sociolinguistics, Brown and Yule recognise the need for their sociolinguist colleagues to develop a linguistic theory that conceives of language as essentially a social process, and which takes full account of more sophisticated theories of discourse relations than simple interactionalism, network analysis or "commonsense." The methods employed by anthropologists do not on their own guarantee theoretical sophistication: it is possible, for instance, for "ethnographic" accounts of literacy to be conducted within the "autonomous" model, with all the problems and flaws that entails. However, when ethnographic method is allied to contemporary anthropological theory, emphasising ideological and power processes and dynamic rather than static models, then it can be more sensitive to social context than either linguistics in general or discourse analysis in particular have tended to be.

26 *Protean Shapes in Literacy Events: Ever-Shifting Oral and Literate Traditions*

SHIRLEY BRICE HEATH

The Proteus-nature . . . of ever-shifting language

–JOHN UPTON, *CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS ON SHAKESPEARE*, 1747

Since the mid-1970s, anthropologists, linguists, historians, and psychologists have turned with new tools of analysis to the study of oral and literate societies. They have used discourse analysis, econometrics, theories of schemata and frames, and proposals of developmental performance to consider the possible links between oral and written language, and between literacy and its individual and societal consequences. Much of this research is predicated on a dichotomous view of oral and literate traditions, usually attributed to researchers active in the 1960s. Repeatedly, Goody and Watt (1963), Ong (1967), Goody (1968), and Havelock (1963) are cited as having suggested a dichotomous view of oral and literate societies and as having asserted certain cognitive, social, and linguistic effects of literacy on both the society and the individual. Survey research tracing the invention and diffusion of writing systems across numerous societies (Kroeber, 1948) and positing the effects of the spread of literacy on social and individual memory (Goody and Watt, 1963; Havelock, 1963, 1976) is cited as supporting a contrastive view of oral and literate social groups. Research which examined oral performance in particular groups is said to support the notion that as members of a society increasingly participate in literacy, they lose habits associated with the oral tradition (Lord, 1965).

The language of the oral tradition is held to suggest meaning without explicitly stating information (Lord, 1965). Certain discourse forms, such as the parable or proverb (Dodd, 1961), are formulaic uses of language which convey meanings without direct explication. Thus, truth lies in experience and is verified by the experience of listeners. Story plots are said to be interwoven with routine formulas and fixed sayings to make up much of the content of the story (Rosenberg, 1970). In contrast, language associated with the literate

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tradition is portrayed as making meaning explicit in the text and as not relying on the experiences of readers for verification of truth value. The epitome of this type of language is said to be the formal expository essay (Olson, 1977). The setting for learning this language and associated literate habits is the school. Formal schooling at all levels is said to prescribe certain features of sentence structure, lexical choice, text cohesion, and topic organization for formal language—both spoken and written (Bourdieu, 1967). An array of abilities, ranging from metalinguistic awareness (Baron, 1979) to predictable critical skills (reported in Heath, 1980) are held to derive from cultural experiences with writing.

In short, existing scholarship makes it easy to interpret a picture which depicts societies existing along a continuum of development from an oral tradition to a literate one, with some societies having a restricted literacy, and others having reached a full development of literacy (Goody, 1968:11). One also finds in this research specific characterizations of oral and written language associated with these traditions.

But a close reading of these scholars, especially Goody (1968) and Goody and Watt (1963), leaves some room for questioning such a picture of consistent and universal processes of products—individual or societal—of literacy. Goody pointed out that in any traditional society, factors such as secrecy, religious ideology, limited social mobility, lack of access to writing materials and alphabetic scripts could lead to restricted literacy. Furthermore, Goody warned that the advent of a writing system did not amount to technological determinism or to sufficient cause of certain changes in either the individual or the society. Goody went on to propose exploring the concrete context of written communication (1968:4) to determine how the potentialities of literacy developed in traditional societies. He brought together a collection of essays based on the ethnography of literacy in traditional societies to illustrate the wide variety of ways in which TRADITIONAL, i.e., preindustrial but not necessarily preliterate, societies played out their uses of oral and literate traditions.

Few researchers in the 1970s have, however, heeded Goody's warning about the possible wide-ranging effects of societal and cultural factors on literacy and its uses. In particular, little attention has been given in MODERN complex industrial societies to the social and cultural correlates of literacy or to the work experiences adults have which may affect the maintenance and retention of literacy skills acquired in formal schooling. The public media today give much attention to the decline of literacy skills as measured in school settings and to the failure of students to acquire certain levels of literacy. However, the media pay little attention to occasions for literacy retention—to the actual uses of literacy in work settings; daily interactions in religious, economic, and legal institutions; and family habits of socializing the young into uses of literacy. In the clamor over the need to increase the teaching of basic skills, there is much emphasis on the positive effects extensive and critical reading can have on improving oral language. Yet there are scarcely any data comparing the forms and functions of oral language with those of written language produced and used by members of social groups within a complex society. One of the most appropriate sources of data for informing discussions of these issues is that which Goody proposed for traditional societies: the concrete context of written communication. Where, when, how, for whom, and with what results are individuals in different social groups of today's highly industrialized society using reading and writing skills? How have the potentialities of the literacy skills learned in school developed in the lives of today's adults? Does modern society contain certain conditions which restrict literacy just as some traditional societies do? If so, what are these factors, and are groups with restricted literacy denied benefits widely attributed to full literacy, such as upward socioeconomic mobility, the development of logic reasoning, and access to the information necessary to make well-informed political judgments?

The Literacy Event

The LITERACY EVENT is a conceptual tool useful in examining within particular communities of modern society the actual forms and functions of oral and literate traditions and co-existing relationships between spoken and written language. A literacy event is any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants' interactions and their interpretive processes (Heath, 1978).

In studying the literacy environment, researchers describe: print materials available in the environment, the individuals and activities which surround print, and ways in which people include print in their ongoing activities. A literacy event can then be viewed as any action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a role (Anderson, Teale, and Estrada, 1980:59). There are rules for the occurrence of literacy events, just as there are for speech events (Hymes, 1972). Characteristics of the structures and uses of literacy events vary from situation to situation. In addition to having an appropriate structure, a literacy event has certain interactional rules and demands particular interpretive competencies on the part of participants. Some aspects of reading and/or writing are required by at least one party, and certain types of speech events are appropriate within certain literacy events. Speech events may describe, repeat, reinforce, expand, frame, or contradict written materials, and participants must learn whether the oral or written mode takes precedence in literacy events. For example, in filling out an application form, should applicants listen to oral instructions or complete the form? On many occasions, an interview consists of participating orally with someone who fills out a form based on the oral performance, and access to the written report is never available to the applicant in the course of the interview. Oral comments often contradict the usual assumption that written materials are to be read: You don't have to read this, but you should have it.

