

FINANCIAL LITERACY AND ACADEMICS: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS¹

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Abstract:

Using a critical discourse analysis (CDA), we explore the experience of adult education and business academics educating new parents for financial literacy. Informed by post-structuralism, CDA helps to examine the social relations of power operating in knowledge-dissemination processes, especially as they affect adult educators, accountants, community partners, new parents, funding agencies, and government. We analyze our own engagement in this financial program, highlighting our complicities and resistances, especially the ways in which we wittingly and knowingly become academic lackeys for our government.

Résumé

Utilisant une méthode d'analyse critique du discours, nous explorons l'expérience d'académiciens en éducation des adultes et en affaires intruisant des nouveaux parents en littéracie financière. Informée par le poststructuralisme, la méthode d'analyse critique du discours aide à examiner les relations sociales de pouvoir impliquées dans le processus de dissémination, spécialement leur impact sur les éducateurs d'adultes, comptables, partenaires communautaires, nouveaux parents, organismes de financement, et gouvernement. Nous analysons notre engagement dans ce programme financier, soulignons nos complicités et nos résistances, et comment nous devenons des laquais académiques pour le gouvernement.

Introduction

Literacy of any kind is a valued phenomenon as evidenced by the broad range of specialized terms associated with it: cultural literacy, powerful literacy, health literacy, multiple literacies, fundamental literacy, and civic literacy (e.g., Pleasant, 2011; Quigley, 2006). When classic definitions of literacy as the ability to read and write are extended to health, to civil society, and, more recently, as in this paper, to things financial, we see how

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much society values knowledge and information sharing. Indeed, with regard to financial literacy, we see that adult educators such as Hogarth and Swanson (1995); Tisdell, Taylor, and Sprow (2011); and Buckland (2010) have seemingly embraced financial literacy as part of our profession’s mandate. Yet financial literacy is not an unproblematic idea or practice. Using a post-structuralist lens in this paper, we examine our team efforts to increase financial literacy of new parents, and in so doing show how we collide and collude with the knowledge-dissemination process. We look directly at the ways in which we are affected by (and affect) the funding priorities of academe.

This paper grew out of our experience of working as a team of business professors and adult education professors to help new parents become financially literate, save for their children’s future, and be fiscally responsible. In this article we build also on conversations with colleagues, publicly available documents, and our collective research and education experience. Our attention is drawn to the social and historical context and competing discourses, and the power/knowledge nexus of universities, academics, government, funding agencies, accounting laws, businesses, banks, communities, and health agencies working to educate the public. Using critical discourse analysis (CDA), we pay particular attention to the social relations of power that operate in this Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)–funded educational dissemination process, especially as it affects us as researchers. Our focus is on how the financial literacy phenomenon can inform the critically self-reflexive process engendered by post-structuralism and CDA.

Theoretical Framework

Our theoretical framework is CDA, which relies heavily on Foucauldian (1980, 1982) post-structuralism; we employ CDA to further understand how the financial literacy discourse is created and how it perpetuates itself and produces effects (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 6). Of central importance in this paper is how ideas like financial literacy become embedded in our field’s language and practices, while others fade into oblivion. Like adult educators English and Irving (2008), we wonder how some of these ideas and discourses become dominant and normalized, and how we as academic subjects are affected (Treleaven, 2004).

The theory of power that undergirds this analysis is informed by Foucault (1980, 1982). This theory holds that rather than a sovereign power, humans operate in a world where power is everywhere and is exercised by everyone (not owned); it is interwoven and works itself in a capillary-like fashion through the complex web of relationships and discourses (words, text, practices, and their underlying body of knowledge) that surround the financial literacy process. This power is productive in that it has effects, both negative and positive. Though Foucault himself did not draw directly on critical theory, his work shares a common purpose of addressing unjust power relations and situations (Brookfield, 2005). Foucault (1982) draws attention to governmentality, or the ways we are governed by a number of technologies (techniques or practices) of power. By government he meant “conduct of conduct,” or the control of how we act (pp. 220–221). By self-discipline he referred to the actions by which we regulate ourselves (e.g., telling the funder what it wants to hear; complying with arcane funding rules). To describe this self-regulation, Foucault uses the term subjectivity, or the ways in which we are constituted as subjects.

