing me with copies of the exercises that she did with Adam so that I would have an easier time following the lessons. This also made it more tempting to participate in the sessions. One day they while they were working on a homonym exercise I noticed that Adam was about to write 'some' instead of 'sum' so I asked him "What is the sum?" Adam got the hint and then looked at me and said, "You're watching me too, good." After that I started looking over the exercises and thinking about them instead of just trying to observe the process through which Adam

and Simone solved them. Because Simone had photocopied all of the exercises out of books that she had long since lost track of, there were no answer sheets for us to check answers against. This meant that we had to rely on our own resources to get the answers and that if Adam could not find the answer it did not mean that Simone or I would necessarily be able to find it. Sometimes it took all three of us working together to figure out the answers to an exercise.

One day we did a homonym exercise where the task was to use the clues given to us to identify sets of homonyms, most of them were relatively easy. Adam got most of them, Simone and I helped him with a few but there was one that neither of them could get. While they skipped it over I looked at it thoughtfully. Simone noticed this and said "Charles is thinking." I had to admit that I could not think of the answer and Adam grumbled playfully. "Sure, make me do all the work." In the end he found the pair of homonyms without any help and they moved on to the next exercise. Sometimes I helped and sometimes I just observed. One day Simone brought out an exercise and after they'd read the exercise together she went to the office kitchen to make herself a cup of tea. Adam was on the first number of the exercise when she said "No help from Charles." I had been on the point of giving a hint and I stopped. Simone came back to find Adam working on the activity by himself, after he'd given all the items a try she helped him with the ones that gave him trouble. Gradually I was accepted as the third participant in their sessions.

Small Talk

During my time in the field I learned a lot about my informants, sometimes the information would come from the content of the lessons but more often it would come from the friendly banter that framed lessons. Adam and Simone talked about their everyday lives. Every tutoring session I attended began informally, through small talk. These conversations afforded me a window into their lives, I learned about all the different organizations that Simone works with in some capacity as well as the different talks she attended.

This was partly social convention, but as I attended tutoring sessions, I realized that the conversations I observed were more than idle chatter. The informal nature of the sessions meant that the volunteer tutors and the learners would elaborate lesson objectives together. One day Adam asked Simone if she knew any tricks for remembering how to spell the names of the months correctly. Another time he asked her if they could work on long and short vowels. More than one of Simone and Adam's sessions began with Simone asking Adam if there was something in particular he wanted to work on. He didn't always make suggestions but Simone always incorporated them into her lessons when he did. Learners and tutors also evaluated their progress informally. When John worked his way through one of the Laubach books, he and Cindy took a moment to discuss their progress before moving on to the next book. Conversation was particularly important for Kim, who needed to practice oral expression more than he needed writing practice. Most importantly these conversations were the means through which learners and tutors got to know each other.

One of the interesting features of Kim and Lily's discussions was the comparative bent that those conversations would take. In addition to talking about their everyday lives

they talked about more serious topics like crime and criminality or food cultures. Kim and Lily talked politics, economics, sociology, theology, and current events. Lily and Kim did not always agree on every topic but their discussions were always amicable.

The topics that learners discussed during sessions were not often or even usually directly related to the work at hand, rather they covered a broad variety of topics. This is not remarkable or unique; small talk is an important part of social life in North America. I got to know my research participants in much the same way as most learners and tutors become acquainted, through friendly banter. These conversations provided me with a window into the lives of my informants. In addition to further humanizing my research participants, the social interactions also served to establish the tutoring sessions as a space where it was ok to make mistakes and to practice the skills that they were being taught with no fear of judgement. Moreover, by learning about the lives of their tutors, learners got a better idea of the ways in which literacy is or can be integrated into one's daily life.

Teaching methods

Teaching was also central to the sessions and I noticed that the three tutors that I observed in the field had their own particular teaching styles. All three sessions were held at the Lighthouse's main office, all three tutors had received similar tutor training, and all three tutors used Laubach materials in their sessions to some extent. Simone, the retired Language Arts teacher, had a lifetime supply of word puzzles, crosswords, and other spelling and grammar exercises to pull from above and beyond the Laubach workbooks

which were the mainstay of Cindy and Lily's sessions. Simone may not have used the Laubach books much with Adam but she used the method stating that she found it to be the most effective way she knew to teach literacy. When Simone did pull out Laubach materials, she usually used the adult storybooks published by Laubach Literacy Canada for reading practice. The one time she took out a Laubach workbook in a session, Adam worked his way with such ease that it was clear why she chose to use materials from her collection instead of the Laubach workbooks.

Of the three learners I observed in the field Kim was the one who needed the least direct instruction. Lily read the exercises out lout and Kim filled them out as she read them. Sometimes he needed her to repeat herself either because he had not understood what she said or because she had read a little too quickly. On a few occasions they encountered a word that he was not familiar with but given that the words in the workbook they were using were commonplace short words this happened very rarely. When they did encounter a word Kim did not know, Lily would define it and Kim would repeat the word a few times committing it to memory. The bulk of the instruction Kim got from Lily was about pronunciation. The workbook they were using was designed to help learners figure out the connection between the letters of the Latin alphabet and the sounds of the English language. This meant that they did not cover grammar much but that they focused on pronunciation.

John, who was technically a couple of books ahead of Kim, had more complex and varied exercises to work on. Unlike Kim and Lily who used the exercises to work on pronunciation, Cindy and John used the exercises as they were intended. Cindy would have John read the directions out loud and then they would go over each item of the

exercise and then they would complete it. Cindy had John read as much as possible, when he faltered she would pronounce the first syllable and he would repeat with her and try to complete the word on his own. Often that was all he needed to get simple or commonplace words, for less common words Cindy would read it out and then John would repeat after her.

John had a solid English vocabulary but there were occasionally words that were unfamiliar to him, mostly slang and colloquialisms like catcall or catty. When those words came up Cindy would explain them and then move on. They always reviewed their answers before starting a new exercise in order to verify their answers. Sometimes Cindy checked the answers in her instructor's workbook but most of the time she didn't need to. Cindy guided John through the exercises often asking him to verify his answers as he was completing exercises.

Simone insisted that Adam read the whole exercise before working on it in order to get a better sense of what he was being asked to do. If he encountered a word that gave him trouble she would get him sound it out syllable by syllable. After Adam read the exercise but before he started working on it, Simone would always check to make sure he understood every word he read. Any words he did not understand or was not familiar with were explained and then put on a list to be integrated into the sessions at a later date. Because of Adam's level of literacy, Simone emphasized self-reliance, vocabulary building. This is not to say that Simone just handed Adam exercises and set him to work on them, but rather that she encouraged him to rely on his own skills as much as possible. She provided clues or hints when he was stumped and would correct any mistakes he missed but she wanted to see what he could accomplish before she

provided more explicit instruction. Simone also wanted Adam to get more practice reading and writing longer texts.

Around the beginning of November, Simone started giving Adam creative writing assignments for homework. “Write without using a dictionary, this is about counting on your resources.” She said. “If you’re not sure how to spell a word, sound it out. If you’re not sure how to spell the word after sounding it out, then you can use a dictionary. We’ll look over the story together next session so don’t worry too much about making mistakes.” She only gave these assignments on the second tutoring session of the week, because she knew that Adam would have the weekend to work on them. She always made sure Adam understood what she wanted with him and gave him a couple of writing tips with each assignment. Most of the time she would give him an image and ask him to describe it in writing, she also asked him to write about his life. The first time she asked him to write about himself, she asked for a short story about the happiest or the scariest thing he’d ever experienced. After going over the assignment with Adam, she decided to ask for one page double spaced from him.