The having of something in writing is often a ritualistic practice, and more often than not, those who hold the written piece are not expected to

read what they have. In other cases, the actual reading of the piece of written material may be possible, but not sufficient, because some oral attestation is necessary. A church congregational meeting may be an occasion in which all must read the regulations of applying for a loan or a grant for church support (this is usually done by having the minister read them aloud). But the entire congregation must orally attest that they have read and approved the regulations. On other occasions, the written material must be present, but the speech event takes precedence. A Girl Scout comes to sell cookies at the door; she passes out a folder asserting who she is, to which troop she belongs, and to which project her fund will go. After handing over this piece of paper, the Girl Scout talks about the cookies and the project which the sale will benefit. Few individuals read the folder instead of listening to the Girl Scout. Here, the speech event takes precedence at the critical moments of the interaction. It is important to know what the framing situations for literacy events are in a variety of contexts, for situations may differ markedly from each other and may, in fact, contradict such traditional expectations of literacy as those taught in school or in job training programs. For example, ways of asking clarification of the USES of written materials are often far more important in daily out-of-school life than are questions about the content. What will be done with forms submitted to the Department of Motor Vehicles after an accident is of as much consequence as, if not more consequence than, the actual content of the forms. Thus it may be hypothesized that examination of the contexts and uses of literacy in communities today may show that THERE ARE MORE LITERACY EVENTS WHICH CALL FOR APPROPRIATE KNOWLEDGE OF FORMS AND USES OF SPEECH EVENTS THAN THERE ARE ACTUAL OCCASIONS FOR EXTENDED READING OR WRITING.

Furthermore, the traditional distinctions between the habits of those characterized as having either oral or literate traditions may not actually exist in many communities of the United States, which are neither nonliterate nor fully literate. Their members can read and write at least at basic levels, but they have little occasion to use these skills as taught in school. Instead, much of their daily life is filled with literacy events in which they must know how to use and how to respond in the oral mode to written materials. In short, descriptions of the concrete context of written communication which give attention to social and cultural features of the community as well as to the oral language surrounding written communications may discredit any reliance on characterizing particular communities as having reached either restricted or full development of literacy or as having language forms and functions associated more with the literate tradition than with the oral, or vice versa.

The Community Context

Some testing of these ideas is possible from data collected in a Piedmont community of the Carolinas between 1969 and 1979. The community, Trackton, is a working-class all-Black community, whose adults work in the local textile mills and earn incomes which exceed those of many public-school teachers in the state. All adults in this community can read and write, and all talk enthusiastically about the need for their children to do well in school. Ethnographic work in the primary networks within the community, the religious institutions, and work settings documented the forms and functions written and spoken language took for individual members of Trackton. The literacy event was the focus of descriptions of written language uses in these contexts.

At Home in Trackton

In the daily life of the neighborhood, there were numerous occasions when print from beyond the primary network intruded; there were fewer occasions when adults or children themselves produced written materials. Adults did not read to children, and there were few pieces of writing produced especially for children. Sunday School books, and single-page handouts from Sunday School which portrayed a biblical scene with a brief caption, were the only exceptions. Adults, however, responded to children of all ages, if they inquired about messages provided in writing: they would read a house number, a stop sign, a name brand of a product, or a slogan on a T-shirt, if asked to do so by a child. In September, children preparing to go to school often preferred book bags, pencil boxes, and purses which bore labels or slogans. Adults did not consciously model, demonstrate, or tutor reading and writing behaviors for the young. Children, however, went to school with certain expectancies of print and a keen sense that reading is something one does to learn something one needs to know. In other words, before going to school, preschoolers were able to read many types of information available in their environment. They knew how to distinguish brand names from product descriptions on boxes or bags; they knew how to find the price on a label which contained numerous other pieces of written information. They knew how to recognize the names of cars, motorcycles, and bicycles not only on the products themselves, but also on brochures about these products. In these ways they read to learn information judged necessary in their daily lives, and they had grown accustomed to participating in literacy events in ways appropriate to their community's norms (see Heath, 1980, for a fuller description). They had frequently observed their community's social activities surrounding a piece of writing: negotiation over how to put a toy together, what a gas bill notice meant, how to fill out a voter registration form, and where to go to apply for entrance to daycare programs.

There were no bedtime stories, children's books, special times for reading, or routine sets of questions from adults to children in connection with reading.[1] Thus, Trackton children's early spontaneous stories were not molded on written materials. They were derived from oral models given by adults, and they developed in accordance with praise and varying degrees of enthusiasm for particular story styles from the audience. In these stories, children rendered a context, or set the stage for the story, and called on listeners to create jointly an imagined background for stories. In the later

preschool years, the children, in a monologue-like fashion, told stories about things in their lives, events they saw and heard, and situations in which they had been involved. They produced these stories, many of which can be described as story-poems, during play with other children or in the presence of adults. Their stories contained emotional evaluation of others and their actions; dialogue was prevalent; style shifting in verbal and nonverbal means accompanied all stories.

All of these features of storytelling by children call attention to the story and distinguish it as a speech event which is an occasion for audience and storyteller to interact pleasantly to a creative tale, not simply a recounting of daily events. Storytelling is very competitive, especially as children get older, and new tricks must be devised if one is to remain a successful storyteller. Content ranges widely, and there is truth only in the universals of human experience which are found in every story. Fact as related to what really happened is often hard to find, though it may be the seed of the story. Trackton stories often have no obvious beginning in the form of a routine; similarly, there is no marked ending; they simply go on as long as the audience will tolerate the story (see Heath, 1980, and chapter 5 of Heath, 1984, for a fuller description).

In response to these stories, Trackton adults do not separate out bits and pieces of the story and question the children about them. Similarly, they do not pick out pieces of the daily environment and ask children to name these or describe their features. Children live in an ongoing multiple-channeled stream of stimuli, from which they select, practice, and determine the rules of speaking and interacting with written materials. Children have to learn at a very early age to perceive situations, determine how units of these situations are related to each other, recognize these relations in other situations, and reason through what it will take to show their correlation of one situation with another. The specifics of labels, features, and rules of behaving are not laid out for them by adults. The familiar routines described in the research literature on mainstream school-oriented parents are not heard in Trackton. They do not ask or tell their children: *What is that? What color is it? Is that the way to listen? Turn the book this way. Let's listen and find out.* Instead, parents talk about items and events of their environment. They detail the responses of personalities to events; they praise, deride, and question the reasons for events and compare new items and events to those with which they are familiar. They do not simplify their talk about the world for the benefit of their young. Preschoolers do not learn to name or list the features of items in either the daily environment or as depicted through illustration in printed materials. Questions addressed to them with the greatest frequency are of the type *What's that like? Where'd that come from? What are you gonna do with that?* They develop connections between situations or items not by specification of labels and features in these situations, but by configuration links.