Our task in CDA is to trace this power (i.e., “critical” element) as it courses through our development processes, acting on us, on the funding agencies, and on the community. This analytic tool of CDA is concerned with not only the end product of what is produced (i.e., the educational booklet and website for new parents), but how it is produced (i.e., in concert with the local hospital board and daycare centres), why it is produced (e.g., advance academic careers, build the economy, increase public financial literacy), and by whom (i.e., experts in the university and in the financial sector). CDA is also concerned with the history and contexts that surround the production (e.g., partners, definable educational products, research funding bodies). In tracing the flow of power we see how we are discursively created as academics, accountants, members of the public, and health agency actors. The power is not held by anyone but rather flows through our texts and our bodies, effecting an array of competing discourses. Yet as social actors and academics we vary in our ability to affect conditions of possibility (Davies, 2004). Our task here is to map the flow of power and the resistances in this financial literacy project, however minute.

Following Foucault (1980, 1982), we pay attention to micropractices, or everyday events such as designing financial literacy programs, in which resistance is embedded, such as in parents’ refusing to read the literature given to them or failing to comply with the suggestions regarding finances. Subtle resistances in the everyday world of financial planning and education are instances of how power is resisted; studying these resistances leads us to a deeper understanding of how power is held and practised among humans. Although the financial literacy literature and the theoretical accounting literature, by and large, assume beneficence of knowledge dissemination and transfer, we take the CDA perspective that these practices need to be closely examined. Our integrity as academics and our belief in the need for government to support families and education require us to be diligent and alert in this process.

Our particular interest in examining financial literacy processes is in analyzing the “opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (Wodak, 1995, p. 204). We are especially interested in “discourse-as-social practice, i.e., the ideological effects and hegemonic processes” by which discourse is enacted in the everyday world (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p. 449). This paper uses discourse to refer to “instances of written or spoken language” (Ferguson, 2007, p. 913). As team members and writers, our interest is in how discourse creates new subjectivities into being. We see discourse as constituted by social structures and as constitutive of them; it can reproduce and transform society.

We recognize that though Foucault’s theor(ies) of knowledge and power are influential in CDA, it was Fairclough’s (2003; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) use of these to articulate a loose framework (not strict method) of CDA that has made this paper possible. Fairclough laid the way for examining social issues (in this case a research project), identifying the obstacles (funders, assumptions, discourses), analyzing the practice and the discourse, identifying possible ways of passing the obstacles, and reflecting on the analysis (see Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Yet as linear as his CDA approach looks, it is in practice an eclectic and spontaneous tool. Our paper builds on this scaffolding with a particular emphasis on the practice and the discourse of financial literacy.

Locating Ourselves and Our Project

In the tradition of CDA as articulated by Fairclough (1992) and Mills (1997), we are especially interested in the history and environment in which the research is produced. In this article we draw on our experience of collaborating to seek funding and in carrying out our research in a rural community. We bring our own experience of coming together as a university-based team (adult education and business professors) to apply for and receive a competitive research-dissemination grant and to implement a pilot program to increase financial literacy of new parents in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. This process, which took place over a six-month period, involved partnering with local committees and agencies such as the regional health board and the credit union to develop and disperse materials to educate new parents in budgeting, accessing grants from government, and participating in long-term savings plans for their children’s educational future.

The actual products were a website (<http://www.parentsguide2money.ca/>) and a 68-page booklet called *A New Parent’s Guide to Money: 5 Simple Steps to Financial Health*. This 3 by 6-inch booklet has a spiral binding, is written in accessible prose, and contains coloured pictures of fresh, healthy, affluent parents of a variety of races, sexes, and ages, with young children. Both products are described more fully below.

The strategic process employed was to apply for a federal SSHRC knowledge-dissemination grant. When the grant was awarded, three undergraduate business students were hired to review the literature, find similar projects internationally, and help create a booklet for distribution to new parents. There was a process of limited consultation with the health authority, the First Nations community, and a local daycare. An outside multimedia firm was hired to build a website. The entire project is classified as a pilot project and has not been evaluated yet, so our analysis is limited to the development and production stages.

