CHAPTER 10.

LITERACY SPONSORSHIP AS A PROCESS OF TRANSLATION: USING ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY TO ANALYZE POWER WITHIN EMERGENT RELATIONSHIPS AT FAMILY SCHOLAR HOUSE

Kathryn Perry

California State University, Los Angeles

This chapter examines a moment of literacy at an educational non-profit called Family Scholar House (FSH) to understand the multiple dimensions underlying literacy practices, including material conditions, social relationships, and institutional ideologies. Based on interviews with both low-income single mothers who are full-time college students as well as FSH staff, this chapter analyzes an application for government assistance using Actor-Network Theory. By examining this literacy moment as a process of translation in which diverse elements interact with the goal of achieving a successful application, this study shows how this population of college students are made (in)visible in specific ways by the negotiated power dynamics of the application itself, the individual applying, and her social support relationships.

"I guess one thing I want to do, I want to be able to make it, you know? I would like, you know I feel like depending on these services are good, but they help, it's easy to get comfortable, and you know to be stuck . . . Being assisted, like I get assistance and stuff, and it's easy to get stuck there. But I want to be able to make my own money, you know, and be able to provide for my kids without any help and assistance from nobody."

<div align="right">- ChaRay, personal interview</div>

"You have to really be organized with your time . . . to get everything accomplished. I would say, it's not so much school but it is the demands

of everything, everybody . . . You know . . . that everybody has expecta-
tions of what they, whether it's the government, you know . . . Because I
get government assistance . . . They have requirements . . . And so it's just,
trying to juggle everything, I would say time . . . I always, I always say . . .
I wish I had more time. So that would be the biggest challenge."

- Sofia, personal interview

On a typical weekday during the semester, Sofia is up early to take her kids to
school, after which she comes home and is able to enjoy a quiet cup of coffee and
start on her homework. She says this is her favorite time of day—the time when
she can focus on school and get to work accomplishing the many goals she has
set for herself and her family. The rest of the day is a constant stream of activity,
between attending her classes, squeezing in homework when she can, picking
up the kids from school and helping them with their homework, playtime, din-
ner, and bed. Sofia doesn't have a job, and she relies on government assistance
to support her family while she finishes her Bachelor's degree. They live in the
subsidized apartments of one of Family Scholar Houses's (FSH) four campuses
in Louisville, Kentucky.

   Sofia's narrative is an increasingly familiar, yet still elided by many, story of
a low-income single parent attempting to earn a college degree and improve the
life of her family. Though higher education has seen, over the past 45 years, an
increasingly diversified student body with the accompanying awareness of the
diverse experiences and expectations that students bring with them into our
classrooms, our field still searches for ways to understand students' lives and
incorporate our understanding into our teaching and research. I begin with the
above anecdote in order to illustrate one way into students' lives and literacies.
A key point to observe about Sofia's day is the abundance of people, places, ob-
jects, institutions, and relationships making up the networks she moves through
throughout the day. And, although literacy is one of these elements, her literacy
practices are also a prism that catch and reflect the fluctuating elements that
contribute to those literacy practices (from her cup of coffee to the expectations
of the professor whose assignment she is working on to her own childhood lit-
eracy experiences). Taking on literacy from a more complex angle is not a new
task, as demonstrated by the work of Brian Street (1984), David Barton and
Mary Hamilton (1998), and others. The scholarship of New Literacy Studies
approaches literacy from the social perspective, analyzing the ideological and
contextual forces that influence the various shapes that literacy practices can
take. In this chapter I offer an alternative to this social emphasis in literacy
studies, along the lines of Deborah Brandt and Katie Clinton's (2002) call for a
need to recognize the "legibility and durability of literacy: its material forms, its

technological apparatus, its objectivity; that is, its (some)thing-ness" (p. 344), and Steve Parks' (2013) argument that "our pedagogical goal within community partnerships should be to understand how any one 'literate' moment is a resting point within a dynamic relationship between a series of diffuse literacy practices. The point is to study the process by which such resting places occur" (p. 43).