The next session, Adam brought a couple of hand written sheets of paper with him. When Simone asked about his weekend, he told her that he had chosen to write about the scariest thing that had ever happened to him. He handed her the sheets of paper he was crumpling and explained that he had ended up needing a page and a half to tell the story that he wanted to tell. Simone insisted that he read it out once, after they had done that they went over the text sentence by sentence looking for errors, almost every time they came across a misspelled word Adam knew that it was misspelled even before Simone pointed it out to him. Instead of telling him anything after they had identified the

word, Simone would ask Adam to spell it out and if he needed more guidance after that she would provide it. Adam was less quick to pick up on some of his grammatical errors. Adam caught most of the grammatical errors with no help from Simone. There were a couple that he Simone had to point the error out, she was more direct about these errors and suggested a couple of alternative rewordings. When Adam asked why she gave him options proposed several options she shrugged and said:” It’s your story, pick what works for you.”

The tutors and learners worked together to figure out what worked for them and what didn’t. The needs of the learners as well as the rapport that the tutors and learners established informed the teaching methods that each individual tutor used. Every tutor received tutor training from the Lighthouse and through the year the Lighthouse offered workshops to build on the basic tutor training that it provides each tutor. Tutors who had experience teaching also brought those skills to their sessions. Cindy and Simone were both educators before they became tutors and their experience enriched their sessions. Tutors were not required to have a background in education and when I asked Lily what she liked about the Lighthouse, she told me that she thought it was great that the Lighthouse recruited people from the neighbourhood instead of simply hiring educators.

Course content

The Laubach workbooks used by most of the volunteers do a reasonably good job of integrating the kinds of skills required for everyday literacy into the lessons. This is less apparent in the first books of the series which emphasize letter and number

recognition, sound symbol relationships, and vocabulary building but by the third book students are given exercises that mirror or mimic everyday literacy. In the third book, for instance, learners are asked to read a variety of documents including menus, bus schedules, a driver's licence application, newspaper ads, and even a letter. These exercises are designed to prepare learners for everyday literacy use by teaching them to decipher and reproduce particular kinds of writing.

The first exercise I observed Cindy and John work on was a mock driver's licence application form. It was clear to me, based on the ease with which John filled out the blank spaces in the exercise that he was no stranger to this kind of writing. Like many people with poor literacy skills, he had developed a vocabulary of sight words[7], was familiar with the document's conventions, and, though he stumbled over some of the larger words in the document, knew the information required of him. For learners who are unaccustomed to the trappings of Canadian bureaucracy, this kind of exercise is an introduction to document literacy; for John it was a chance to practice reading and writing in a format he was already familiar with. This application form was not the only document that John would parse, and with Cindy's support and guidance he read a variety of texts including menus, maps, train schedules, and even a couple of mock newspaper articles. In some cases the point of the exercise was simply to parse the text and in others it was to replicate or fill the document out.

[7] A sight word is a commonplace word that a beginning learner has memorized and can recognize on sight without having to read it, these are generally words that the learner encounters in his or her everyday life. Sight words allow the learner to put what he or she has learned into practice almost immediately, which keeps them motivated.

Simone also drew on examples of everyday literacy in order to teach Adam written English. As we neared Christmas, she would bring Christmas cards with her. Each card contained a few spelling and/or grammar mistakes and Adam was tasked with identifying and correcting them. Like John, Adam was familiar with North American written culture; he knew what a Christmas card was even though he had never written one. As a native English speaker Adam was able to identify many of the grammatical errors and some of the spelling mistakes intuitively. The exercise was about more than spelling and grammar as Simone used the cards to teach the conventions of letter writing. When Adam remarked that there were some strange capitalizations she explained that some of the capital letters were abbreviations. She also used the Christmas cards to emphasize the importance of full sentences in written English, stating: "if you're going to write, write correctly." Adam nodded his head in agreement; he knew that he would have to gain a much firmer grasp of English grammar to become truly literate.

A few weeks later Simone informed Adam that a prestigious public speaker was going to be coming to Montreal to give a talk and encouraged him to attend. They discovered that the event was not open to the public but Simone, who was on the board of directors of the organization that was sponsoring the talk, managed to pull a few strings and got Adam a ticket. The day after the talk, Simone suggested that he write a thank you note to the organization for letting him attend the talk. Simone proposed this activity tentatively; she suggested it because she knew that he had the literacy skills necessary to accomplish the task with minimal assistance but did not want to pressure him to begin writing whole texts before he was ready to. Adam considered her suggestion for a moment and replied "I'll do it if you help me with the spelling and grammar and such."

Together Simone and Adam brainstormed the contents of the letter and then Adam elaborated an outline that Simone wrote out. His homework for the week was to write the letter so that they could proofread it together. The next session, they proofread the letter together. Adam commented that his letter is 'not the best' but told himself that it was the thought that counts. After a few judicious edits, Simone deemed the letter presentable and pulled a blank card out of her purse so that he could recopy the edited version of the letter into it. She assured him that the letter was well written and promised to present it at the next board of directors meeting where it was warmly received. Adam's thank you note was about more than an act of recognition, it was an opportunity for him to put his burgeoning literacy skills to use. The thank you card was an initiation into the world of social writing, a world in which writing is a medium through which we engage in the exchange of pleasantries that is at the foundation of social life in Canadian society. In a sense, writing is as much about social contact as it is about communication and different genres of writing allow for different kinds of contact.

Literacy in everyday life

Though I did not participate in the lives of my participants outside of the tutoring sessions. It sometimes crept into the sessions through the stories that they told. Sometimes it intruded on sessions in the form of interruptions and missed sessions. Adam sometimes had to take calls during the session. When that happened he would excuse himself in order to take the conversation out into the hallway. Adam did not always take calls; very often he would simply inform the person on the other end of the line that he

was in a meeting and that he would call them back. During my time in the field Adam took a handful of calls and each time he excused himself before and after taking the call. Simone, who did not have a cell phone never had a problem with these interruptions and encouraged him to take the time he needed. In the wake of these phone calls I learned about the ways in which Adam fostered his children's literacy development. All of Adam's children were strong students, both he and his wife worked together to ensure that their children did well in school. It was clear form the way Adam spoke about his children's education that it was one of his priorities.

Adam read to his youngest son regularly and they would work on their homework together. One day he asked Simone what the difference between a homonym and a homophone because he had encountered the term when doing some of his homework with his son. Simone told him that both words meant the same thing but that homonym was the British term and homophone was the American one. One more than one occasion he talked about working on his homework with his son and that they read together on a regular basis. Reading to his son was good practice for Adam but it also boosted his son's literacy skills. Research in education has shown that reading with or to a parent with limited literacy skills has a much stronger impact on a child's literacy than working with a reading specialist. Given the way Adam supported his sons I was not surprised to hear that they were all doing well in school.

When I asked John what he had learned from his time at the Lighthouse he talked about the different ways learning to read and write changed his life. Literacy helped him find his way around the city; being able to read means he can drive anywhere and just follow street signs. During his time at the Lighthouse he learned how to use an ATM

machine, which he told me has helped him manage his finances more conveniently. And when I asked him about the importance of literacy, he compared illiteracy to blindness and told me that a person who couldn't read or write could be taken advantage of more easily. The literacy training and support he received from Cindy helped him to be more self sufficient in his everyday life and made him less vulnerable to those who tend to prey on people with poor literacy skills.