Recognition of similar general shapes or patterns of links seen in one situation and connected to another pervade their stories and their conversations, as illustrated in the following story. Lem, playing off the edge of the porch, when he was about two and a half years of age, heard a bell in the distance. He stopped, looked at his older siblings nearby, and said:

Way
Far
Now
It a church bell
Ringin'
Dey singin'
Ringin'
You hear it?
I hear it
Far
Now.

Lem here recalls being taken to church the previous Sunday and hearing a bell. His story is in response to the current stimulus of a distant bell. He recapitulates the sequence of events: at church, the bell rang while the people sang the opening hymn. He gives the story's topic in the line *It a church bell,* but he does not orient the listeners to the setting or the time of the story. He seems to try to recreate the situation both verbally and nonverbally so it will be recognized and responded to by listeners. Lem poetically balances the opening and closing in an INCLUSIO, beginning *Way, Far, Now,* and ending *Far, Now.* The effect is one of closure, though he doesn't announce the ending of his story. He invites others to respond to his story: *You hear it? I hear it.* All of these methods call attention to the story, and distinguish it as a story. The children recall scenes and events through nonverbal and verbal manipulation. They use few formulaic invitations to recall, such as *You know, You see,* etc. Instead, they themselves try to give the setting and the mood as they weave the tale to keep the audience's attention. The recall of a setting may depend on asking the listener to remember a smell, a sound, a place, a feeling, and to associate these in the same way the storyteller does. A similar type of recall of relevant context or set of circumstances marks children's memories or reassociations with print. When they see a brand name, number, etc., they often recall where and with whom they first saw it, or call attention to parts now missing which were there previously. Slight shifts in print styles, decorations of mascots used to advertise cereals, or alterations of television advertising mottos are noticed by children.

Trackton children's preschool experiences with print, stories, and talk about the environment differ greatly from those usually depicted in the literature for children of mainstream school-oriented parents. Similarly, adults in Trackton used written materials in different ways and for different purposes than those represented in the traditional literature on adult reading habits and motivations (cf. Staiger, 1979; Hall and Carlton, 1977). Among Trackton adults, reading was a social activity which did not focus on a single

individual. Solitary reading without oral explanation was viewed as unacceptable, strange, and indicative of a particular kind of failure, which kept individuals from being social. Narratives, jokes, sidetracking talk, and negotiation of the meaning of written texts kept social relations alive. When several members of the community jointly focused on and interpreted written materials, authority did not rest in the materials themselves, but in the meanings which would be negotiated by the participants.

New instructions on obtaining medical reports for children about to enter school provoked stories of what other individuals did when they were confronted with a similar task; all joined in talk of particular nurses or doctors who were helpful in the process. Some told of reactions to vaccinations and troubles they had had getting to and from the doctor's office. In the following conversation, several neighbors negotiate the meaning of a letter about a daycare program. Several neighbors were sitting on porches, working on cars nearby, or sweeping their front yards when a young mother of four children came out on her porch with a letter she had received that day.

LILLIE MAE: You hear this, it says Lem [her two-year-old son] might can get into Ridgeway [a local neighborhood center daycare program], but I hafta have the papers ready and apply by next Friday.

FIRST FEMALE NEIGHBOR (*mother of three children who are already in school*): You ever been to Kent to get his birth certificate?

SECOND FEMALE NEIGHBOR (*with preschool children*): But what hours that program gonna be? You may not can get him there.

LILLIE MAE: They want the birth certificate? I got his vaccination papers.

THIRD FEMALE NEIGHBOR: Sometimes they take that, 'cause they can 'bout tell the age from those early shots.

FIRST FEMALE NEIGHBOR: But you better get it, 'cause you gotta have it when he go to school anyway.

LILLIE MAE: But it says here they don't know what hours yet. How am I gonna get over to Kent? How much does it cost? Lemme see if the program costs anything [she reads aloud part of the letter].

Conversation on various parts of the letter continued for nearly an hour, while neighbors and Lillie Mae pooled their knowledge of the pros and cons of such programs. They discussed ways of getting rides to Kent, the county seat thirty miles away, to which all mothers had to go to get their children's birth certificates to prove their age at school entrance. The discussion covered the possibility of visiting Lillie Mae's doctor and getting papers from him to verify Lem's age, teachers now at the neighborhood center, and health benefits which came from the daycare programs' outreach work. A question, *What does this mean?*, asked of a piece of writing was addressed to any and all who would listen; specific attention to the text itself was at times minimal in the answers which followed.

Adults read and wrote for numerous purposes, almost all of them social. These were:

1. Instrumental—to provide information about practical problems of daily life (bills, checks, price tags, street signs, house numbers)
2. Interactional—to give information pertinent to social relations with individuals not in the primary group (cartoons, bumper stickers, letters, newspaper features, greeting cards)
3. News-related—to provide information about secondary contacts or distant events (newspaper items, political flyers, directives from city offices)
4. Confirmation—to provide support for attitudes or ideas already held (reference to the Bible, brochures advertising products, etc.)
5. Provision of permanent records—to record information required by external agencies (birth certificates, loan notes, tax forms). Trackton residents wrote most frequently for the following reasons:
6. Memory-supportive—to serve as a memory aid (addresses, telephone numbers, notes on calendars)
7. Substitutes for oral messages—to substitute for oral communication on those occasions when face-to-face or telephone contact was not possible or would prove embarrassing (thank-you letters to people in distant cities, notes about tardiness to school or absence at school or work, a request to local merchants for credit to be extended to a child needing to buy coal, milk, or bread for the family).

On all of these occasions for reading and writing, individuals saw literacy as an occasion for social activities: women shopped together, discussed local credit opportunities and products, and sales; men negotiated the meaning of tax forms, brochures on new cars, and political flyers. The evening newspaper was read on the front porch, and talk about the news drifted from porch to porch. Inside, during the winter months, talk about news items interrupted ongoing conversations on other topics or television viewing. The only occasions for solitary reading by individuals were those in which elderly men and women read their Bible or Sunday School materials alone, or school-age children sat alone to read a library book or a school assignment. In short, written information almost never stood alone in Trackton; it was reshaped and reworded into an oral mode. In so doing, adults and children incorporated chunks of the written text into their talk. They also sometimes reflected an awareness of a different type of organization of written materials from that of their usual oral productions. Yet their literacy habits do not fit those usually attributed to fully literate groups: they do not read to their children, encouraging conversational dialogue on books; they do not write or read extended prose passages; reading is not an individual pursuit nor is it considered to have intellectual, aesthetic, or critical rewards. But Trackton homes do not conform to habits associated with the oral tradition either. Literacy is a resource; stories do not fit the parable model; children develop very early wide-ranging language skills; and neither their language nor their parents' is marked by a preponderance of routine formulaic expressions.