This chapter is a glimpse of the many, real life constraints of low-income single mothers living at FSH via analysis of their literacy practices to understand the variety of actors and actants that shape these practices. In Chapter 9, Denecker and Sisser describe how their "embodied reactions" to both the physical spaces and objects of the farms and the farmers' narratives reveal less obvious meanings arising from these interactions. Similarly, I recognize the significance of material and social elements in my analysis of literacy moments at FSH. To do so, I will draw on Actor-Network Theory (ANT), a complex socio-material approach arising from Bruno Latour's (2005) work in science and technology studies. ANT allows us to extend the scholarship on literacy and literacy sponsorship so that, rather than examining a broad swath of sponsorship over generations (Brandt, 2001), and rather than examining specific literacy sponsors in depth (Grabill, 2001), ANT demands that a rich array of diverse elements be included in the analysis of any given literate moment. In other words, we reconceive our goal as researchers to describe the literacy *relationships* as opposed to specific "*agents.*" In the words of W. Michele Simmons, Kristen Moore, and Patricia Sullivan (2015) as they describe how they use ANT to approach a civic engagement project, they follow "the actors and their relationships to one another. . .As we write up the research, we don't choose which of the many groups involved in civic engagement we will study, rather, we watch actors assembling and disassembling at any given time and find data in the traces of those assemblings and disassemblings" (pp. 284-285). My theoretical approach acts as a feminist intervention because I follow the "traces" of literacy sponsorship that are manifested through the shifting *relationships* surrounding a particular moment of translation.

I use the ANT concept of translation in order to a) reveal the mechanisms behind a specific literate moment, and b) analyze how these mechanisms make these students visible in specific ways and invisible in others. I'm analyzing the pieces of the network surrounding the literate moment of translation that is an application for government assistance so that we can stop seeing these women as only "students" or only "single parents" but also in terms of their relationships and their individual perspectives. Kirsch argues that the core principle of feminist research methodology is that research needs to be *for* women, not just *about* women ("Ethical Dilemmas" 2-3). FSH is an organization run almost entirely by women, serving a majority female population. My feminist intervention in doing research at FSH is one that recognizes the significance of gender but opens up the analysis

to other factors that shape participants' lives. I perform a feminist intervention by acknowledging that gender is not the only or most important aspect of these students' experiences and by analyzing the factors surrounding literacy that seem significant to the participants themselves. Given the intense feminization of poverty, I examine an application for federal assistance and take into account the variety of material circumstances, social relationships, and individual perspectives that are at work within this sort of literate moment but that we might not normally see given how the application tends to construct women in a particular, one-sided way, and this is my way of enacting a feminist approach to literacy studies research at the intersection of university and community agendas. I undertake this ANT analysis keeping in mind the concerns of scholars such as Gesa Kirsch (1997), Jacqueline Rosyter & Gesa Kirsch (2012), Ellen Cushman (1998), and others regarding the need for more reflexive, collaborative, and experimental research partnerships. By paying close attention to tensions that arise between the actors and actants within this specific network, my work answers the call for community engagement research that acknowledges the complexities and divides within any given community context while resisting the tendency to reduce the community angle to a singular, rosy hue (Harris, 1989).

The unique space of Family Scholar House reaches beyond but also straddles the university and community dimensions. Looking at students' literacy practices at this organization opens up the feminist agenda by expanding traditional notions of literacy, particularly by focusing on the relationships and relationship work supporting an application for government assistance. This is one of many rich literacy moments occurring at FSH; others include the collaborative writing of a financial aid appeal letter by students and academic advisors, as well as FSH's annual fundraising luncheon at which students present essays they have written to win college scholarships. I have chosen to narrow my analysis in this chapter to the Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program application (or KTAP) because this moment has such far-reaching consequences upon the actors and actants involved, including effects on a student's finances and family relationships as well as effects on the relationship between the student and her FSH social worker.

Beginning as Project Women in 1995, Family Scholar House was created in 2008. Family Scholar House is a non-profit organization in Louisville, KY whose "mission is to end the cycle of poverty and transform our community by empowering families and youth to succeed in education and achieve life-long self-sufficiency" (Family Scholar House). (To get an idea of what FSH does, explore their website (http://familyscholarhouse.org), and watch the video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eyodchYl7pQ&feature=share&list=UUZSKXdktekR-1subN7Xqfe0w.) With four active campuses and more in the pipeline, FSH provides subsidized housing for its residential members and support services such as

academic advising, financial aid advising, mentoring, life skills training, group workshops, tutoring, and more for both residential and non-residential members. All FSH participants are low-income, the majority of them are female, and many have experienced domestic violence. FSH, as an organization, is a feminist intervention: it is run by women almost exclusively, serves a majority female population, and works to promote social justice for a historically underserved student population specifically by building relationships and community ties.