Kim carried a pocket translator with him. When there was a word he did not understand and neither Lily nor I could define it clearly enough he would ask us how to spell it and enter it into the dictionary. In those moments the translation often served as a starting point for a definition or explanation. Given that he could read and write in several languages I did not think too much about how he integrated literacy into his life. Part of his challenge was that he was learning English as a second language speaker. But in addition he didn't encounter written or spoken English outside of work and his sessions with Lily. Sometimes during sessions he would sigh and remark that he found English to be a difficult language to learn. When I asked him about literacy in his every day life he told me that he found it difficult to integrate English into his everyday life. At home and at church he read and spoke Korean so that sometimes he could go for weeks at a time without speaking English.

Being literate in both English and Korean didn't translate into a familiarity with the conventions and norms of Canadian documents. One day he brought a document with him to a tutoring session because he needed help filling it out. It was clear from the outset that it was the document's format rather than its content that he found confusing. Norma and I helped him to the best of our ability but in the end Kim decided that he would fill

the document out later. So Kim could read anything or almost anything put in front of him but that didn't mean he understood what he was reading.

Conclusion

If I came into the field with any preconceived ideas about illiteracy and illiterates, those did not survive first contact with my informants and this didn't bother me because I was expecting it. When you begin conducting research in the real world one of the first things that you discover is that life is messy, complicated, and unpredictable. Social models are useful inasmuch as they can shed light on events but the closer you get to lived experience the more imperfect such models will seem because they tend to be based on generalizations. In getting to know my informants as people I had to let go of everything I thought I knew about what it means to be illiterate in order to locate literacy in the stories that they told about themselves. Sometimes written language fit into the story, sometimes it was alluded to, and sometimes it was just subtext but literacy shaped the everyday lives of all my informants in myriad ways.

Real life is complicated, human beings are complex and their choices can be difficult to predict. In the real world there are no model cases, no clearly visible standards, no easily isolatable samples. Certainly if there is a typical lighthouse learner, I was not able to discern one based on my sample. We can generalize based on the data that we collect but no generalization will ever be perfect. There will always be exceptions for every rule. That being said, as I got to know my informants I came to see how writing was part of their everyday lives. As we talked about a variety of subjects, we came to

know each other. What stuck out to me was the sense of fellowship that informed the tutoring sessions.

When I attended tutor training I was told that the outcome of tutoring sessions was dependant on rapport between the tutor and the learner and my time in the field confirmed that. More generally, trust is an important part of learning because without trust few people are willing to make mistakes, much less learn from them. The challenge for Lighthouse learners and tutors was not simply to fit tutoring sessions into their everyday lives or set lesson goals but to develop a rapport that makes learning possible. Arranging lessons and setting learning goals could be challenges but both of these things were secondary to the rapport between leaner and teacher. After all who would want to learn from somebody who did not respect or like them? Respect is the building block of life in society, without respect there is no reciprocity and thus no society. More concretely the little social rituals that nourished and was sustained by the rapport tutors and learners developed also created a sense of community that permeated the Lighthouse: a community where individuals came to learn together.

Chapter 6: Reflexivities

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, I had to participate in the sessions and it would be disingenuous to claim otherwise. While I tried to keep my interventions to a minimum out of respect for the tutors and learners I ended up participating in the sessions because I was there. As Geertz (1972) discovered during his time in Bali, locals notice ethnographers even when they pretend not to. Moreover, it is through my experiences in the field that I came to understand the centrality of community at the Lighthouse. In this chapter I will talk about my participation in the field because I believe that the process through which I joined the Lighthouse further underlines my point about community and learning at the Lighthouse. I will begin this chapter by talking about my arrival in the field. I will then discuss the different some of the paradoxes of fieldwork. After this I will discuss how I learned about my informants and touch on the boundaries of relationships in the field. Then I will touch on the topic of auto-anthropology and critically re-examine my work. Finally, I will conclude this chapter with a meditation on the unique challenges of ethnographic work.

In the previous chapter I touched upon my experiences in the field when I talked about the importance of respecting the learners and my integration into the field. I did this because this is how I came to understand the importance of trust in the field. In addition to presenting data as I encountered it in the field I will discuss some of the particularities of ethnographic fieldwork. This thesis is both the story of what I found in the field as well as the story of how I learned what it means to be a cultural anthropologist. Fieldwork is still the defining mark of cultural anthropology (Rabinow 2007) even it is not “what it

used to be" (Marcus 2009). This chapter has a secondary goal: to demystify the fieldwork by talking about my time in the field. As an undergraduate and a graduate student I took methodology and writing courses designed to help me through the process of fieldwork, and while these courses were helpful I am not sure anything could have prepared me for the realities of being in the field. This chapter is my attempt to come to grips with this.

Finding the field

It took me longer than I would care to admit to start looking for a field site. I wanted to write a research proposal that I could show the gatekeepers to prospective field sites but my supervisor insisted that I start looking for a field site before completing the proposal. Her reasoning was that the best proposal in the world would be worthless to me if I could not find a field site. As an introverted person the prospect of contacting strangers to ask them for a favor terrified me but, with my supervisor's support, I overcame my reticence and began the process of looking for a field site. This was a difficult time for me not because the people that I spoke with were unreceptive or hostile to me but because the process of looking for a field site pushed me far outside my comfort zone. Until I found at least one prospective site I would have no idea whether or not the project I had in mind was feasible.

The literature that I had read on the topic warned me that people weren't generally particularly interested in working with scholars. I had read essays like 'Custer Died for Your Sins' (Deloria jr. 2007) and 'Here Come the Anthros' (King 2007) and was prepared to be received as a nuisance. Given that I was expecting to have to pitch my

research with the tenacity of a door-to-door salesman, I was consistently surprised by the interest my project generated. In spite of this, the first organizations I contacted were unable to accommodate my research either because of schedule conflicts or because they simply did not have the resources or space to do so. Sometimes this came out during our initial e-mail conversation, sometimes this came out over the phone, and sometimes this came out when I met the gatekeeper in person to discuss the specificities of my project.

Throughout this process my supervisor was there for me providing support, encouragement, and advice. When a wave of e-mails or phone calls failed to bear fruit, she would encourage me to keep going and provide constructive criticism so that I could refine my approach. Once I made contact with somebody it was much easier for me to deal with the organization simply because I was not dealing with a complete stranger. I spent three long months looking for a field site until I received a call from Norma.

Arrival

The day of our meeting I miscalculated how long it would take for me to get to her the Lighthouse's main offices and as a result I was about an hour late when I finally found the place. When I got to the Lighthouse offices I was informed that Norma spent her mornings at an adult education centre working to establish a social integration program for special needs adults in the community that the Lighthouse was spearheading. She had intended for us to meet at the adult literacy centre in order to show me the program that was currently taking up most of her time. Luckily the receptionist was able to point me in the right direction and I found the adult learning centre quite easily. I was

consequently very late to our appointment and I suspect that the only reason I did not simply go home was because I was not sure if I could get another meeting with Norma.

When I arrived Norma waved aside my apologies and told me straight up that she wanted me to conduct research with her organization. Nothing in the anthropological literature that I had read had prepared me for the possibility that people might not just accept to participate in my research but want to. Unprepared for the level of acceptance I was shown I followed Norma into the classroom where she presented the social integration program and then we had a discussion about education, literacy, and society. As we talked I came to realize that when it came to literacy and education we were on the same wavelength. I was comfortable with Norma, and because I had worked with special needs populations before, I was in my element in her program. The only problem was that her social integration program was not a literacy program and my project was about literacy.