We as a team prepared, produced, and disseminated the discourses at the heart of this paper in the belief that they would build on some of the team members’ previous experience in similar financial literacy projects for high-school students, and in the hope that they would be an opportunity to share professional knowledge with new parents. With this in mind, we knowingly complied with SSHRC guidelines and set out a plan that reproduced, in large measure, the prevailing discourses of financial literacy, good citizens, and useful academic work. If we had reservations, we did not voice them, in effect self-disciplining ourselves to comply with the granting agency rules—yet we resisted in a number of instances. It was not until three months after the pilot project was completed that we were available to critically reflect on our agency, our products, and our process to date. This reflection involved rough dialogue, analysis of created texts, engagement with the literature, and recollection of past experiences. We are aware that our literacy dissemination project is not unproblematic in the sense that we complied greatly, creating academic subjectivities that are largely compliant. Our resistances, like those of most academics, are modest, which is partly why we wanted to examine them.

Working the Data

Irving and English (2008), Treleaven (2004), Fairclough (1992), and Mills (1997) use CDA to examine social and institutional processes that occur, like this one of creating a financial

literacy program. Although the locations and processes differ, each is interested in the everyday background and the historical, economic, cultural, and political setting in which the discourse/data (language and practices) were contextualized. In our case, a number of discourses stand out; in this section we examine them more closely in light of the relevant aspects of CDA.

We are guided here in part by Davies' (2004) injunctions about doing critical work, beginning with her understanding of the use and selection of relevant data. Davies notes that the data we use are not evidence that stand apart from us. Rather, these data are "statements or descriptions [which] reveal the ways that sense is being made" (p. 4) by researchers. As research team members we are an integral part of our data; we are with it in the making and, as with all our relationships, knowledge, power, and subjectivity are an integral part of that data and how we analyze it. Important here is the belief that the ways we analyze that data—in our case the SSHRC grant application, the booklet, the website, anecdotes of our teamwork, etc.—or "make sense [of it,] are not innocent" (p. 5). We chose these based on relevance to CDA and availability of access. We did not have access to other possible sources of data such as SSHRC insider discussions or young parents' reactions to the booklet.

We assume that we need to interrogate how we do educational work and analysis and how we affect and are affected by it. The most important caution Davies (2004) offers is that we as authors are not the final word in the analytical process. It is the reader's job to find meaning in our text; we have merely created the possibilities. Our task is to do more than reveal hidden truth—we want to "disrupt that which is taken for truth" (p. 7). We intend to do this by observing the flow or movement of power—"its strategies, its maneuvers, its tactics, and techniques" (p. 7).

Text upon Text

Our pilot project in financial literacy was funded through SSHRC. Mixed with its discourse of co-creating knowledge is the language of finance, useful knowledge, and brokering; for SSHRC, knowledge becomes a commodity to quantify and disseminate; its own website says it "*builds* knowledge" (www.sshrc.ca; italics ours). The university, often through its administrators, has taken up this SSHRC language and encouraged research production and dissemination to become everyday discourses. In our institution, like many others, academics who garner federal grants and who publish frequently are favourably positioned for promotion and distinction. Indeed, the critique of the commodification of higher education is well established (Bok, 2003).

As academics we are affected by the discourse, though the counter-discourse of academic freedom and collegial respect for refereed scholarship may moderate the effects. Yet the SSHRC-like discourse shaped (and shapes) the development of our respective research programs and encouraged us to reach out to the most available and convenient audience—new parents—regardless of marital or financial status, educational background, or sex. Our goal was market and availability, though we resisted SSHRC in some ways by using our literacy material as a place to not only promote financial information but also to include a section on labour rights (how to "talk to your employer," booklet, p. 25), the

benefits of breastfeeding (“it’s free,” booklet, p. 35), and the value of work inside and outside the home (“deciding to go back to paid work,” booklet, p. 23). In so doing, we created a new text that resisted SSHRC’s attempts to co-opt academic labour in the service of a fiscal agenda.

One means of resistance was writing this critique of the financial literacy project. SSHRC grant in hand, pilot project complete, we are taking advantage of our privileged position as tenured academics to resist in print, much as Haggerty (2004) does in his critique of federal funding councils and mandatory research ethics reviews. The actual guidelines for this dissemination grant on the SSHRC website (www.sshrc.ca) present this project as an opportunity to “inform discussion, and enhance understanding and decision-making” and to “disseminate, transfer, synthesize, and broker research results [in finance] to wider audiences.” This was a one-time grant and it was clearly intended to be applied for and spent in a short period of time. Underlying these guidelines was the assumption that the quicker we were to get knowledge out there, the quicker the world financial crises would be solved. Seemingly, this fear trickled down into our booklet, since there was a sense of urgency and fear in it, too (“hope for the best, but prepare for the worst,” booklet, p. 56).