I developed a relationship with FSH while doing dissertation research there, a feminist intervention of the kind Sheridan recognizes as a "threshold experience": "a learning-by-doing opportunity that changes many participants' views of themselves and of their research, teaching, and community-engaged work in and beyond graduate school" (p. 223). For the study this chapter is drawn from, I conducted eleven interviews: six with FSH students, three with FSH staff, and two with local university writing program administrators. I identified the six students with help from Will, the academic services coordinator and my main contact at the organization (as well as one of my staff interviews). Both before and while I collected data, I volunteered at FSH in various capacities, from filing documents to assessing students' computer needs. I tried to maintain as reciprocal a relationship as possible between myself as researcher and the organization and its participants. As Mathis and Boehm point out in Chapter 6, collaboration and reciprocity are "necessarily flexible—not a rigid, predetermined relationship defined by a single party" (p 120). Thus, when one interviewee mentioned needing evening writing help, I made myself available at FSH one evening a week as a writing tutor. While my research was not collaborative in the sense that many feminist scholars call for—the multivocality, co-authorship, and participatory action angle to research—I tried to design my interview questions in ways that would allow the women to tell their stories as uniquely as they could. As Brandt et al. emphasize, these everyday stories can become crucial touchstones in activist collaborations surrounding literacy. During the interviews themselves, I kept a semi-structured approach and tried to follow the narrative arc of each interviewee as she told her stories.

ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY, TRANSLATION, AND POWER

For this project, the relevant aspects of networks as Latour and those following Actor-Network Theory theorize them concern the work being done in the formation of networks and the significant uncertainty involved in that work. Latour (2005) critiques the term "network" and its overemphasis when it comes to deciding how to use ANT, arguing that in addition to the importance of "being connected," networks should draw attention to the actual work taking

place: "Really, we should say 'worknet' instead of 'network'. It's the work, and the movement, and the flow, and the changes that should be stressed" (p. 143). In other words, my analysis focuses on the relationships and the work that flows between actors and actants making up those relationships. Specifically, as I describe the different people involved in the completion of an application for government assistance, I emphasize how key relationships impact the application, and vice versa, how the document itself influences its networked relationships.

Just as Harris (1989) critiques the field's tendency to reify the notion of "community," scholars using ANT also point out that networks exist around a particular function and often hide the many people and activities that went into creating that function, using the example of "a textbook or an educational article" which "each bring together, frame, select and freeze in one form a whole series of meetings, voices, explorations, conflicts and possibilities explored and discarded" (Fenwick & Edwards, 2012, p. xiii). The authors emphasize the fact that "these inscriptions appear seamless and given, concealing the many negotiations of the network that produced it" (p. xiii-xiv). In order for my analysis to get under the "seamless and given" appearance of networks surrounding literacy practices, I focus on the translation occurring during this particular literate moment of completing an application for government assistance. In ANT, translation occurs when actors/actants are enrolled into a network in order to accomplish a specific purpose. As Latour (2005) writes, translation is "a connection that transports, so to speak, transformations . . . the word 'translation' now takes on a somewhat specialized meaning: a relation that does not transport causality but induces two mediators into coexisting" (p. 108). In other words, Latour understands translation as the connection between actors in a network, and it is this connection that is responsible for bringing multiple actors together which results in a network (that then gets traced by the researcher). Because translation is the "connection that transports . . . transformations," this makes translations especially rich things to study.

It's the instability of these moments of translation that make them appealing for literacy research as feminist intervention that seeks to recognize the diverse and shifting factors involved in any given literacy moment—factors that we might not be able to see otherwise. As Simmons et al. (2015) point out, "In its reliance on uncertainties as a heuristic, Latour's ANT insists researchers resist and refuse the assumed, the foundational, and the stable in systematic and rigorous ways. Because stability is exclusionary, Latour-like unstable portraits likely reveal connections otherwise obscured . . ." (p. 278). Not only does an ANT analysis reveal the hidden connections and relationships that create a moment of translation, it can take on the visibility trap of Foucault's panopticon by pointing to specific ways in which those with less power—the women applying for assistance—are forced into visibility, while also revealing the less visible ways

in which these women are interacting with this literacy moment and how that influences their lives and relationships.

Translation is essentially another way of making networked actors/actants and their relationships visible. This is important work considering that what we usually see as literacy researchers tends to be, despite our best efforts, bounded by the constraints of the literacy expectations in any given context. As Mary Hamilton (2012) points out, looking at translations allows us to see beneath the seemingly ordered reality: "ANT has been called a 'sociology of translations' and the key process I will focus on is that of 'translation' whereby the messy complexities of everyday life are ordered and simplified for the purposes of the project at hand" (p. 44). By identifying literate moments that seem to represent a unified coherence of purpose, we can tease out the underlying tensions and differences. Hamilton draws on Sakari's articulation of translation to point out the repercussions of power dynamics within translation:

> Translation, as Sakari (2006) argues, is not a simple process of making equivalent two different but predetermined entities. It is, rather, a process of articulation—"a poietic social practice that institutes a relation at the site of incommensurability [. . .] a process of creating continuity in discontinuity" (p. 75). The result is productively emergent, the smoothing of differences, the alignment and sequencing of a number of sub-projects, a set of differences held—precariously—in tension because, as Sakari again points out, 'translation is always complicit with the building, transforming or disrupting of power relations' (p. 72). (p. 44)

Translation is about relationship-making between distinct actors, and about providing the opportunity for connection between various actors/actants that, by coming into contact with each other, change in all sorts of ways. In this chapter, I'm identifying the KTAP application as a particular moment of translation in which a variety of actors/actants seem to be working together towards a common purpose (a purpose provided by the moment of translation as it creates opportunities for relationships), and in which there is an element of literacy at work. I analyze the relationship work happening within this KTAP moment in order to start on the micro-level and to avoid lumping particular motivations for these moments together and attributing them solely to macro social forces.

As Sarah Read (2015) points out, ". . . for Latour the tracing of associations, or the 'peculiar *movement* of re-association and reassembling' (RS; emphasis added), is an explanatory activity that describes the translations that induce two actors, two intermediaries, into coexisting (RS 108) . . ." (p. 256). In other words, the key

to translation is in tracing the movement—or work—that creates relationships between actors/actants as they're enrolled into a specific network with a shared purpose. One way that translation takes power into account is by recognizing the fluidity of the negotiations between actors/actants and the mutability of agency in these relationships. In addition to recognizing the fluctuations of power dynamics, I consider how examining a moment of translation can help us to see *how* actors are made visible or identified as they interact with other actors and actants within the network. Analyzing the KTAP moment of translation allows us to see the mechanisms and consequences of Foucault's panopticon as they play out here, and also to work on identifying how the important and complex ways in which these students are interacting with the KTAP application tend to get subsumed and hidden by the application itself as a powerful institutional document.

KTAP ANALYSIS

The Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (KTAP), nested within several state departments, provides monthly financial assistance as part of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash benefit program to families with children, for a maximum of five years. Most parents at FSH receive KTAP benefits and must complete the application every month. In what follows, I analyze the KTAP application as a literacy moment of translation, which means I focus on how relationships are created, with whom, to accomplish what purpose, and amidst which tensions.

The KTAP application represents a kind of continuity of purpose and process that comes from its power as an established institutional document and procedure, but this continuity hides the tensions, differences, and fractures that arise when FSH students apply for government assistance. Just as Mathis and Boehm delve into their specific preparations and "behind-the-scenes work" of the Community Engagement Academy in order to reveal how significant collaborative relationships are being built, my analysis of KTAP reveals "behind-the-scenes" tensions underlying this document: the tension between needing assistance and being stuck on it, the tension in family relations, the tension between the KTAP applicant and her sponsor signing off on it, and the tension arising from the material circumstances and time constraints surrounding the application. These tensions get hidden by the one-dimensional way in which the powerful KTAP application constructs the less powerful applicants. Thus, also important here are the points of connection for relationship-making that KTAP provides opportunities for. This relationship work is a form of feminist intervention that can help to make students visible in different, complex ways.

During my interview with Rose, the Family Services Coordinator at FSH,

the KTAP application first came up when I asked her what kinds of writing she actually did with participants, such as filling out forms. Because all FSH participants are low-income single parents, KTAP applications are a common literacy event as participants need financial assistance. KTAP came up again when I asked Rose about the common struggles and obstacles that participants dealt with. Her answer initially had to do with the financial difficulties participants are dealing with, and then she moved on to address other, related challenges that arise through the KTAP application and the process it entails. It became clear that the KTAP application is a very powerful document representing the state government, and it requires interventions and relationships in order for participants to successfully negotiate it on many levels.

Part of the KTAP application's power comes not only from a very firm deadline that, if missed, means no assistance that month, but also from the fact that the KTAP document requires acknowledging existence of the child's father, which then results in the state demanding that he pay child support, which then has all sorts of consequences on relationships (between the mother and father, between the father and child, etc.). As Rose explains,

> Because it is government assistance, the government's going to say "Well where is Dad? What is he doing? How is he involved?" . . . So that will push a person into child support . . . And so we have hesitation for people to get KTAP because they, because a lot of times what they think or feel is "Oh, by putting my child's father on child support he's getting, I'm getting him in trouble." And that's a feeling from both sides, mom's side and dad's side . . . And he might say, which is, these are statements that have been shared with us, like "Ok well then I'm not going to see my child anymore," or "I want visitation," or somebody gets physically assaulted because of this. (Rose, personal communication, December 14, 2014)

Submitting a KTAP application therefore has very real and potentially negative consequences on the family relationships. This highlights further tension in this translation moment, because FSH students may rely on KTAP assistance to support their families while they're in school, but at the risk of damaging relationships between the mother and father and between the father and the kids. I don't necessarily want to argue that FSH students see this decision in this way—as choosing between earning a degree and maintaining positive relationships—but I do want to emphasize the potential for tension crystallized in this KTAP moment. What happens with this tension depends on the individual circumstances of each FSH student.