At Church

Trackton is a literate community in the sense that its members read and write when occasions within their community demand such skills. Outside the community, there are numerous occasions established by individuals and institutions in which Trackton residents must show their literacy skills. One of these situations is in the church life of the Trackton people. Most residents go to country churches for Sunday services, which are usually held twice a month. In these churches, the pastor serves not one, but several churches, and he also holds another job as well during the week. A pastor or reverend is always a man, usually a man who in his younger days was known as wild and had come to the Lord after recognizing the sins of his youth. Many pastors had been musicians entertaining in clubs before their conversion to religion. Few had formal theological training; instead they had gone to Black colleges in the South and majored in religion. Most had at least a four-year college education, and many had taken additional training at special summer programs, through correspondence courses, or in graduate programs at nearby integrated state schools. In their jobs outside the church, they were businessmen, school administrators, land-owning farmers, or city personnel.

The country churches brought together not only residents of Trackton, a majority of whom worked in textile mills, but also schoolteachers, domestic workers, hospital staff, clerks in local retail businesses, and farmers. Levels of formal education were mixed in these churches, and ranged from the elderly men and women who had had only a few years of grammar school in their youth, to the minister and some school administrators who had graduate-level education. Yet, in the church, all these types and levels of literacy skills came together in a pattern which reflected a strong reliance on the written word in both substance and style. Everyone wanted others to know he could read the Bible and church materials (even if he did not do so regularly). Church was an occasion to announce knowledge of how to handle the style of written language as well as its substance. Numerous evidences of formal writing marked every church service, and on special occasions, such as celebration of the accomplishments of a church member, formal writing was very much in evidence. For these celebration services, there were brochures which contained a picture of the individual, an account of his or her life, lists of members of the family, and details of the order of service. Funeral services included similar brochures. All churches had hymnbooks, and a placard on either side of the front of the church announced the numbers of the hymns. Choir leaders invited the congregation to turn to the hymn and read the words with him; he announced the number of the verses of the hymn to be sung. The minister expected adults to bring their Bibles to church along with their Sunday School materials and to read along with him or the Sunday School director. Mimeographed church bulletins dictated the order of the service from the opening hymn to the benediction. The front and back covers of the bulletin contained drawings and scripture verses which illustrated either the sermon topic or the season of the year. Announcements of upcoming events in the recreational life of the church or political activities of the Black community filled one page of the bulletin. Reports of building funds and missionary funds were brief and were supplemented by the pastor's announcements in church service.

Yet many parts of the service move away from the formality of these written sources. The congregation often begins singing the hymn written in the book, but they quickly move away from the written form to "raise" the hymn. In this performance, the choir leader begins the hymn with the written words and the congregation follows briefly; however, another song leader will break in with new words for a portion of the hymn; the audience waits to hear these, then picks up the words and follows. The hymn continues in this way, with different members of the congregation serving as song leader at various points. Some of the words may be those which are written in the hymnbook, others may not be. A member of the congregation may begin a prayer at a particular juncture of the hymn, and the congregation will hum until the prayer is completed. The ending of the hymn is to an outsider entirely unpredictable, yet all members of the congregation end at the same time. Hymns may be raised on the occasion of the announcement of a hymn by the choir leader, spontaneously during a story or testimonial by a church member, or near the end of a sermon. In the raising of a hymn, written formulas are the basis of the hymn, but these are subject to change, and it is indeed that change which makes the congregation at once creator and performer. The formulas are changed and new formulas produced to expand the theme, to illustrate points, or to pull back from a particular theme to pick up another which has been introduced in a prayer or in the sermon. Every performance of a particular hymn is different, and such performances bear the mark of the choir leader and his interactional style with the congregation.

A similar phenomenon is illustrated in oral prayers in church. These are often written out ahead of time by those who have been asked by the minister to offer a prayer at next Sunday's service. The prayer as follows was given orally by a forty-five-year-old female schoolteacher.

1 We thank thee for watchin' over us, kind heavenly Father
2 Through the night.
3 We thank thee, oh Lord.
4 For leadin' 'n guidin' us
5 We thank thee, kind heavenly Father
6 For your strong-arm protection around us.
7 Oh Lord, don't leave us alone.
8 We feel this evenin', kind heavenly Father, if you leave us
9 We are the least ones of all.
10 Now Lord, I ask thee, kind heavenly Father,
11 to go 'long with my family,
12 I ask thee, kind heavenly Father, to throw your strong-arm protectors around
13 Oh Lord, I ask thee, oh Lord.
14 to take care of my childrens, Lord, wherever they may be.

15 Oh Lord, don't leave us, Jesus.
16 I feel this morning, kind heavenly Father, if you leave me,
17 Oh, Lord, please, Lord, don't leave me
18 in the hands of the wicked man.
19 Oh Lord, I thank thee kind heavenly Father
20 for what you have done for me.
21 Oh Lord, I thank thee, kind heavenly Father
22 Where you have brought me from.
23 Oh Lord, I wonder sometime if I didn't have Jesus on my side,
24 Lord, have mercy now,
25 what would I do, oh Lord?
26 Have mercy, Jesus.
27 I can call on 'im in the midnight hour,
28 I can call on 'im, Lord, in the noontime, oh Lord,
29 I can call on 'im anytime o' day, oh Lord.
30 He'p me, Jesus,
31 Oh Lord, make me strong
32 Oh Lord, have mercy on us, Father
33 When we have done all that you have 'signed our hands to do, Lord,
34 Have mercy, Lord,
35 I want you to give me a home beyond the shinin' river, oh Lord,
36 Where won't be no sorrowness,
37 Won't be no shame and tears, oh Lord.
38 It won't be nothing, Lord, but glory, alleluia.
39 When we have done all that you 'signed our hands to do, kind heavenly Father,
40 And we cain't do no mo',
41 We want you to give us a home in thy kingdom, oh Lord.
42 For thy Christ's sake. Amen.

After the service, when I asked the schoolteacher about her prayer, she gave me the following text she had composed and written on a card she held in her hand during the prayer:

Kind heavenly Father, we thank thee for watching over us through the night.
We thank thee for thy guidance, kind heavenly Father, for your strong protection.
We pray that you will be with us, Lord, be with our families, young and old, near and far.
Lead us not into temptation, Lord. Make us strong and ever mindful of your gifts to us all. Amen.

A comparison of the oral and the written prayer indicates numerous differences, but the major ones are of four types.

Use of Formulaic Vocatives. *Oh Lord, kind heavenly Father,* and *Jesus* appear again and again in the prayer once the woman has left the printed text. In the written text, all but the final sentence contain such a vocative, but in the oral text, there are often two per sentence. In descriptions of folk sermons, such vocatives are said to be pauses in which the preacher collects his thoughts for the next passage (Rosenberg, 1970). Here, however, the thoughts have been collected, in that the entire text was written out before delivery, but the speaker continues to use these vocatives and to pause after these before moving on to another plea.