I contacted Norma about a week after our first meeting to let her know I was interested in conducting fieldwork at the Lighthouse. I told her that I was still working out the details of my project but that I would like to get a sense of the field as soon as possible. She told me that the social integration program that she was working on was going to have a summer session and that I was welcome to participate as a volunteer. Before I could volunteer, however, I had to submit to a background check and provide two character references. “This is mostly a formality, however, it is important that you do this.” Norma explained to me over the phone as I printed out the form that allowed her to conduct a background check on me. Norma was the first gatekeeper (Rabinow 2007) I encountered in the field but she was not the last.

A few days after the paperwork cleared, I went back to the social integration program, getting my first taste of the commute to and from the field in the process. Norma greeted me warmly and ushered me into the centre's kitchen where the learners were eating breakfast. Over breakfast I met Alba, one of the two technicians working with the program. Alba was also the volunteer coordinator for the Lighthouse while Norma was getting the social integration project started. Like Norma, Alba was very welcoming. She was interested in my thesis and asked several questions about it all of which I answered to the best of my ability. I was pleased that Alba found my project interesting, not realizing that Alba was one of the gatekeepers who would help me establish the field site.

Over the summer I volunteered at the Lighthouse and spent two days a week as a volunteer, the rest of my time was spent preparing my proposal. I enjoyed volunteering at the social integration program and I could tell that Norma and Alba appreciated my help. I already had previous experience working with the developmentally disabled so it was not long before I was comfortable at the social integration program. At the end of the summer session, I spoke with Norma and agreed to call her when I knew what my project would entail. When I called her in September, we talked about the different possible places where I could conduct research and then arranged for me to start back at the social integration program. The fall semester had just started and it would be a couple of weeks before she could help me get my own research started.

Though I did not end up conducting my research at the social integration program, the hours I spent there as a volunteer enriched my experience in the field and allowed me to integrate myself more easily into the Lighthouse community. As a volunteer, the hours

I put into helping out the social integration program bought me a lot of good will from the Lighthouse administration. The program put me in regular social contact with both Norma and Alba, which helped me establish rapport with them, and the program helped me better understand the Lighthouse as an organization. It was a program designed to help developmentally disabled adults develop the skills that they needed in order to lead more productive lives. While it was not explicitly a literacy program some of the students did get basic literacy training at the social integration program. The social integration program was emblematic of everything the Lighthouse stood for: people helping their neighbours master skills that would benefit them.

On my first day back in the Fall, I filled out another set of background check forms, this time for the learning centre. Then I walked up to the new classroom with my volunteer badge and met the students attending the summer session. A couple of weeks after the start of the fall semester, Norma invited me to go to the Lighthouse office to discuss my project. She showed me around the office, told to me a little about Dr Laubach, and lent me a couple of books. The first was part of a collection of Dr Laubach's writing and the second was a history of the Laubach literacy councils in Canada. She told me that if I wanted to observe the tutoring sessions that the Lighthouse offered the best person to contact would be Simone. Simone was the Lighthouse's founder and a member of the Lighthouse's board of directors. Simone was one of the Lighthouse's tutor trainers and she was the one who assessed all incoming learners to measure their level of literacy. Norma gave me Simone's phone number, advising me that Simone might be tricky to get in touch with since she did not have an e-mail address or a cell phone.

I thanked Norma for her help and sat down to plan my next move when Simone arrived with a new learner. She assessed the learner and then agreed to meet with him until they could match him with a more full time tutor. After the gentleman left, I spoke with Simone about my project. She listened to me very carefully and asks several pointed questions. Satisfied by my answers she looked over my consent form and then told me she had a student who would have no problem participating in my project. His name was Adam and she'd been working with him for a couple of years. Just to be sure she told me that she would have to speak to him first, I gave her my phone number and she promised to call back when she had an answer from him.

A few days after meeting Simone, she called me to inform me that Adam was amenable to letting me sit in on his tutoring sessions. I stayed after the session to ask Simone if she knew of other students who might be willing to participate in my study. Simone considered my request for a moment and then suggested that Alba, the Lighthouse's volunteer coordinator, would be better placed to help me find other participants than she was.

The next day at Step Up, I asked Alba for assistance and she agreed to help me find more participants. The Monday of the week after my meeting with Adam, Alba told me that she had asked around and managed to find two more students willing to participate in my research. Like Adam, these new students met with their tutors at the Lighthouse office, unlike him, they kept regular meeting times with their tutors changing them only if a change in their work schedules made their regular meeting times untenable and communicated those changes with the help of the Lighthouse's administrative assistant. I returned home exhausted but happy that day; I had finally found my field site.

On the paradoxes of fieldwork

One of the first things that I did in the field was collect consent. I would first read out the consent form to them and then I would walk them through the process of oral consent. This was pretty much the most awkward part of each session, largely because they didn't fully understand why I was so careful about consent. When I talked about collecting consent from Adam, he protested that Simone had already informed him about my project and he felt that my presence at the session should constitute a sign of consent. In the end Simone asked him to humour me and I managed to collect informed consent. The other learner/tutor pairs were less vocal and simply let me collect informed consent, possibly a little amused by the formality of the process. I suspect that my fixation on recording informed consent seemed to them to be a formality on my part, to their minds a recording was not necessary, as they had given their consent to participate when I went over the form with them informally.

I planned on using pseudonyms for my informants and I figured that it would be better if I let my informants pick their own pseudonyms because I thought that would help to make the process of collecting consent more engaging. I also figured that by asking them to pick their pseudonyms I would be sure not to pick a name that inadvertently insulted them. With the exception of Norma who readily picked her own pseudonym even though she didn't really feel the pressing need to adopt one none of my informants were willing to pick their own pseudonyms. When I asked them to pick their

pseudonyms all of my informants told me that I could just use their names and when I insisted told me that I should feel free to pick the pseudonyms myself.

Though I disagree with Scheper-Hughes' (2007) assertion that an anthropologist does not have to honour community secrets, I do share some of her scepticism about the time-honoured tradition of using pseudonyms. Like Scheper-Hughes I am concerned that my use of pseudonyms will "…fool few and protect no one…" (Scheper Hughes 2007; 208). Though I'm not sure that the use of pseudonyms necessarily leads the anthropologist to forget that he or she owes his informants the same degree of courtesy on the page that we owe them in person (Scheper-Hughes 2007), I think that this is something to remain mindful of. I suspect that the reason my informants were uninterested in pseudonyms was because they knew I would make my work available to them. Moreover, I would be writing about the work they put into learning a socially valuable skill, something they were proud of. In refusing to pick pseudonyms, my informants were showing that they trusted me to be respectful.

This isn't to say that my informants trusted me completely from the outset. During my first weeks in the field John took me to task for not demonstrating the proper respect. Given that he was a soft-spoken man, I imagine that he had to have been particularly put off by my behaviour to say something. It helped that John was friends with some of the students at the social integration program and that he knew Simone well. Gradually and imperceptibly John became more confident during the sessions I sat in on. At first John had been so hesitant to answer questions that I wondered if he was working on the right book. Near the end of the session after John and Cindy had moved onto the next book in

the series and there was no doubt in my mind that he was on the right book. Ironically I left the field just as John had gotten accustomed to my presence in it.