Dorothy Smith (2006) argues that analyzing how texts are used by different people in a sequence of activities reveals the disjunctures between different realities, individuals' perspectives, and institutional purposes that we wouldn't otherwise be able to see based on analyzing texts alone. Drawing on Smith, even though we aren't able to know how a KTAP form gets read and interpreted down the road by a government employee, what we can see is Rose's interpretation of the consequences of varying interpretations of the KTAP form upon FSH students and their families. For example, Rose indicates that the father's different interpretation of KTAP's request for child support—that he's now in trouble with the state—can result in a change in his relationship with the mother and the kids. The power here fluctuates, with another potential scenario being that applying for KTAP could mean that the father does end up paying child support, which then helps the mother support her family and continue her education. I want to point out the variability of different versions of the KTAP moment of translation in order to emphasize the tenuous, continually negotiated nature of power here. KTAP provides the points of connection "that transport transformation," and the shape this transformation takes varies. It's also significant that the KTAP application makes both the applicant and the child's father visible: it identifies the applicant as in need of financial assistance, and then identifies the father as someone who is then required by the state to help provide some of this assistance in the form of child support payments (even if he cannot make them). Identifying the mother and father in this way, as a one-dimensional focus on the material circumstances and needs of their lives, ignores other complex dimensions such as, as Rose points out, the nature of the pair's relationship.

Just as the KTAP application has potential consequences on family relationships, this tension creates the opportunity for a relationship between the student and Rose, as she points out: "And so I can help them, let me help you navigate this system and that you understand it well enough to take away some of the stressors that you could potentially experience. And if there is a relationship issue with dad, let me help you have a better conversation with dad so he can understand. . .That it benefits him too" (Rose, personal communication, December 14, 2014). The relationship work here between Rose and the participant becomes a feminist intervention, but not intervention in order to halt or prevent action—rather, intervention in the literal sense of the word. Their relationship "comes between" the actors and actants (the people involved and the KTAP application itself), acknowledging the necessity of KTAP and easing its repercussions. Mary Hamilton (2012) points out that "ANT asserts that the effects of power can be traced through assemblies, or mixtures, of objects, animals, people, machines, discourses and so on to which agency is delegated" (pp. 41-42). It is only through looking at the *relationships* connecting these various actors that we are able to understand how power works

within the translation process. As Sarah Read (2015) points out in her Latourian analysis of a child care program, the agency of these child care workers to implement material change based on state mandates "is coextensive with these powerful structures. Their agency is an effect of their association with the whole assemblage and their work to enact, maintain, and extend it" (p. 270). Thus, ANT allows us to describe how the relationships between actors being translated into a network shape the ebb and flow of power within that network. We can see the interdependencies of power dynamics that develop out of relationships within the KTAP moment of translation in how Rose describes her relationships with participants as well as how she develops her coaching approach to these relationships.

Rose describes the way she approaches her role with students as "encouragement coaching," and we can see how her specific angle creates perspectives on her students' lives that the KTAP application ignores.

> And I really take the approach . . . of coaching with our families . . . Seeing that our families are the experts, or the parent is the expert in their life . . . That I'm not here to tell them what to do . . . So I think that approach is really helpful for rapport-building . . . and again giving that person the tools and feeling that "Hey I can take care of this situation". (Rose, personal communication, December 14, 2014)

In voicing her coaching approach, Rose identifies the FSH families as "the experts" and the parent as "the expert in their life." This particular tact demonstrates a significantly different way of "seeing" or constructing these women from how the KTAP application sees them: as dependent, as needing the supervision of a sponsor. So, in this moment of translation, the relationship work between Rose and the women involves a shift in the perspective on the women, or on how they are "seen." By recognizing that the women are the experts in their own lives, Rose brings a more complex dimension to a literacy moment that typically reduces individuals to one-dimensional types. She thus counters the visibility trap of the KTAP application by refusing to see the women only as the document portrays them, but rather seeing their complexity. This shift in "seeing" extends the relationship work here as a kind of feminist intervention with deeper consequences, because in seeing the women as experts of their own lives, Rose helps them to see themselves this way.