Expression of Personal Involvement. Throughout the written version, the woman uses *we,* but in the expanded oral version, she shifts from *we* to *I,* and uses *my* and *me* where the plural might have been used had she continued the pattern from the written version. She shifts in line 10 to a singular plea, speaking as the weak sinner, the easily tempted, and praying for continued strength and readiness to being helped by her Lord. The written prayer simply asks for guidance (orally stated as *leadin'* and *guidin'*) and strong protection (*strong-arm protection* and *protector* in the oral version). The plea that the sinner not be faced with temptation is expressed in the written version in a familiar phrase from the Lord's Prayer, and is followed by a formulaic expression often used in ministers' prayers *Make us ever mindful of . . .* At line 22, she stops using *thee, thy,* and *thou,* archaic personal pronouns; thereafter she uses second-person singular *you.*

Expression in a Wide Variety of Sentence Structures. The written version uses simple sentences throughout, varying the style with insertion of vocatives, and repetitions of paired adjectives (*young and old, near and far*). The spoken version includes compound-complex sentences with subordination, and repetition of simple sentences with variation (e.g., *I can call on 'im . . .*). There are several incomplete sentences in the spoken version (lines 16–18), which if completed would have been complex in structure.

Use of Informal Style and Black English Vernacular Forms. The opening of the spoken version and the written version uses standard English forms, and the first suggestion of informality comes with the dropping of the *g* in line 4. As the prayer progresses, however, several informal forms and features associated with the Black English vernacular are used: *'long* (= along), *childrens, 'im* (= him), *anytime o'day, he'p* (= help), *'signed* (= assigned), omission of *there* (in lines 36, 37) and use of *it* for standard English in line 38, double negative (lines 36, 37, 38, 40), *cain't* (= can't), and *mo'* (= more).

There is no way to render the shifts of prosody, the melodic strains, and the changes in place which accompany the spoken version. The intonation pattern is highly marked, lilting, and the speaker breaks into actual melody at the end of line 10, and the remainder of the prayer is chanted. (Note that at this point she also shifted to the singular first-person pronoun.) Sharp pitch modulations mark the prayer, and on one occasion (end of line 35), a member of the congregation broke in with a supporting bar of the melody, lasting only 3.5 seconds. All vocatives after line 6 are marked by a lilting high rise–mid fall contour.

It is possible to find in numerous studies of the religious life of Afro-Americans lengthy discussions of the historical role of the spoken word (see, for example, Levine, 1977:155ff, for a discussion of literacy and its effects on Black religion). Current research with preachers (e.g., Mitchell, 1970; Rosenberg, 1970) and gospel songwriters (e.g., Jackson, 1966; Heilbut, 1971) in Black communities underscore and pick up numerous themes from historical studies. Repeatedly these sources emphasize the power of words as action and the substantiating effect a dynamic creative oral rendering of a message has on an audience. Preachers and musicians claim they cannot stick to a stable rendering of written words; thoughts which were once shaped into words on paper become recomposed in each time and space; written words limit a performance which must be created anew with each audience and setting. Though some of the meaning in written words remains stable, bound in the text, the meaning of words people will carry with them depends on the integration of those words into personal experience. Thus the performance of words demands the calling in of the personal experience of each listener and the extension by that listener of the meanings of those words to achieve the ultimate possibility of any message.

In terms of the usual expectations of distinctions between the oral and literate mode, practices in the church life of Trackton residents provide evidence that neither mode is in control here. Members have access to both and use both. Oral spontaneous adjustments from the written material result in longer, more complex sentences, with some accompanying shifts in style from the formal to the more informal. Clearly in the oral mode, the highly personalized first-person singular dominates over the most formal collective first person. Pacing, rate of speech, intonation, pitch, use of melodic phrases, and finally a chant have much fluctuation and range from high to low when written materials are recomposed spontaneously. Spoken versions of hymns, prayers, and sermons show the speaker's attempt to identify with the audience, but this identification makes use of only some features usually associated with the oral tradition (e.g., high degree of involvement of speaker, extensive use of first person). Other features associated with oral performance (e.g., simple sentences linked together by simple compounds, and highly redundant formulaic passages which hold chunks of information together) are not found here. The use of literate sources, and even literate bases, for oral performances does not lead to a demise of many features traditionally associated with a pure oral tradition. In other words, the language forms and uses on such occasions bear the mark of both oral and literature traditions, not one or the other.

At Work

In their daily lives at home and in church, Trackton adults and children have worked out ways of integrating features of both oral and written language in their language uses. But what of work settings and contacts with banks, credit offices, and the employment office—institutions typical of modernized, industrial societies?

Most of the adults in Trackton worked in the local textile mills. To obtain these jobs, they went directly to the employment office of the individual mills. There, an employment officer read to them from an application form and wrote down their answers. They were not asked if they wanted to complete their own form. They were given no written information at the time of their application, but the windows and walls of the room in which they waited for personal interviews were plastered with posters about the credit union policy of the plant and the required information for filling out an application (names of previous employers, Social Security number, etc.). But all of this information was known to Trackton residents before they went to apply for a job. Such information and news about jobs usually passed by word of mouth. Some of the smaller mills put advertisements in the local paper and indicated they would accept applications during certain hours on particular days. Interviewers either told individuals at the time of application they had obtained jobs, or the employment officer agreed to telephone in a few days. If applicants did not have telephones, they gave a neighbor's number, or the mill sent a postcard.

Once accepted for the job, totally inexperienced workers would be put in the particular section of the mill in which they were to work, and were told to watch experienced workers. The foreman would occasionally check by to see if the observer had questions and understood what was going on. Usually before the end of the first few hours on the shift, the new worker was put under the guidance of certain other workers and told to share work on a particular machine. Thus in an apprentice-like way new workers came on for new jobs, and they worked in this way for only several days, since all parties were anxious for this arrangement to end as soon as possible. Mills paid in part on a piece-work basis, and each machine operator was anxious to be freed to work at his or her own rapid pace as soon as possible. Similarly, the new worker was anxious to begin to be able to work rapidly enough to qualify for extra pay.