Though my informants generally got accustomed to my presence they never forgot I was there. I suspect that my presence affected what they said and the choice of conversation topics to some degree though I rarely saw any signs of it. Sometimes, however, Simone would declare that something she said was "off the record" and insist that I stop taking notes. She did this to preserve her privacy. When she made a request I would note that she made it and stop taking notes. I was transparent about the content of my notes and invited her to look them over but she never did. I was more than glad to respect her wishes because none of the things we talked about during those moments were germane to my thesis and also because I did not want to violate the trust she and Adam were showing me by letting me sit in on her tutoring sessions. In retrospect, the fact that there were off the record moments was a lot more interesting than anything that she actually said largely because they were a demonstration of trust.

Learning about the other

The day I met Kim, he asked me why First Nations people do not eat vegetables. As a preface, he explained to me that he had gone to a reservation near Bay James as part of a church group to do charitable work there. During the week that they spent in the reservation, the church group organized communal meals and they would serve a meat dish, a vegetable dish, and rice with every meal. Kim noticed that while the members of the church group would serve themselves meat, vegetables, and rice; the locals avoided

the vegetables. Do they not know that vegetables are part of a balanced diet? He asked, perplexed. Caught off guard by the question, I admitted that this was not a topic I was particularly familiar with but tried to answer it anyways. The question led to a discussion about different food cultures in which both Lily and Kim talked about some of the challenges they had adapting to Canadian food culture.

The question caught me off guard for two reasons; firstly because it was not really related to my project, the topic we had been discussing before he asked this question; and secondly because even though it was not related to my project, it was the kind of question that a cultural anthropologist might be called on to answer. Typically I would get two reactions when I said I was an anthropologist, either a blank look or somebody who said, "That is so cool, anthropology was my favourite subject at university. Can you make a living doing that?" If I was caught off guard by the question, my readiness to answer this surprising question established me as a worthy interlocutor in his eyes. I participated in the discussion as best as I could while silently re-adjusting my expectations.

When I asked them what they learned during their time at the Lighthouse, both Lily and Cindy told me that they learned a lot about the cultures and societies that their learners came from. Lily told me she had learned a lot about Korean culture from Kim and Cindy told me about an East Indian learner who had taught her a lot about East Indian culture. Like Cindy, Lily, and even Simone, I learned a lot from my informants not necessarily because they came from different cultures but also because their lives were very different from mine. I learned about the perils of roofing from Adam who had worked as a construction worker in the same way that I learned about life in the West Indies from John and Korean culture from Kim.

Every tutoring session I attended began informally, through small talk. As I have stated in previous chapters small talk played an important role in the sessions. Through small talk, learners and tutors got to know each other better. Small talk facilitated the formation of rapport and it facilitated the tutoring process. Conversation was particularly important for Kim, who needed to practice oral expression more than he needed writing practice. Most importantly these conversations were the means through which learners and tutors got to know each other.

The topics that learners discussed during sessions were not usually directly related to the work at hand, rather they covered a broad variety of topics. This isn't remarkable or unique; small talk is an important part of social life in North America. I got to know my research participants in much the same way as most learners and tutors become acquainted, through friendly banter. These conversations provided me with a window into the lives of my informants, and through the stories that they told about themselves they challenged me to locate literacy in the real world. Their narratives challenged me to look beyond stereotypes and social models to find the human dimension of literacy and to consider the social dimensions of both literacy and learning.

On openness in the field

Anthropologists depend on their informants. While in the field and I was no exception to that rule even though I did not travel to a far off community in the middle of nowhere. Without research participants I would have had no project and we all knew it. I was a lot less necessary to my research participants, I imagine that they let me sit in on

their sessions because I was a Lighthouse volunteer and because it cost them nothing to do so. For Kim having a third interlocutor was great because it helped him get a better sense of different accents and speech patterns. During my first week in the field, he asked me to slow down because he felt that I spoke too quickly and he had a hard time understanding what I was saying. The next week as I forced myself to speak more slowly and clearly it occurred to me that miscommunication was often mutual as I had a lot of trouble with his accent as well.

Over time as we got to know each other I became less acutely aware of the fact that I needed their goodwill and was able to engage more openly with them. It is not that I was ever disingenuous but rather that the better I got to know them the more I could be myself around them. At the same time, I was sometimes hesitant to talk about my personal life in the field. When one of the learners I was working with asked me if I was married or seeing somebody I told him I was too busy to even think of dating and changed the subject. I did not intentionally conceal my personal life from my informants but in that moment I became aware of the fact that it was possible that this knowledge could change the way my informant saw me and I changed the subject.

American anthropologist Nancy Scheper Hughes (2007) argues that the value of anthropology comes from the encounter between the anthropologist and the local. When conducted in the spirit of mutual respect these encounters are the source of anthropological knowledge. At the same time, however, we depend on our informants for our data and this colours the relationships that we form in the field. My time in the field was shaped in no small part by how my informants perceived me. I would have had a much more difficult time in the field if they had seen me as unlikeable or untrustworthy.

This is about more than simply minding one's manners, although that is part of it as well. During our time in the field we depend on our informants and this dependence "encourages projection and the development of transferences… which can have a positive effect on self understanding.[8]" (Turkle 1995; 207)

Auto-anthropology

It is a mistake to assume that just because an anthropologist is a member of the society in which he[9] conducts his research that he will understand the local cultural genres he encounters in the field (Strathern 1987). Conducting research at home is fraught with complexities because of the relative nature of familiarity and distance. As an anthropologist who conducted fieldwork 'at home' it is the continuity between my writing and the accounts of my informants that determine if I was 'at home' in the field. (Strathern 1987). My time in the field made me more aware of the challenges that illiterate people face in everyday life. Through my informants I got a better understanding of the ways in which individuals sometimes work around their literacy issues. I learned first hand that about the importance of respect and sociality to the learning process but this was something I already had a sense of from my time as a student.

As the author of this thesis, my writing recounts and embodies the relations that I established in the field. In arguing that we learn through social interaction I have to

---

[8] Turkle is writing about relationships that form in online settings but some of the things she says about online spaces hold true about field situations as well. Time in the field is generally limited and the anthropologist generally enters the field feeling isolated. Anthropologist can and do make lasting friendships in the field but the act of moving outside of one's comfort zones facilitate certain kinds of attachment.

[9] I refer to the anthropologist as a he because I am indirectly referencing myself.

recognize that everything I learned about the Lighthouse comes from my interactions with the different people I met in the field. I chose to focus on the tutoring sessions but all of the things that I did, the places that I went, and the people that I met informed my writing in one way or another. As I spent time in the field I became aware of the cultural work of literacy and of the ways in which written and spoken language are interconnected in the West.

Auto-critique

While this study made me more aware of the ways in which literacy flows off of the written page and into everyday life, it would be remiss of me not to talk about its limitations. The most glaring limitation of this study is that for all of my talk about thick description, the ethnographic description in my thesis is on the thin side. I was not able to get at and present enough different layers of meaning to create a piece of truly thick description. While I was able to hint at the ways in which literacy manifests itself in everyday life, I did not move into the everyday lives of my learners to observe it firsthand and this shows. Though I am uncomfortable with the way that this flattens and distorts the experiences of my learners getting a better sense of how limited English language literacy impacts their lives would have strengthened this thesis immeasurably. Another way that I could have made up for the fact that I only observed tutoring sessions was by conducting interviews outside of the tutoring sessions. More robust interviews would have also given me a better perspective on how the tutors and learners I worked with saw the organization and the degree to which they participated in its everyday life.