The tension arising from relationships surrounding the KTAP application includes possible discomfort between the applicant and the sponsor she must get to sign off on her application. Rose points out that people applying for KTAP must find someone to sign off on their application, such as an employer or professor if they don't have access to FSH staff:

> So if you're a person who, let's say you didn't have FSH to sign off . . . I have a relationship with the folks to sign off, no big deal . . . But if a person maybe has to ask a professor or maybe has to ask an employer to sign this, well that could be embarrassing to them because Oh, here I am wanting you to sign my form . . . And you're going to ask me, and now you're going to know that I receive government assistance. (Rose, personal communication, December 14, 2014)

The potential embarrassment arising from applicants having to divulge private information about their lives and financial situation to relative strangers becomes an obstacle. And perhaps this remains an obstacle for FSH students, too, who may not all have strong relationships with FSH staff and who might not be comfortable sharing that information. Here, the points of connection that KTAP, as a moment of translation, allows for between the applicant and her sponsor can lead to unpredictable kinds of relationships and consequences. Just because translations are a "connection that transports transformation" doesn't mean that this transformation is necessarily positive. In this scenario, where KTAP applicants must find a person to sign off or may still feel uncomfortable with the FSH staff, the consequences involve a shift in social capital where applicants may lose power specifically in the form of social capital because of the negative associations that accompany government assistance. The sponsor signing gains a degree of power because he knows more about the applicant's life than he did before, and perhaps at least partially against her will. The document shapes the relationship between the sponsor and the applicant by mediating this relationship along the roles of supervisor/supervised, have/have not.

I attempted to locate a copy of the KTAP application itself but was told I could only obtain one with an in-person interview with a city social worker. Rose gave me a copy of the Verification of Kentucky Works Participation, or PA-33 which, while not the exact same thing as the KTAP application, does give an idea of the kind of supervision required from a sponsor (such as an employer or teacher). This is the form that documents the work/educational activities of applicants every month and is signed by the "provider."

Based on this form, we can see that the provider must document the exact hours an applicant works each day, including absences and holidays, and the provider must also "enter comments for any excused absences." Just like a teacher tracking a student's attendance in order to help determine her grade in the course, this level of supervision is close, precise, and shapes the financial situation of the applicant each month (the PA-33 must be completed each month). In other words, this document makes an applicant's labor visible, but in strictly prescribed

ways, namely, in terms of hours. The only potential for more detail comes from the requirement to "Enter comments for any excused absences," or, in other words, explanations for an applicant's lack of visible labor. The form itself emphasizes the significance of the monthly deadline: "If this form is not correctly completed and returned by **October 5, 2014**, we cannot give you credit for your participation, pay for transportation for **November 2014**, or help with other items you may need" (original emphasis). Not only does the PA-33 emphasize time in terms of an applicant's hours of work, it also constrains/defines the temporal aspect in which applicants interact with the document with the strict monthly deadline.

Figure 10.1. Verification of Kentucky Works Participation, PA-33. Photo taken by the author during data collection.

The KTAP application deadline imposes time-sensitive constraints upon the individual completing the application, and Rose points to the potential difficulties this might create for applicants who are juggling many variables when she says, "If you don't turn in that paperwork on time your benefits get cut off," which then means that person has to go to an appointment to reapply; "You also have situations where, and you may see this both for KTAP and Section 8, where they say, they send the letter and say 'Hey, you have an appointment on Dec 4th at 11:00.' Well that just so happens to be my math class" (Rose, personal communication, December 14, 2014). In this example, the high-stakes constraints placed upon this participant by her school and by the state require her to juggle her time in ways that allow her to successfully receive her benefits and to successfully pass her math class. As Sofia points out in this chapter's epitaph, time is her biggest challenge: "And so it's just, trying to juggle everything, I would say time . . . I always, I always say . . . I wish I had more time. So that would be the biggest challenge" (Sofia, personal communication, February 20, 2015). There is tension in this moment of translation due to the potential conflict between a student's material circumstances and the KTAP time constraints. The same material constraints that push a student into government assistance—full-time college coursework, lack of income, children to support—can also make it difficult to jump through the necessary hoops to receive the assistance. And, although the KTAP and the PA-33 paint a picture of the applicant primarily in terms of time (hours of labor), this maintains a one-dimensional portrait that does not take into account the many living variables making up an applicant's time.