Within each section of the mill, little written material was in evidence. Safety records, warnings, and, occasionally, reports about new products, or clippings from local newspapers about individual workers or events at the mill's recreational complex, would be put up on the bulletin board. Foremen and quality control personnel came through the mill on each shift, asking questions, noting output, checking machines, and recording this information. They often asked the workers questions, and the information would be recorded on a form carried by the foreman or quality control engineer. Paychecks were issued each Friday, and the stub carried information on federal and state taxes withheld, as well as payments for health plans or automatic payments made for credit loans from the credit bureau. Millworkers generally kept these stubs in their wallets, or in a special box (often a shoe box, sometimes a small metal filebox) at home. They were rarely referred to at the

time of issuance of the paycheck, unless a recent loan had been taken out or paid off at the credit bureau. Then workers would check the accuracy of the amounts withheld. In both the application stage and on the job, workers had to respond to a report or a form being filled out by someone else. This passive performance with respect to any actual reading or writing did not occur because the workers were unable to read and write. Instead, these procedures were the results of the mill's efforts to standardize the recording and processing of information. When asked why they did not let applicants fill out their own employment form, employment officers responded:

> It is easier if we do it. This way, we get to talk to the client, ask questions not on the form, clarify immediately any questions they have, and, for our purposes, the whole thing is just cleaner. When we used to have them fill out the forms, some did it in pencil, others had terrible handwriting, others gave us too much or too little information. This way, our records are neat, and we know what we've got when someone has finished an application form.

In the past, job training at some of the mills had not been done "on the floor," but through a short session with manuals, an instructor, and instruction "by the book." Executives of the mills found this process too costly and inefficient, and those who could do the best job of handling the written materials were not necessarily the best workers on the line.

Beyond the mill, Trackton adults found in banks, credit union offices, and loan offices the same type of literacy events. The oral performance surrounding a written piece of material to which they had little or no access was what counted or made a difference in a transaction. When individuals applied for credit at the credit union, the interviewer held the folder, asked questions derived from information within the folder, and offered little or no explanation of the information from which he derived questions. At the end of interviews, workers did not know whether or not they would receive the loan or what would be done with the information given to the person who interviewed them. In the following interview (see Figure 1), the credit union official directs questions to the client primarily on the basis of what is in the written documents in the client's folder.[2] She attempts to reconcile the written information with the current oral request. However, the client is repeatedly asked to supply information as though she knows the contents of the written document. Referents for pronouns (*it* in 4, *this* in 7, *this* in 10, and *they* in 16) are not clearly identified, and the client must guess at their referents without any visual or verbal clues. Throughout this literacy event, only one person has access to the written information, but the entire oral exchange centers around that information. In (4) the credit union employee introduces new information: *it* refers to the amount of the current loan. The record now shows that the client has a loan which is being repaid by having a certain amount deducted from her weekly paycheck; for those in her salary range, there is an upper limit of $1700 for a loan.

FIGURE 1 Interview at Credit Union

A-CU5 Heath 1979
C1: Client
Off: Credit Union Official
(enters office where client is seated)

Total units of discourse: 16
4 elicitations directed to C1, 4 responses by C1
4 utterances directed to folder by Off
2 responses by C1 to folder information
2 announcements of exits by Off

(1) Off: okay, hh, what kind of a loan did you [hh wanna see about now?
(pause)
(2) C1: [well, hh, I wanna wanted it for my hhh personal reserve.
(exits)
(3) Off: let me get your folder. I'll be right back.
(reenters) (looking at folder)
(4) and you want to increase it to seventeen.
(looking toward client)
(5) and your purpose?
(pause)
(6) C1: I hhh need a personal uh, I got some small bills.
(looking at folder)
(7) Off: because when I did this, I, hhh, didn't know, but you were telling me both had to sign.
(looking at client)
(8) what kind of bills?
(9) C1: water, gas, clothes, hhh, water department.
(flips through folder, writing figures on pad)
(10) Off: okay, now you're paying fifty a month, and you want, you, hhh, umummmm
you want your payments to stay at that, okay, you live at 847 J. O. Connell,
(pause)
and you've been there three years, okay um, let's see, we're gonna combine this,
gross weekly salary is $146 [46, forty-hour week
(11) C1: [no, about $170
(looking at folder) (pause)
(12) Off: you don't have a car and your rent is $120, and you still owe Sears, hhh it's twenty =
(13) C1: = no, it's more than that =
(looking at client)
(14) Off: = what is it now?
(15) C1: I think it's about $180 [some
(16) Off: [is that everything, yea, all we've got to do is apply to the credit bureau, they decide, you can come back tomorro

But this information is not clear from the oral exchange, and it is known only to the credit union employee and indicated on documents in the client's folder. The calculation of a payment of $50 per month (10) is based on this information, and the way in which this figure was derived is never explained to the client. In (10) the official continues to read from the folder, but she does not ask for either confirmation or denial of this information. Her ambiguous statement, "We're gonna combine this," can only be assumed to mean the current amount of the loan, with the amount of the new loan, the two figures which will now equal the total of the new principal $1700. The statement of gross weekly salary as $146.66 is corrected by the client (11), but the official does not verbally acknowledge the correction; she continues writing. Whether she records the new figure and takes it into account in her calculations is not clear. The official continues reading (12) and is once again corrected by the client. She notes the new information and shortly closes off the interview.

In this literacy event, written materials have determined the outcome of the request, yet the client has not been able to see those documents or frame questions which would clarify their contents. This pattern occurred frequently for Trackton residents, who argued that neighborhood center programs and other adult education programs should be aimed not at teaching higher-level reading skills or other subjects, but at ways of getting through such interviews or other situations (such as visits to dentists and doctors), when someone else held the information which they needed to know in order to ask questions about the contents of that written material in ways which would be acceptable to institution officials.

Conclusions

Trackton is a literate community in the sense that the residents are able to read printed and written materials in their daily lives, and on occasion they produce written messages as part of the total pattern of communication in the community. Residents turn from written to spoken uses of language and vice versa as the occasion demands, and the two modes of expression seem to supplement and reinforce each other in a unique pattern. However, the conventions appropriate for literacy events within the community, in their worship life, and in their workaday world call for different uses of speech to interpret written materials. In a majority of cases, Trackton adults show their knowledge of written materials only through oral means. On many occasions, they have no opportunity to attend directly to the written materials through any active use of their own literacy skills; instead, they must respond in appropriate speech events which are expected to surround interpretation of these written materials.

It is impossible to characterize Trackton through existing descriptions of either the oral or the literate traditions; seemingly, it is neither, and it is both. Literacy events which bring the written word into a central focus in interactions and interpretations have their rules of occurrence and appropriateness according to setting and participants. The joint social activity of reading the newspaper across porches, getting to the heart of meaning of a brochure on a new product, and negotiating rules for putting an antenna on a car produce more speaking than reading, more group than individual effort, repeated analogies and generalizations, and fast-paced, overlapping, syntactically complex language. The spontaneous recomposing of written hymns, sermons, and prayers produces not parables, proverbs, and formulas, but recreations of written texts which are more complex in syntactic structure, performance rules, and more demanding of close attention to lexical and semantic cues than are their written counterparts. For these recomposing creations are, like community literacy events, group-focused, and members of the group show their understanding and acceptance of the meaning of the words by picking up phrases, single words, or meanings, and creating their own contribution to a raised hymn or a prayer.