As academics, of course we did not act alone. We were aided and abetted by higher-education officials (deans, directors, academic vice presidents, provosts) who have created a discourse of their own, sometimes in sync with the government and its funding agencies like SSHRC who reward academics who partner for funding, and at times at odds with these bodies when they use the discourse of academic standards, research integrity, and autonomy (English & Irving, 2008). The discourses exist simultaneously, each producing a separate and parallel regime of truth (universalisms or unwritten laws; Foucault, 1980): (1) we are supportive of integrity and institutional independence, and (2) we are supportive of any projects that are funded.

Faced with declining budgets from their conservative government funder, SSHRC increasingly rewards projects like ours that address current problems. In 2011, for instance, their strategic research grants were directed to topics such as the environment, Aboriginal issues, and economic development in northern communities. When we applied for this financial literacy project, SSHRC wanted results that “enable businesses, governments and institutions to innovate, boost their productivity” (www.sshrc.ca), and our project met this criteria. A key discourse here is that the project is results-driven, useable, and strategic. While academics voice objection to the erosion of academic freedom, they (like us) comply with the bureaucratic funding machinery given the rewards of success in a competition.

Discursive Text

The booklet and website overlaid discourses on each other. The booklet was designed for easy reading (our grant application called this “clear language”), with charts, lists, and bullet-point information. It was divided into five sections: Step 1—Understanding your benefits; Step 2—Arranging child care; Step 3—Managing your money; Step 4—Investing in your child’s future; and Step 5—Protecting your child’s future. The use of coloured blocks of information and coloured pictures accentuate the ease with which one can control spending and plan for the future. The sub-title *5 simple steps to financial health* suggests that

all parents should be able to do this, if only they try. Our selection of language betrays our attitudes to parents as needing very accessible information in simple terms, and emphasizes the distance between expert knowledge of the team and the standard knowledge level of the public. In effect, we were setting ourselves up as experts, using financial language to exert power and effect docility and compliance in the reader.

In retrospect, we further infantilized the parent in the introduction to the booklet by using the heading “From pinching cheeks to pinching pennies, we’ll help you” (p. 2), in effect treating the parent as a child who has to be cajoled into compliance. The booklet goes on to generalize that “having a newborn is always a source of joy, happiness” (p. 3). In fact, for the millions of people who live below the poverty line, this is likely not always the case. Ironically, when one is finished reading the booklet, the joy of having a baby is eclipsed with the barrage of charts, calculators, schedules, talk of making wills, and enough financial information to seriously overwhelm a new parent. The discourse is a classed one and is reinforced through intertextuality—layering the discourse of savings on existing discourses of responsible parenting. Since we have not fully evaluated the booklet and its use, we are unsure of its effect on parents, but we speculate there may be some resistance by those who refuse to read it or who give up halfway through. Yet our intent was genuinely to help.

The text of the website lies over and around the text of the booklet, creating further discourse layers. The website contains a PDF and HTML copy of the booklet, and provides easy links to the forms needed to apply for the benefits listed in the booklet. Whereas the booklet suggests “planning your spending” (p. 34), the website links directly to a daily spending calculator from the Government of Canada (<http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/oca-bc.nsf/eng/ca01808.html#result>). When the booklet suggests applying for a birth certificate and a social insurance number (p. 48), a website link to the appropriate application forms is provided. When the booklet suggests that new parents “stick to a budget,” a direct link is given to a tool for budgeting. The multiple links suggest immediacy and the need to act now. In some ways the booklet mirrors Beck’s (1992) risk society: we need to be always afraid, always prepared, and always looking ahead. In our haste to share financial literacy information we did not adequately weigh the effects of our discourse and the ways in which it rendered us as fear mongers and parents as potential agents of disaster.