At the time I was grateful to be allowed into the tutoring sessions and I felt that trying to further embed myself into their everyday lives would have represented an imposition. My research participants were adults with work schedules, families, and social lives, that they made time for the tutoring sessions spoke to their dedication to literacy and I was not sure I could expect them to make time for me. Additionally I was pretty busy, between my volunteer hours and my fieldwork as well as transit times I was at the Lighthouse full time and I was not sure that I would have had the time or energy to spare for interviews. In retrospect, I realize that more robust interviews could have added a lot to this thesis.

At the same time, however, I wanted to study socialization in tutoring sessions and this was not something that I would have been able to get at through interviews or really outside of tutoring sessions. This is not to say that fuller interviews would have been useless but rather that I wanted the focus of my research to be the tutoring sessions. While more fleshed out interviews could have rounded out my observations nicely they would have required an investment of time and energy that I was not sure would pay out. Furthermore, if I had managed to conduct those interviews I would have a very different project right now. The amount of time it would have taken for me to process, transcribe, and code those interviews would guarantee that they were became the focus of the thesis. In hindsight my reluctance to get to know my informants outside of the tutoring sessions may seem like a mistake but in the heat of the moment I felt that it was the right approach.

As the fruit of my first foray into fieldwork in the real world, I think that this study is solid if somewhat hesitant. It suffers from the hesitancy that I felt when I

ventured outside of my comfort zone and into the field. As a first time ethnographer I learned a lot of things the hard way. For example, near the end of my time in the field I realized I should have been coding as I collected the data. However, I set out to show how we are socialized to use written language just as we are socialized to use spoken language and even though I was not able to establish exactly how that happens this thesis suggests that the process of becoming literate is a socializing process.

If I were to continue this research there are a number of things that I would do differently. For one thing, I would take the time to conduct more in depth interviews with my research participants. I would also want to follow the tutor/learner pairings I for at least a year and I would probably want to work with more than just three sets of learners and tutors in order to widen the scope and depth of my data. The four months I was allotted for my fieldwork just flew by. I felt like I had only just got my bearings when it was time for me to leave. Hindsight is 20/20, it is easy to look back and recognize one's mistakes and much harder to recognize mistakes in the heat of the action. For better or worse this thesis is the product of my time in the field and I feel that it has merit in spite of or perhaps because of its flaws.

Conclusion

Ethnography is anthropology's trial by fire, in fact until one does fieldwork one cannot be considered to be a true anthropologist (Rabinow 2007). Ethnographic research is an involved and complex process that fits difficultly into the two-year time frame of a Master's degree. In some ways it seems like the height of madness to complete a thesis

based on original fieldwork in four to six month period in which a Master's thesis is traditionally supposed to be completed. The problem with conducting research with human subjects outside of a controlled environment (like a lab or clinic) is that anything can happen. Four to six months is not a lot of time and many Master's students from a variety of disciplines have trouble completing a thesis in that kind of time frame. This is particularly true for students who have to go out into the real world to conduct research. It is possible to complete a thesis based on original ethnographic fieldwork in two years but it represents an incredible challenge because it requires one to squeeze into four months something that would normally be spread out over the space of a year if not more.

I struggled a lot with this thesis, not because I was required to do field work but because of the time frame within which I was supposed to complete my research. I enjoyed my time in the field. In many ways the fieldwork was the easiest part of the thesis. The challenge for me was picking a subject, finding a field, and then writing the thesis afterwards. It was a struggle for me to find a research topic, I tried a few times and in the end I was forced to choose between a topic that was feasible and a topic that I was passionate about. I chose the topic that I felt was feasible and I have mixed feelings about my decision to do so. On the one hand, I chose a viable and interesting thesis topic and managed to create a thesis that I am proud of but on the other I regret not being able to pursue my interests.

I struggled to find a field site until I found the Lighthouse. Norma originally wanted me to conduct my research in the social integration program that she was spearheading. When I met her I realized that the social integration program would be an ideal field site for me. When I spoke with my supervisor she warned me to be careful

about working with a vulnerable population because it would be more difficult for me to get clearance form the ethics committee. In the end chose to walk away from the ideal field site because I was not sure I would be able clearance to conduct my research form the ethics committee of the school board that the Lighthouse partnered with to found the program. In the end, I found a field site it was not the one that I had envisioned when I told Norma that I wanted to conduct research at the Lighthouse but I was satisfied with it.

I learned a lot about what completing a masters entails, largely by making mistakes and dealing with the consequences of those mistakes. It is easy to look back at the decisions that I made and recognize that I made a mistake, it is much more difficult to recognize the right course of action in the moment. Over the course of the thesis I made a lot of questionable choices, but every time I stumbled my supervisor was there with words of support, advice, or encouragement. My supervisor and I did not always see eye to eye but the trust that we established allowed us to work through those differences of opinion when they arose. Much like the tutoring sessions I observed in the field, this success of my research rested on the rapport I established with my supervisor.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Return to the thesis question

So let us return to my thesis question, is the feeling of community an integral part of teaching literacy to adults? My research suggests that community or at least rapport between tutors and learners as well as a sense of commitment to the Lighthouse as an organization played an important role in teaching literacy to adults. It further suggests that literacy flows off the page and informs a variety of everyday practices, even practices that do not explicitly involve reading or writing (A.S.Johnson 2010).

At the beginning of this thesis I drew from UNESCO's 'plurality of literacies' approach as well as the works of a handful of scholars (J. Collins 1995, Besnier 2000, Street 2004) to define literacy as a constellation of practices. I then drew from the works of various scholars (Dyer& Choski 1997, Li 2001, Adami 2008, Reimer 2008) to explore the implications of this kind of definition. Then I presented Schieffelin and Ochs' (1986) theory of language socialization and argued for a socialization approach to literacy. I argued that Language (both written and spoken) should be understood as a powerful resource for social theory.

Then I took up Amit's (2010) argument about the value of community as a concept and took up her argument that it was its ambiguities that made the community such a useful concept. I then examined the different ways that people used the term community at the Lighthouse. Putting it all together I argued that the Lighthouse was a community of practice (Wenger 2002), one created around teaching literacy. I

demonstrated how the Lighthouse has all of the characteristics of a community of practice and pointed to the correspondences between Amit's understanding of community and Lave and Wenger's communities of practice.

Then I drew form Dr Frank Laubach's biography and writings (Norton 1990) to present the theoretical foundations of Laubach literacy, principles which continue to inform the practices of Laubach literacy councils all around the world including the Lighthouse. Then I presented the history of Laubach literacy in Canada and Quebec (M.Collins 1996) as well as the history of the Lighthouse. That done I provided an overview of Montreal in order to situate the Lighthouse in its geo-political context. In doing so I situated the Lighthouse in its socio-historical context, the context in which I conducted my field research.

With the stage set I then introduced my research participants and talked about what I observed in the field. A major part of the success of the tutor/learner partnerships came from the rapport between the tutor and the learner. As a result, Norma and Alba were careful to match tutors and learners whom they thought could work well together and were always careful to check up on the pairings to see how things were working.