In work settings, when others control access to and restrict types of written information, Trackton residents have to learn to respond to inadequate meaning clues, partial sentences, and pronouns without specified referents. In these latter situations, especially those in financial and legal institutions, Trackton residents recognize their deficiency of skills, but the skills which are missing are not literacy skills, but knowledge about oral language uses which would enable them to obtain information about the content and uses of written documents, and to ask questions to clarify their meanings. Learning how to do this appropriately, so as not to seem to challenge a person in power, is often critical to obtaining a desired outcome and maintaining a job or reputation as a "satisfactory" applicant, or worker.[3]

Descriptions of these literacy events and their patterns of uses in Trackton do not enable us to place the community somewhere on a continuum from full literacy to restricted literacy or nonliteracy. Instead, it seems more appropriate to think of two continua, the oral and the written. Their points and extent of overlap, and similarities in structure and function, follow one pattern for Trackton, but follow others for communities with different cultural features. And it is perhaps disquieting to think that many of these cultural features seem totally unrelated to features usually thought to help account for the relative degree of literacy in any social group. For example, such seemingly unrelated phenomena as the use of space in the community and the ways in which adults relate to preschool children may be as important for instilling literacy habits as aspirations for upward mobility or curiosity about the world. In Trackton, given the uses of space and the ways in which adults interacted with preschool children, no amount of books suddenly poured into the community, or public service programs teaching parents how to help their children learn to read, would have made an appreciable difference. The linkage between houses by open porches, the preference of young and old to be outdoors rather than inside, the incorporation of all the community in the communication network of each household, and the negative value placed on individual reading reinforced the social group's negotiation of written language. Formal writing always had to be renegotiated

into an informal style, one which led to discussion and debate among several people. Written messages gave residents something to talk about; after they talked, they might or might not follow up on the message of the written information, but what they had come to know had come to them from the text through the joint oral negotiation of meaning.

Trackton children do not learn to talk by being introduced to labels for either everyday objects or pictures and words in books. Instead, without adjusted, simplified input from adults, they become early talkers, modeling their ways of entering discourse and creating story texts on the oral language they hear about them. They tell creative story-poems which attempt to recapture the settings of actions as well as the portrayal of actions. They achieve their meaning as communicators and their sense of their own worth as communicators through the responses they obtain to their oral language, not in terms of responses in a one-to-one situation of reading a book with an adult. Words indeed must be as "behavioral" as any other form of action (Carothers, 1959). They carry personal qualities, have a dynamic nature, and cannot become static things always retaining their same sense. As one mother said of her ways of teaching her two-year-old son to talk: "Ain't no use me tellin' 'im: 'learn this, learn that, what's this, what's that?' He just gotta learn, gotta know; he see one thing one place one time, he know how it go, see sump'n like it again, maybe it be the same, maybe it won't." In each new situation, learning must be reevaluated, reassessed for both the essence of meaning that occurs across contexts and for the particular meaning obtained in each new and different context.

What does this mean for the individual readers in Trackton? How different is their way of comprehending literate materials from that more commonly ascribed to literate individuals? For example, current research in reading suggests three ways or levels of extracting meaning from print: attending to the text itself, bringing in experiences or knowledge related to the text, and interpreting beyond the text into a creative/imaginative realm or to achieve a new synthesis of information from the text and reader experience (see Rumelhart, 1976; Rumelhart and Ortony, 1977; Adams, 1980, for technical discussions of these processes). Trackton residents as a group do use these methods of getting information from print. One person, reading aloud, decodes the written text of the newspaper, brochure, set of instructions, etc. This level of extracting meaning from the text is taken as the basis for the move to the next level, that of relating the text's meaning to the experience of members of the group. The experience of any one individual has to become common to the group, however, and that is done through the recounting of members' experiences. Such recountings attempt to recreate the scenes, to establish the character of the individuals involved, and, to the greatest extent possible, to bring the audience into the experience itself. At the third level, there is an extension beyond the common experience to a reintegration. For example, what do both the text and the common relating of text's meaning to experience say to the mother trying to decide how best to register her child for a daycare program? Together again, the group negotiates this third level. The process is time-consuming, perhaps less efficient than one individual reading the information for himself and making an individual decision. But the end result has been the sharing of information (next year's mother receiving a similar form will hear this discussion recreated in part). Furthermore, the set of experiences related to the task at hand is greater than a single individual would have: the mother has been led to consider whether or not to enlist the doctor's help, which information to take for registration, and a host of other courses of action she might not have considered on her own. Thus Trackton residents in groups, young and old, are familiar with processes for comprehending text similar to those delineated for individual readers by reading teachers and researchers. Major differences between their experiences with literacy and those generally depicted in the mainstream literature are in the degree of focus on specific decoding skills (such as letter-sound relationships), the amount of practice at each level of extracting meaning available for each individual in the community, and the assignment of interpretive responsibility to the group rather than to any one individual.

There are still other questions which could be asked of the uses of oral and literate skills in Trackton. What of the social consequences of their uses of literacy? Because they do not frequently and intensively engage in reading and writing extended prose, is their literacy "restricted," and what has this meant for them in socioeconomic terms? Work in the textile mills provided an income equal to or better than that of several types of professionals in the region: schoolteachers, salesmen, and secretaries. Successful completion of composition and advanced grammar classes in high school would not have secured better-paying jobs for Trackton residents, unless very exceptional circumstances had come into play in individual cases. Improved scores on tests of reading comprehension or the Scholastic Aptitude Tests would not necessarily have given them access to more information for political decision making than they had through the oral medium of several evening and morning television and radio news broadcasts. They tended to make their political judgments for local elections on the basis of personal knowledge of candidates or the word of someone else who knew the candidates. In national and state elections, almost all voted the party, and they said no amount of information on the individual candidates would cause them to change that pattern.

These behaviors and responses to what Goody might term "restricted literacy" echo similar findings in the work of social historians asking hard questions about the impact of literacy on pre-industrial groups. For such diverse groups as the masses of seventeenth-century France (Davis, 1975), sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England (Cressy, 1980), and colonial New England (Lockridge, 1974), social historians have examined the functions, uses, degrees, and effects of literacy. All agree that the contexts and uses of literacy in each society determined its values, forms, and functions. The societal changes which came with the advent of literacy across societies were neither consistent nor universal. Cressy (1980) perhaps best summarizes the conclusions of social historians about the universal potentialities of literacy:

1. People could be rational, acquire and comprehend information, and make well-founded political, social, and religious decisions without being able to read or write.
2. Literate people were no wiser or better able to control their universe than were those who were illiterate.