Actors and Resistances

We were a mixture of accounting, marketing, and adult education professors who hired undergraduate business students to conduct the literature reviews and prepare draft educational products. Though seemingly equal, the team itself was affected by its own power issues. The adult education professor was in a minority position in that she was the only female team member and her expertise was in gender and education, not in business and accounting. The principal investigator was an accountant. The adult education professor was unwilling to challenge the financialization agenda of the educational products and so she self-disciplined herself by not speaking for fear of being perceived as uncooperative. Therefore, the discourse of finance and savings set the tone of the financial literacy project. The adult education professor resisted when she saw an early copy of the booklet that promoted the use of baby formula and talked about “going back to work.” She suggested

promoting breastfeeding and designating work outside the home as paid work to distinguish it from work at home, thereby inserting a critical voice into a masculinist text. It must be said that such overtures are minute resistances that may have little effect.

The adult education professor was not the only resister. When the principal investigator consulted with community groups such as the community health board, a preschool, and a First Nations community about the booklet, he felt the push of these community bodies reminding him to diversify the pictures (which are now inclusive of gender, race, and age), and to include a reminder to "register with Band membership" (p. 3) for First Nations families. Consultation with the regional health authority resulted in inclusion of reminders for pregnant mothers to take folic acid (p. 19) and to pack toiletries and a car seat, among other items, to take to the hospital on the day of delivery (p. 9). These useful tips serve to decrease the fear in the financial literacy booklet and to broaden the range of information from a purely financial focus. It is worth noting that in the usual manner of university work, the "team" operated largely as individuals, met infrequently, and communicated mainly by e-mail. One wonders how more face-to-face meetings might have affected the process.

Parental Identities and Discourses

New parents were the ones most acted upon in this project. At a time of physical and emotional vulnerability (new parenting), they were approached by the team to read drafts and later to participate in the financial literacy programs that were to be "*distributed* to hospitals and prenatal classes" (SSHRC application). Though the educational program was basically a website and a printed booklet, it had the power of a major educational initiative, mainly because it concerned their child and his/her future. For these parents, typically at a young age with a scarcity of funds, the child is seen as a priority. Educational programs such as these work alongside admonitions to take care of prenatal and early childhood safety and health (our booklet recommends checking out a day care centre "to make sure it will be a good fit for your child," p. 29). Hearing the voice of authority through print and through the discourse of banking, government, and other regulations that are there for the future, the parent likely is anxious. And who would not be, though the relationship between text and effect is not always clear-cut, since the discourse on financial literacy is wrapped in soft and caring language? The booklet, for instance, talks of "protecting your child's future" (p. 56) and "provid[ing] a healthy home" (p. 64).

Similarly, a federal government website linked from ours equates saving for a child's future with caring for a child: "To date, more than three million children have benefited from the Canada Education Savings Grant" (http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/learning/education_savings/public/cesg.shtml). This statement, however true, has the ring of rescuing a child from poverty. For the parent, the effect of not complying with this financial literacy information may be a sense of failure in that we could not and did not take care of our child. One wonders here with Landvogt (2006) about the parent who cannot save, who does not have the means to put aside funds. The situation is further complicated by the myth of benevolent sovereign power, the nation state, that will help you if only you would do your part. Here is how the Canadian government frames one of its savings plans on a website linked from ours (<http://www.canlearn.ca/eng/saving/cesg/index.shtml>):

On the first \$500 you save every year in your child's Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP), the Canada Education Savings Grant will give you:

up to \$200, if your net family income is \$38,832 or less

up to \$150, if your net family income is between \$38,832 and \$77,664,
or

up to \$100, if your net family income is more than \$77,664.

The discourses that the government uses are socially produced ideas, and over a period of time “they are maintained and held in place” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 6). We see here that the terms *saving* and *planning* are entwined with the discourse of responsible parenting. The good parent saves and cooperates and the good government “will give you.” This discourse has likely come about because of the global financial situation and the increasing trend away from a social welfare approach to increased individual responsibility. Not surprisingly, then, government-funded agencies such as SSHRC responded by calling for funding proposals to disseminate business knowledge and financial know-how. Consequently, a fiscally conservative discourse has seeped into our everyday academic lives through funding as a technology of power.

Discursive Struggles with Partners

As we conducted this financial literacy project and engaged with the bureaucrats involved, a number of ambiguities emerged. The knowledge-dissemination project was intended to connect a number of constituencies—parents, government, academics, funding bodies, community groups. Yet it really was an exercise in *transfer of* information rather than a community-based and generated system of knowledge. This project was intended to force compliance with the government and its funding agencies that support partnering to promote savings, thereby strengthening the economy. If parents comply by saving for their child's higher education, then they help the government offset the provision of student loans to students later in life. We forget quickly that having paid taxes we must continue to support the government's avoidance of its responsibility to provide education for all. The *regime of truth* that we live in a deliberative democracy and a *socialist state* is furthered.