Moreover, as a volunteer organization the Lighthouse relied upon a feeling of community to keep volunteers motivated and to encourage learners to come for help. I cannot speak for all community based literacy organizations or all volunteer based literacy organizations but at the Lighthouse this feeling of community was central to the process of teaching adults how to read and write. During my time in the field I attended a Christmas party as well as several other events organized by the lighthouse for volunteers, learners, and their families. Norma, Alba, and Carla worked not only to

administer the organization but also to make all of its members whether learner or volunteer feel welcome.

As a community, the Lighthouse reached out to those people in order to help them find their voice. The process of becoming literate is a transformative process at any age, for adults who have a much firmer and more anchored sense of self than children this change in status has to be husbanded along more carefully. As a community of practice the Lighthouse focused on that transformative process, gathering and organizing a body or bodies of knowledge and skill used to accomplish that goal. In preparing learners to break the silence imposed upon them by illiteracy they had to prepare learners for life in a community as a literate person and they accomplished this in part through social functions and individually tailored tutoring sessions. They also did this by working through volunteers in order to allow learners and volunteers to network. The Lighthouse was not the only community in play, as a volunteer organization the Lighthouse helped to foster a sense of community on the South Shore simply by promoting not just literacy but by encouraging people to step up and help their neighbours.

Then I took a step back and examined my role in the story and meditated on what I learned both from my informants and about the practice of anthropology from my time in the field. I considered the limits of the kind of knowledge that I gathered during the field and the implications of the kind of qualitative research I conducted. I discussed the issues I faced in the field and the choices that I made and in doing so placed myself in the stories I told about the field. Though anecdotal, the evidence that I have gathered from the field suggests that community is an important part of teaching literacy at the lighthouse.

Implications of research

So what does this mean? I suppose one of the more obvious conclusions to draw from this is that formal education is not enough in and of itself to address the problem of illiteracy. For one thing the classroom is not the optimal learning environment for all individuals and for another the most successful literacy learners are the ones who learn to integrate literacy into every aspect of their lives. This means mastering more than just school type literacy practices. While it is true that truly accessible quality universal education would rise the literacy rates such an advance would do little for the billions of adults who are currently illiterate. Reaching out to them means requires a more informal and pragmatic approach. This means working with the skills and knowledge that the learner brings into the classroom to help develop their literacy skills. It also means listening to the learner and focusing on the kinds of literacy that interest them. It also means understanding that literacy is more than simply a skill to master

Literacy is more than the ability to read and write, it is the ability to draw on writing for a variety of purposes in everyday life. Literacy extends off the page and the screen to connect people in a variety of ways. Literacy is not a single set of practices or a body of literature, one cannot reduce literacy to writing anymore than one can reduce orality to oral tradition (Adami 2008). As a practice literacy is embedded in everyday life in a variety of ways and it is in those moments that it truly matters. Writing is embedded in particular contexts and it is heavily informed by local social and cultural practices.

Literacy can be an instrument of cultural imperialism but it doesn't have to be, it can be an instrument by which people can make their voices heard all around the world.

Literacy is one of the cornerstones of North American liberal democracy because it is the primary means by which individuals can claim and exercise their fundamental rights, participate in the governing process, and relate to one another (Cody 2009). This makes individuals with lower levels of literacy more vulnerable and teaching these adults to read and write necessarily means preparing them to take more active roles in society. Literacy is central to citizenship in that it is the means through which citizens are able to fulfil both their responsibilities to the state and claim their rights as citizens.

Could we say that the literacy services really made the learners I observed citizens? Being able to read and write gave all three of the learners that I observed a greater sense of place and purpose. Literacy training did help them to become more independent and it did give them a stronger sense of belonging to the communities in which they lived. So answer to the question is both yes and no. My learners were already Canadian citizens, so in that respect learning to read and write didn't change anything but at the same time their new identities as literate people did allow them to participate more fully in the community (Rogers 2007). The process of becoming literate is profoundly social and thought this process adult learners are socialized into a new literate identity (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986). Where this identity takes them after is not necessarily evident maybe because the world cannot be organized into discrete and readily identifiable communities or at least not easily.

The Lighthouse embodied the Laubach motto "each one learns together" (Norton 1990) through the services that it provided and the sense of community it fostered. The

Lighthouse gave its learners the resources to stand up for themselves and the confidence needed to seek help when required. In a sense the process of becoming literate was the process of stepping out into society and this is what the Lighthouse offered to its learners. Drawing on the data collected in the field, I illustrated the many ways in which we are taught how to use literacy and how we learn social values, norms, and models through the use of written language. I then connected literacy with social integration in order to point to the role of literacy in the development and maintenance of the relations that constitute citizenship in Canadian society. If literacy is not a necessary precondition to citizenship it is the medium through which individuals assert their rights as citizens and the means through which they become invested in Canadian society.

Literacy matters, the particular ways in which we express ourselves through text say something about who we are as individuals and as a society. Literacy is an important vehicle of culture, through written language we learn about ourselves, we share knowledge, we communicate, and we enter into relations with each other. Written language is a powerful medium of social practice and the events in our lives become meaningful as we communicate to each other about them through text. Literacy acquisition (the process of learning to read and write) is closely connected to the process of becoming a competent member of a society; (partly) through the process of learning how to read and write we learn how to live in society.

In conclusion

Let us return to Shaw's Pygmalion. In the end Higgins manages to pass Eliza off as a High Society lady, both he and Pickering are elated by their success and prepared to move on to a new venture. This offends Eliza, who is not sure what is to become of her. When it is clear that Higgins has not thought about what will happen to Eliza once he and Pickering are through with her, she storms off. The play ends on an ambiguous note: Higgins finds Eliza at his mother's house, realizes that he admires and cares for her and asks her to return to his side but the play ends before we know if she accepts his offer (Shaw 1916).

Eliza's frustration brings up an important point, that a skill is only really valuable if it is useful. The mannerisms and manners of a duchess isolated Eliza from the world she knew and the transformation from street vendor to duchess would only really matter to her if it could bring something to her life. There's a sobering warning about frivolous or inappropriate education here but also a reminder of the social nature of learning. Without a community Eliza would have nowhere to go, she finds one at the end of the play but we the audience are left to wonder what it is. Once they learn to read and write Lighthouse learners are free to leave the Lighthouse but whether they do or not they bring with them skills that they will be able to use wherever they go and that makes all the difference.