KTAP also creates tension between a student's need to be on assistance and the trap of getting stuck on it and stuck in poverty, as ChaRay, an FSH participant, notes in the opening epigraph to this chapter. Not only must participants follow the application guidelines and deadlines, they must do so despite their discomfort and strong desire not to be on government assistance. As LeeAnn (another FSH staff member and former FSH participant) and Rose both point out, the very nature of government assistance requires FSH participants to remain in a very low income bracket to be eligible to receive this assistance. LeeAnn articulates this best:

> I think there's a point in everyone's life when you're on government assistance and you are low-income, that you sort of realize, it's like an epiphany, the system is meant to suppress me . . . Instead of help me, sort of. . . I mean, even if that's not entirely true, you do realize that at one point. . .I have to stay low-income in order to receive these benefits . . . you know you're broke, you know you're low-income, you're very

aware of all this stuff while you're here . . . But if you try to
do anything to better yourself right now, it's going to hurt
you more than help you. (LeeAnn, personal communication,
December 10, 2014)

In this scenario, the KTAP document seems to take power away from partici-
pants by limiting their opportunities for employment. Simultaneously, however,
the government assistance provides opportunities by giving recipients income.
This very real and embodied contradiction demonstrates the inability of a docu-
ment like the KTAP application to fully portray applicants as they work, study,
and live amidst a tremendous variety of elements making up their networks.
And I'm not arguing that it should, or even that it could, given how institutional
documents like the KTAP application have to function. But it is important to
understand exactly how the KTAP application translates the students into needs
and numbers, ignoring their complexities out of necessity, and thereby creating
opportunities for feminist interventions in the form of the relationship work
between Rose and the participants.

In fact, it is this contradictory and imbalanced power of the KTAP docu-
ment that necessitates Rose's intervention to help students navigate the system:

> . . . there are so many different barriers that come into play in
> helping a person get out of poverty . . . And, it's just helping
> our folks be strategic about that . . . And that's where I hope
> that I can help them . . . KTAP is only a 5 year program . . .
> And it's ideal right now because you're in college, and you're
> only going to be in college for, hopefully about 5 years . . . And
> so I can help them, let me help you navigate this system and
> that you understand it well enough to take away some of the
> stressors that you could potentially experience. And if there is a
> relationship issue with dad, let me help you have a better con-
> versation with dad so he can understand . . . That it benefits him
> too . . . And ultimately it's your decision, you know, because I
> have people who get KTAP, it doesn't work for them, and they
> would rather work, and that's fine . . . So it's really case by case.
> (Rose, personal communication, December 4, 2014)

We can see here that the KTAP moment of translation provides the op-
portunity for a relationship between the FSH student and Rose, and it is this
relationship specifically that helps the student to successfully navigate the KTAP
application in ways that reduce the negative consequences (on her family rela-
tionships, for example).

CONCLUSION

It is the uncertainty and tension represented in the KTAP document (the tension between needing assistance and that same assistance requiring applicants to stay poor, tension between needing assistance and needing strong family relationships, etc.) that necessitates these working relationships—these feminist interventions—between FSH students and FSH staff. So, another way to look at the KTAP moment in terms of translation, in light of the notion of translation as "a process of creating continuity in discontinuity," is to recognize the seeming continuity and strength of these relationships and then to look at what lies beneath those relationships, namely, the reasons that those relationships exist. If translation is a "connection that transports . . . transformations" (Latour, 2005, p. 108), then the KTAP application as a moment of translation is a point of connection between all of the involved actors/actants that supports potential transformations of those actors/actants via the relationships created by this point of connection. As Latour argues, "So, the word 'translation' now takes on a somewhat specialized meaning: a relation that does not transport causality but induces two mediators into coexisting" (p. 108). In other words, KTAP does not cause transformation; rather, the KTAP application induces the relevant actors/actants into coexisting, and it is the relationships arising from this coexistence that have the potential to transform those involved. In this way, we can conceive of feminist interventions as necessary parts of a complex system of sponsorship surrounding literacy practices. These feminist interventions enact relationship work that balances the reductive lens of institutional documents and processes. As Sheridan argues in Chapter 11, "Knot-working collaborations emerge out of what I consider a threshold concept within our field: doing is a leading edge of learning. Unfortunately, our desire to provide opportunities for this learning-by-doing faces institutional and individual obstacles that hinder feminist community engagement" (p. 214). Knot-working is an example of this feminist intervention of relationships that develop through "doing"; identifying moments of translation can allow us to recognize what the "doing" of this relationship work looks like in the practice of community engagement and research.

The most significant negotiations of power in this moment of translation seem to lie in the relationships among the people involved. It initially seems as though the KTAP document itself has the most power, because the students and staff are working to navigate the document successfully and there are material consequences on students' lives. Perhaps another way of looking at power is to argue that the KTAP document has the present power—in the present conditions of students' lives as they're on assistance—but it's the students who have the power over their potential futures because they are using the KTAP assistance in order to work towards the kind of futures they want (futures in which they are not on assistance).