In effect, we as academics and parents are helping to support privately (not publicly) funded education, all the while being told that the government “will give you” a reward (www.canlearn.ca). We have become willing subjects of a controlling capitalist state. While it is true that many higher-education students are in debt and that many parents have not contributed to RESP plans for their children's education, this ignores the fact that recent “job losses were almost entirely concentrated among summer students” (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2009, p. 1). Government policies, then, are directly affecting students who cannot work even if they want to. Furthermore, there is an implied discourse here of what it means to be a citizen. A good citizen has funds to save and takes care of his/her child by contributing to savings, avoiding “trouble with debt” (booklet, p. 43), and “managing your money” (p. 32). In effect, we are blaming poverty on the poor, who cannot comply for reasons often more complicated than a bank balance.

In tracing the lines of power, it becomes more apparent that the financial literacy discourse was dictated downward from the government, through the SSHRC agency, through the university-employed academics and professionals, through the health boards, and on to the new parents, to the family unit. Whereas literacy (Freire & Macedo, 1987) is intended to be more of a participatory endeavour, this is a top-down program that has the potential to engender resistance from the so-called partners—academics, parents, health board, community, observers. It is usually expected that there be considerable and long-term consultation with the participants, but that was not the case here. The short timeline for project completion, the limited resources available, and the application requirements that the project be completed in six months made this challenging.

Discussion of Alternative Perspectives

We wonder here, as does Landvogt (2006), what can be done to subvert such processes and to address real literacy needs in the community through more responsible means. Though we are mindful that Foucault himself was hesitant to make recommendations, we proceed cautiously to discuss the possibilities for alternative views and actions.

Reading the Word and Reading the World

It would seem that the term *financial literacy* needs to be examined more closely. Used in the discourses of civil society and corporate governance, it is ubiquitous and assumes that literacy is a thing to be consumed, that it can be conveyed in text and on the web. Yet, as Paulo Freire (Freire & Macedo, 1987) has told us, literacy needs to be participatory, to involve participants in the process and ultimately engage them in projects for their own freedom. If literacy can be absconded or borrowed by finance, then the social practices of basic literacy education ought to be too. We could use the financial literacy educational programs and the knowledge-dissemination process to question critically the funders of the program, the source of funding, and the purposes of the funding. Our discourse may need to shift away from *productive academics* to *community members*. Freire would find our 5 simple steps and production of “A guide to money” to be anything but participatory and very much removed from a project to read the world, particularly given the Canadian political context in which the conservative federal government is promoting spending our way out of the recession (Coyne, 2009), all the while promoting budgeting and saving.

As with all social practices and discourses, the discourse of *knowledge dissemination* and *financial literacy* constitutes and sustains unequal power relations (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997): us as experts, and parents as depositories of information. Educating about financial practice shapes not only interactions in and among the partners, the community, and the university, for example, or between parents and banks, but also the knowledge produced and the nature of inquiry itself. The discourse of financial literacy borrows from the seemingly benign discourse of education and functional literacy (ability to read and write) to make accessible and mandatory the notion of financial literacy (budgeting and saving for the future). In conjoining the once removed world of finance with literacy, the government and SSHRC produce a language of responsibility and care and make financial care a possibility. Such mapping of terms renders moot arguments about

separate spheres and moves financial management from the federal level to the household economy, flowing in a single direction through university professors and their research and publication agendas. Invisible as it may seem, this serves to allow the government into the homes of private citizens and to allow the business sector to *transfer* its knowledge to special classes and ages of citizens. This also allows governments, once supportive of education and funding higher education, to download these responsibilities to families in the form of *savings*, *refunds*, and *responsibility*. All of this happened when, as Buckland (2010) has shown, many families already know what they need to do with their money.

The unknowing subject of literacy is inscribed with the economic discourses of *financial literacy*, *budgeting*, and *planning*, and thereby becomes an unwitting actor in the global financial sector. Yet despite the fact that the participants in the traditional reading and writing discourse debate the meanings of what it means to be literate (e.g., Quigley, 2006), in our project we never once debated what it meant to be financially literate; rather, we searched the Internet, found similar programs from other constituencies, and decided ourselves on a set of concepts that constituted the financial literacy subject. Our complicity was enjoined with minor resistances, which in retrospect need bolstering, especially our own surveillance of SSHRC, federal regulations, and seemingly benign educational processes.