Bibliography

Abu-Lughod, Lila. “Writing Against Culture.” In *Recapturing Anthropology*, by R.G.Fox, 137-162. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1991.
Adami, Herve. “The Role of Literacy in the Acculturation Process of Migrants.” *Seminar on The Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2008. 19-28.
Amit, Vered. “Community as 'Good to think with'.” *Anthropologica* 52, no. 2 (2010): 357-363.
Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London and New York: Verso, 1983.
Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings.* Bantam edition reissue. New York: Bantam Books, 1993.
Auerbach, Elsa Roberts. “Towords a Social-Contextual Approach to Family Literacy.” *Harvard Educational Review* 2 (May 1989): 165-181.
Barrett, Stanley. “Community: The Career of a Concept.” *Anthropologica* 52, no. 1 (2010): 113-125.
Barton, David. “Directions for Literacy Research: Analyzing Language and Social Practice.” *Language and Education* 15, no. 2&3 (2001): 92-104.
Besnier, Niko. “Literacy.” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9, no. 1-2 (2000): 141-143.
Cicourel, A. *Cognitive Sociology.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.
Cody, Francis. “Inscribing Subjects to Citizenship: Petitions, Literacy Activism, and the Performativity of Signature in Rural Tamil India.” *Cultural Anthropology* 24, no. 3 (2009): 347-380.
Collins, James. “Literacy and Literacies.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24, no. 3 (1995): 75-93.
Collins, Mary C. *The First Twenty-Five Year: Laubach Literacy in Canada 1970-1995.* New Brunswick: Laubach Literacy International, 1996.
Cook-Gumperz, Jenny. “Dilemmas of Identity: Oral and Written Literacies in the Making of a Basic Literacy Student.” *Anthropology& Education Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (1993): 336-356.
d'Anglejan, Alison. “Language and Literacy in Quebec: Exploring the Issues.” In *Literacy accross Languages and Cultures*, by Bernardo M. Ferman, Rose-Marie Weber and Arnulfo G. Ramirez, 273-291. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.
Deloria jr., Vine. “Custer Died for Your Sins.” In *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, by Antonius C.G.M. Robben and Jeffery A. Sluka, 183-190. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.
Dyer, Caroline, and Archana Choski. “Literacy for Migrants: An Ethnography of Literacy Acquisition among Nomads of the Kutch.” *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education* 27, no. 2 (1997): 217-230.
Fog Olwig, Karen. “Commentary on "Community as 'Good to Think With'".” *Anthropologica* 52, no. 2 (2010): 357-363.
Geertz, Clifford. “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight.” In *The Interpretation of Culture*, by Clifford Geertz, 412-453. New York: Basic Books, 2000 (1972).

Geertz, Clifford. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, by Clifford Geertz, 3-30. New York: Basic Books, 2000 (1973).
Gilbert, Margaret. "Sociality as a Philosophically Significant Category." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 25, no. 3 (1994): 5-25.
Gordillo, Gaston. "The Crucible of Citizenship: ID-Paper Fetishism in the Argintinean Chaco." *Anerican Ethnologist* 33, no. 2 (2006): 162-176.
Hooks, Bell. *Belonging: A Culture of Place.* New York: Routledge, 2009.
Hymes, D. "Models of Interaction of Language and Social Settong." *Journal of Social Issues* 23, no. 2 (1967): 8-28.
Johnson, Amy Suzanne. "The Jones Family's Culture of Literacy." *The Reading Teacher* 64, no. 1 (September 2010): 33-44.
Johnson, Laura Ruth. "Challenging 'Best Practices' in Family Literacy and Parental Education Programs: The Development and Enactment of Mothering Knowledge among Puerto Rican and Latina Mothers." *Anthropology& Education Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (2009): 257-276.
King, Cecil. "Here Come the Anthros." In *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, by Antonius C.G.M. Robben and Jeffrey A. Slauka, 191-193. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.
Laubach, Frank C. *Fourty Years with the Silent Billion.* New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1970.
Li, Guofang. "Literacy as Situated Practice." *Canadian Journal of Education* 26, no. 1 (2001): 57-75.
Lindstrom, L. «Debatable Truth Statements on Tanna (Vanuatu).» Dans *Rethinking Context*, de A. Duranit et C. Goodwin, 102-124. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
Marcus, George E. "Introduction: Notes toward ab Ethnographic Memoir of Supervising Graduate Research through Anthropology's Decade of Transformation." In *Fieldwork is Not What It Used to Be*, by James D. Faubion and George E. Marcus, 1-34. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.
McKeown, Eamon. "Modernity, Prestige, and Self-Promotion: Literacy in a Papua New Guinean Community." *Anthropology& Education Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2006): 366-380.
Ministere de L'Education. *Literacy Training in Quebec.* Provincial Report, Quebec: Gouvernement du Quebec, 2002.
Mitchell, Winifred L. "Pragmatic Literacy and Empowerment: An Ayamara Example." *Anthropology& Education Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1994): 226-235.
Mortimer, Jeylan T., and Roberta G. Simmons. "Adult Socialization." *Annual Review of Sociology* 4 (1978): 421-454.
Norton, Karen R. "Introduction." In *Teacher*, by Frank C. Laubach, 1-25. Syracuse: Laubach Literacy International, 1990.
Ochs, Elinor. "Constructung Social Identity: A Language Socialization Perspective." *Research on Langiage and Social Interaction* 26, no. 3 (1993): 287-306.
Pirius, Landon Kenneth. *Massively Multiplayer Online Game Virtual Environments: A Potential Locale for Intercultural Training.* PhD Dissertation, Department of Educational Policy and Administration, University of Minnesota, University of Minnesota, 2007.

Poole, Deborah. “Language Socialization in the Second Language Classroom.” *Language Learning* 42, no. 2 (December 1992): 593-616.
Purcell-Gates, Victoria, Sphie C. Degener, Erik Jacobson, and Marta Soler. “Impact of Authentic Adult Literacy Instruction on Adult Literacy Practices.” *Reading Research* 37, no. 1 (2002): 70-92.
Rabinow, Paul. *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007.
Rafkey, David M. “Phenomenology and Socialization: Some Comments on the Assumptions Underlying Socialization Theory.” *Sociological Analysis* 32, no. 1 (1971): 7-20.
Reimer, Frances J. “Becoming Literate, Being Human: Adult Literacy and Moral Reconstruction in Botswana.” *Anthropology& Education Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (2008): 444-464.
Rogers, Alan. «Women, Literacy and Citizenship: A critique.» *Review of Education* 53 (2007): 159-181.
Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. “Ire in Ireland.” In *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, by Antonius C.G.M. Robben and Jeffrey A. Sluka, 202-215. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.
Schieffelin, B.B., and E. Ochs. “Language Socialization.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15 (1986): 163-191.
Schieffelin, Bambi B, and R.C. Doucet. “The Real Haitian Creole: Ideology, Metalinguistics, and Orthographic Choices.” In *Language Ideologies*, by B.B. Schieffelin, K.A. Woolard and P.V. Kroskrity, 285-315. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
Schieffelin, Bambi B. *The Give and Take of Everyday Life: Language Socialization of Kaluli Children.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
Shaw, George Bernard. *Pygmalion.* New York: Brentano, 1916.
Silverstein, Michael. “Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology.” In *The Elements: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels*, by Paul Clyne, William Hanks and Carol Hofbauer, 193-247. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society, 1979.
Statistics Canada. *About the Survey.* 2008 йил 31-January. www.statcan.gc.ca/pub.89-588-x/4145226-eng.htm (accessed 2012 йил 2-September).
Statistics Canada. *Building on our competancies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey.* Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2005.
Statistics Canada. *Learning Literacy in Canada: Evidence from the International Survey of Reading Skills.* Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2005.
Steinkuehler, C.A. *Cognition and Learning in Massively Multiplayer Online Games: A Critical Approach.* PhD Thesis, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Wisconsin, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2005.
Strathern, Marilyn. “The Limits of Auto-Anthropology.” In *Anthropology at Home*, by A. Jackson, 16-37. London: Tavistock, 1987.
Street, Brian. “The Implications of the 'New Literacy Studies' for Literacy Education.” *English in Education* 31, no. 3 (1997): 45-59.
Street, Brian. *Understanding and Defining Literacy.* Background Paper, UNESCO, Paris: UNESCO, 2004.

Turkle, Sherry. *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.
UNESCO-UIS. *The Next Generation of Literacy Statistics: Implimenting the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP).* Technical Paper, Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2009.
Wenger, E. *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002.
Wright, Dana E., and Jabari Mahiri. "Literacy Learning Within Community Action Projects for Social Change." *Journal of Adolescent& Adult Literacy* 56, no. 2 (October 2012): 123-131.