In short, in a variety of times and places, "Literacy unlocked a variety of doors, but it did not necessarily secure admission" (Cressy, 1980: 189).

Cressy and other social historians underscore the fact that, in some societies, literacy did not have the beneficial effects often ascribed to it. Davis found that, for the unlettered masses of seventeenth-century France, printing made possible new kinds of control from the top segments of the society. Before the printing press, oral culture and popular community-based social organizations seemed strong enough to resist standardization and thrusts for uniformity. With literacy, however, people began to measure themselves against a widespread norm and to doubt their own worth. In some cases, this attitude made people less politically active than they had been without print or opportunities for literacy. Lockridge (1974), in his study of colonial New England, concluded that literacy did not bring new attitudes or move people away from the traditional views held in their illiterate days. Eisenstein (1979) suggested that shifts in religious traditions enabled print to contribute to the creation of new notions of a collective morality and to an increased reliance on rhetoric in the verbal discourse of sermons and homilectics.

But these are studies of pre-industrial societies; what of literacy in industrial societies? Stone (1969) proposed the need to examine in industrial groups the FUNCTIONS of literacy in a variety of senses ranging from the conferring of technical skills to an association with self-discipline. Stone further suggested that each society may well have its own weighted checklist of factors (e.g., social stratification, job opportunities, Protestantism, and sectarian competition) which causes literacy to serve one or another function. Sanderson (1972), building on Stone's work, showed that the economic development of the English industrial revolution made low literacy demands of the educational system. His argument points out the need to examine closely job demands for literacy; changes in mechanization may call for shifts of types of literacy skills. Indeed, in the English industrial revolution, the increased use of machinery enabled employers to hire workers who were less literate than were those who had previously done the hand work. Successful performance in cottage industries, for example, required a higher level of literacy for a larger proportion of workers than did mechanized textile work.

Research by economic and educational historians of the late-nineteenth-century United States has examined the effects of literacy not only on the economic laws of supply and demand of job opportunities, but also on the values society placed on a correct oral reading style and acceptable performance on standardized tests. Reading for comprehension and an expansion of creative thinking were less frequently assessed in the late nineteenth century than they had been earlier (Calhoun, 1973). Soltow and Stevens (1977) point out the extent to which standardized measures of performance were lauded by parents, and they suggest that acceptable performance on these tests convinced parents their children would be able to achieve occupational and social mobility. Whether or not the schools taught children to read at skill levels that might make a real difference in their chances for upward occupational mobility is not at all clear. Nevertheless, if students acquired the social and moral values and generalized "rational" and "cultured" behaviors associated with literate citizens, occupational mobility often resulted.

This social historical research raises some critical questions for the study of communities in today's complex society. A majority of communities in the modern world are neither preliterate, i.e., without access to print or writing of some kind, nor fully literate (Goody, 1968). They are somewhere in between. Some individuals may have access to literacy and choose to use it for some purposes and not for others. Some communities may restrict access to literacy to some portions of the population (Walker, 1981); others may provide a climate in which individuals choose the extent to which they will adopt habits associated with literacy (Heath, 1980). As Resnick and Resnick (1977) have shown, the goal of a high level of literacy for a large proportion of the population is a relatively recent phenomenon, and new methods and materials in reading instruction, as well as particular societal and economic supports, may be needed to achieve such a goal.

Furthermore, in large complex societies such as the United States, the national state of technological development and the extent of intrusion of governmental agencies in the daily lives of citizens may have combined to set up conditions in which literacy no longer has many of the traditional uses associated with it. Understanding and responding to the myriad of applications, reporting forms, and accounting procedures which daily affect the lives of nearly every family in the United States bears little resemblance to the decoding of extended prose passages or production of expository writing, the two literacy achievements most associated with school success. Furthermore, television and other media have removed the need to rely on reading to learn the basics of news and sports events, how to dress properly for the weather, and what to buy and where to find it. Increasingly industry is turning to on-the-job training programs which depend on observation of tasks or audiovisual instruction rather than literate preparation for job performance; specialists handle reports related to production, quality control, inventory, and safety. In industry, the specialized demands of reporting forms, regulations and agency reports, and programming requirements call for a communications expert, not simply a "literate" manager. In a recent survey of employer attitudes toward potential employees, employers called not for the literacy skills generally associated with school tasks, but instead for an integration of mathematical and linguistic skills, and displays of the capability of learning "on one's own," and listening and speaking skills required to understand and give instructions and describe problems (RBS, 1978).

These shifts in larger societal contexts for literacy are easily and frequently talked about, but their specific effects on communities such as

Trackton, though occasionally inferred, are very rarely examined. It is clear that, in what may be referred to as the post-industrial age, members of each community have different and varying patterns of influence and control over forms and uses of literacy in their lives. They exercise considerable control within their own primary networks. In institutions, such as their churches, they may have some control. In other institutions, such as in their places of employment, banks, legal offices, etc., they may have no control over literacy demands. The shape of literacy events in each of these is different. The nature of oral and written language and the interplay between them is ever shifting, and these changes both respond to and create shifts in the individual and societal meanings of literacy. The information to be gained from any prolonged look at oral and written uses of language through literacy events may enable us to accept the protean shapes of oral and literate traditions and language, and move us away from current tendencies to classify communities as being at one or another point along a hypothetical continuum which has no societal reality.

21 En Los Dos Idiomas: *Literacy Practices Among Chicago Mexicanos*

MARCIA FARR

The present study is carried out within the framework of the ethnography of communication as conceptualized by Hymes (Hymes, 1974; Saville-Troike, 1989). This type of linguistic research emphasizes the importance of context and holistic analysis, and its aim is to understand meaning from the point of view of the members of a particular cultural group. Consequently, long-term participant-observation is deemed necessary for a valid understanding of cultural and linguistic patterns. My participant-observation so far has included five years in Chicago (primarily on weekends) and six weeks in Mexico. In addition to participant-observation, we carried out informal, open-ended interviews with the adult members of the families in the study and audiotaped informal discourse in the homes of members and in public settings in the neighborhood.

The families in the study comprise one social network of *mexicano* immigrants (approximately forty-five people) who in the United States would be designated working class by virtue of their blue collar occupations and limited formal educational levels (years of schooling range from zero to eight). The concept of a social network has been developed within anthropology and used in sociolinguistic research (Hannerz, 1980; Milroy, 1987); a social network consists of one center person or family—the latter in this case—and all immediate intimates in terms of kin and friendship. For linguistic research, one advantage of studying a social network is that normal group rules for interaction tend to prevail, thus minimizing the effect of the participant-observer and yielding more natural language data (Milroy, 1987).

Social networks have been studied in various working-class communities around the world, and although they are probably important for many U.S. immigrant groups (as a support and survival mechanism), they seem to be particularly important for *mexicanos* because of *compadrazgo*. *Compadrazgo*

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