At a certain point we may also need to think more strategically about what our academic docility is promoting and how we might resist it. The Canadian Association of University Teachers encourages academics to become more active in lobbying government (see www.caut.ca) and in changing academic policies and funding. As academics we can use our intellectual resources to encourage more debate, become involved in politics, and put SSHRC under the microscope. We have an arsenal of intellectual acumen at our disposal and we need to resist the ways in which SSHRC has been able to “capture” us (Gendron & Bedard, p. 339)—that is, influence what we research and how we do it.

Alternate Framing of Needs

We might well consider doing literacy projects differently, and since ours was a pilot project, we have that opportunity. We need to think of it as in the functional literacy sense (Quigley, 2006) as including people, as bringing in the partners to ask them what they need to know. We can ask the question: what is the sense of a program that meets a need that does not exist (Caffarella, 2002)? Or of a literacy initiative that never seeks the views of the community it serves in terms of readiness to learn, appropriateness of material, etc.? The lifting of literacy from its context of community (*functional literacy*) and importing it in the financial hierarchical sector (*financial literacy*) is not without its issues. We could learn from Tisdell et al. (2011) about being more culturally responsive in financial literacy work.

There is an irony that these educational resources (booklet and website) are intended for use in a rural location that has both black Nova Scotians and First Nations people as part of its constituency. Although we consciously included racial diversity in our images and texts, we have not considered deeply the ways in which varied groups view literacy and education. First Nations scholar Eileen Antone (2003), for example, has pointed out that for her ethnic group, literacy is both a community and a holistic

practice and that it involves "relationships between self, community, nation and creation with a focus on words, language, listening and comprehension" (n.p.). Our approach to planning this project has not fully honoured this discourse or way of being, certainly not to the degree that Tisdell et al.'s (2011) work did. In some ways, it has met the needs of a literate constituency who hold the traditional literacy abilities to access this information independently. In using the middle-class discourse of banking, saving, and child care, we have ignored the working poor and lower middle classes as well as ethnic and cultural practices.

Identifying Resistances in These Programs

We need to move to a model of financial literacy that pays attention to the resistances that, according to CDA, reside in all human encounters. We need to look at how the power courses through all these situations. Tracing these will help us plan for our work (Brookfield, 2005). For instance, part of our planning process was to examine all our educational products to ensure gender balance and racial diversity and to enlist community partners in doing the same. We were able then to catch our predisposition to choose people of European descent for the booklet and website illustrations; in so doing, we resisted the regime of truth that only the white middle class are the financially literate. Yet, beyond changing pictures, it is not clear that we respected diversity to any great degree.

Of course, we remain committed to responsible parenting and financial care, but we realize these terms exist on a continuum. Troubling them is a good thing so that we as professors involved in adult education do not accept things as a given. The government is planning for its future by delaying payments, and it is creating the idea that it is also helping us plan for our future. In reality we are instruments of the state; in this instance we knowingly helped the government further its own economic and political goals, in effect creating us and parents as docile subjects. Tracing the lines of power more closely will help us identify and fortify the resistances.

Concluding Comments

This kind of analysis helps adult educators uncover and problematize seemingly benign academic practices such as partnering and working with the community and funding agencies. By using CDA on this knowledge-dissemination project, we have contributed to the ongoing development of our field and encouraged others to do the same. In applying CDA to this contradictory discourse we raise questions about our university alliances and our complicity in the implicit power relations. On the one hand, partnering created a collaborative work culture, and on the other hand, it militated against relationship.

We continue with our attempts to understand the effects of power and the discourse within the thrust for financial literacy, which consumes the global world of civil society through the print, web, and visual media. In the same way that this culture demands *accountability*, *knowledge transfer*, and *dissemination*, we respond that our task is to analyze these demands and how they are enacted among parents, citizens, and academics. This paper serves as an act of resistance to stabilized readings of the economy, literacy, community, and financial responsibility. It provides a cartography of our own shifting

subjectivity as we move from writers of grants and participants in the adult education academic sphere to discourse analysts.

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