In other words, power shifts over time and between actors/actants within a given translation. In this sense, it's important to analyze the relationship work and the ways in which students are being made visible/invisible in this KTAP moment of translation because by seeing the complexity here, we can also begin to see how this literacy moment could influence students' potential futures.

In using the ANT concept of translation to examine the network of literacy sponsorship surrounding the KTAP application, I have been able to trace the relationship work taking place between human actors as well as nonhuman actants. This relationship work between Rose and the participants allows FSH participants to change how they perceive their own lives and how they imagine their futures. Literacy sponsorship at FSH becomes not only about the literacy practices themselves (practices which, as demonstrated here, are not exclusively 'academic' or 'extracurricular' but are multifaceted, pragmatic, and significantly related to finances), or even about the goal of "life-long self-sufficiency" that these practices help achieve, but about the relationships and negotiations unfolding around even the smallest literacy event, where those relationships and power dynamics come from, and how they then keep on playing out within these actors' lives and networks. By making visible the mechanisms underlying this specific moment of translation and revealing the ways in which applicants are made visible (as poor, as single parents, in stark terms of work hours) and the complexities that are hidden (tensions in family relationships, the material conditions of their lives), I hope to emphasize the significance of the relationship work happening here. This relationship work not only provides opportunities for students to navigate the system and to see themselves differently (as Rose helps them to navigate KTAP and to see themselves as "the experts" on their lives), it also demonstrates the kind of deeply layered, prismatic work going on at places like Family Scholar House. This work is not worthy of attention simply because it exists in the "community" versus the "university" (because actually, I'd argue FSH exists in both at once), or because of its devotion to literacy and education. Rather, the relationship work happening in this moment of translation is valuable because it mirrors the kind of complex, deeply felt but rarely understood relationship work surrounding literacy in classrooms, living rooms, community centers, and workplaces everywhere. In identifying this relationship work as a kind of feminist intervention, the next question becomes, "How do we build heuristics and scaffolding to support and sustain the relationship work of feminist interventions in ways that don't squash the serendipitous, unpredictable, and joyful nature of these encounters?"[1]

---

1   I model this question after a similar one asked by Paul Feigenbaum at the inaugural Conference on Community Writing about the nature of community-university partnerships: "What would it mean to build engaged infrastructure that cultivates a flow milieu even while connected to institutions that tend to disrupt it?"

REFERENCES

Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (1998). *Local literacies: Reading and writing in one community*. London, England: Routledge.

Brandt, D. (2001). *Literacy in American lives*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Brandt, D., & Clinton, K. (2002). Limits of the local: Expanding perspectives on literacy as social practice. *Journal of Literacy Research, 34*(3), 337-356.

Cushman, E. (1998). *The struggle and the tools: Oral and literate strategies in an inner city community*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Family Scholar House. Retrieved from http://familyscholarhouse.org/

Feigenbaum, Paul. The community writing believing game: Discovering and dreaming about flow. *Conference on Community Writing*. University of Colorado, Boulder. Boulder, Colorado. 15 October 2015. Keynote Address.

Fenwick, T. J., & Edwards, R. (2012). *Researching education through actor-network theory*. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons.

Grabill, J. (2001). *Community literacy programs and the politics of social change*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Hamilton, M. (2012). Unruly practices: What a sociology of translations can offer to educational policy analysis. In T. J. Fenwick & R. Edwards (Eds.), *Researching education through actor-network theory* (pp. 40-59). Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons.

Harris, J. (1989). The idea of community in the study of writing. *College Composition and Communication, 40*(1), 11-22.

Kirsch, G. (1997). Multi-vocal texts and interpretive responsibility. *College English, 59*, 191-202.

Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network theory*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Parks, S. (2013). Beginnings of a polemic: Shaking the borders of a literate education. *Literacy in Composition Studies, 1*(1), 42-44.

Read, S. (2015). Making a thing of quality child care: Latourian rhetoric doing things. In P. Lynch & N. Rivers (Eds.), *Thinking with Bruno Latour in rhetoric and composition* (pp. 256-274). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Royster, J. J., & Kirsch, G. (2012). *Feminist rhetorical practices: New horizons for rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Simmons, W. M., Moore, K., & Sullivan, P. (2015). Tracing uncertainties: Methodologies of a door closer. In P. Lynch & N. Rivers (Eds.), *Thinking with Bruno Latour in rhetoric and composition* (pp. 275-293). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Smith, D. E. (2006). *Institutional ethnography as practice*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Street, B. V. (1984). *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press.