Challenging Representations: Constructing the Adult Literacy Learner Over 30 Years of Policy and Practice in the United Kingdom

Mary Hamilton, Kathy Pitt
Lancaster University, UK

ABSTRACT

This article addresses the question, How do changes in policy discourses shape public representations of literacy learners and the goals of adult literacy education? It examines specifically how the agency of adult literacy learners is constructed. We carry out a critical discourse analysis of two key adult literacy policy documents from the U.K.: the manifesto *A Right to Read* (British Association of Settlements, 1974) and *Skills for Life: The National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills* (Department for Education and Skills, 2001). We describe the overall structure and genre of the documents and analyze the semiotic resources in the texts to explore the discursive shaping of adult literacy learners. Our analysis shows that, while a functional discourse of individual deficit is prominent throughout the texts, each document expresses it differently. A discourse of rights and participation in the earlier text changes to a discourse of social inclusion, conditional on duty and responsibility and narrowed to the sphere of paid employment. The profiles of individual learners are heavily framed by the dominant discourses of literacy and education that constitute the texts. We argue that the discursive shifts we trace in these national documents relate to wider changes in notions of social disadvantage, rights and citizenship, and the emergence of literacy as a key indicator of progress. Our analysis demonstrates the powerful ways in which policy documents articulate relationships between national and transnational literacies.

Adult literacy learners are often viewed as people living at the margins of mainstream society. In the United Kingdom, they are currently targeted as part of a wider group of people labeled "socially excluded" and thus are a focus of concern for social policy and a range of expert practitioners. The field of adult literacy shares with other policy areas (such as mental health, homelessness, poverty, and disability) the task of representing a stigmatized group. The effort to advocate on their behalf may paradoxically reinforce the negative stereotypes through which they are "othered" (see Chouliaraki, 2010; Hall, 1997; Lister, 2004; Luke, 2003).

This article explores the discourse of adult literacy policy in the United Kingdom since the 1970s, a historical period during which social disadvantage, welfare rights, and citizenship have been discursively and materially reconfigured. We treat the United Kingdom

as a detailed case study of wider trends and ask the following questions:

- How do policy discourses shape public representations of literacy learners and the goals of adult literacy education?
- Specifically, how is the agency of literacy learners represented within the changing social relations of policy and practice?

The article addresses a central challenge that has been identified for literacy studies: the need to extend our understanding of how the relationships between local and transnational literacies are organized (see Blommaert, 2010; Brandt & Clinton, 2002; Warriner, 2009).

We carry out a critical discourse analysis of two key adult literacy policy documents from the United Kingdom: the *A Right to Read* manifesto (British

Association of Settlements, 1974) and *Skills for Life: The National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills* (Department for Education and Skills, 2001). We chose these two documents because of the pivotal roles they played in the formation of the field of adult literacy education from the early 1970s to 2001.

We begin by establishing the macro policy context of the "problem" of adult literacy. We offer an account of the context and main changes within the field of adult literacy in the United Kingdom since the 1970s, including international influences on it. This account is based on oral history and the documentary data collected in the *Changing Faces* historical project reported in Hamilton and Hillier (2006).[1] We map the documentary trail across this field of action over three decades to identify and contextualize the key documents for textual analysis. This situates the two documents we analyze within a set of practices and policy discourses experiencing constant realignment (see Coffield, Edward, Finlay, & Hodgson, 2008; Hamilton & Hillier, 2006, 2007; Hodgson, Edward, & Gregson, 2007). It also establishes their key significance at pivotal moments in the construction of the field. We then describe the overall structure and genre of the two documents and analyze the semiotic resources in the texts, focusing in detail on lexical, syntactic, and visual elements to explore the discursive shaping of adult literacy learners. We discuss the two texts in chronological order of their production, showing some of the links and disruptions between them. Because the discourses we identify pervade the wider field of social policy, we argue that we can locate the specific texts we analyze within broader orders of discourse (Fairclough, 2001) and social formations that are significantly shaping the contemporary social landscape.

We focus especially on how the *agency* of adult literacy learners is constructed, looking at the ways they are positioned in the mix of dominant discourses on literacy and education that constitute the texts. We do this by analyzing selected key excerpts from the documents, which reveal that agency is represented through limited, reductive dichotomies. We also discuss how the complex lives and needs of adult literacy learners are constructed through the device of illustrative narratives of specific individual learners which are included in the documents. We look in detail at these profiles because they are potentially a channel through which the learners' own representations of their learning and lives might appear. Through our analysis, however, we argue that the persuasive, promotional discourse of the policy genre in both documents reaches deep into these narratives and presents the personalized examples as stories of product success.

Overview of Adult Literacy in the United Kingdom as a Field of Policy and Practice

A long history of adult education practice in the United Kingdom addressed literacy before the advent of compulsory schooling (Kelly, 1992). Adult literacy as a named field of social policy, however, did not emerge until the mid-1970s with the *A Right to Read* campaign. This campaign was led by volunteer activists and the television media, who successfully argued for local government provision supported by a central resource agency (Withnall, 1994). Over the next 30 years, literacy classes for adults grew in number, though services remained fragmented and underfunded. The form of provision changed from primarily one-on-one teaching by volunteers to small-group teaching, drop-in centers, and e-learning. Teaching took place in adult and community learning centers, further education colleges, workplaces, volunteer organizations, and in people's own homes. By the early 1990s, numeracy and English language provision for speakers of other languages (ESOL) had been added to literacy to form a new statutory subject area known as basic skills (Hamilton & Hillier, 2006).

Following a review of adult basic skills (Moser, 1999), the government funded a *Skills for Life* Strategy for England[2], which set ambitious targets for improvement and created a specialized basic skills qualification structure and a set of professional standards for practitioners. This infrastructure was set out in the *Skills for Life* strategy document (2001). Core curricula were produced for ESOL, numeracy, and literacy. These curricula aligned adult performance with school-based subjects. The changes were introduced through staff development courses attended by over two thirds of teachers (Cara, Lister, Swain, & Vorhaus, 2010). £5 billion was spent between 2001 and 2008, with a target of 2.25 million adults achieving a basic skills qualification by 2010. This target was met ahead of time (Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, 2009).

A range of competing discourses ran through the field of adult literacy during this period, rising and falling in visibility. Many of these are common in other countries and international organizations such as UNESCO. They include remedial or compensatory discourses that foreground individual trajectories of failure as well as discourses that blame teachers and institutions for educational underachievement and declining standards (McQuillan, 1999). One alternative discourse in circulation was a student-centered, participatory approach drawing on the work of Paulo Freire, first translated into English in the early 1970s (see Freire, 2004; Giroux, 2005). This discourse aligns with social approaches to disability rights and access,

and improved legislative protection for many marginalized groups (Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 1999; Shakespeare, 2006). As elsewhere, contentious discourses exist in the United Kingdom around notions of citizenship, migration, and appropriate roles for English and other community and heritage languages. English for refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers was included in the original *Skills for Life* strategy, but this proved difficult to sustain as the policy unfolded (Cooke & Simpson, 2009).

A vocational discourse linking literacy and education to the wider economy came to dominate policy documents during the 1980s and 1990s, a period of significant change in the structure of employment. Many unskilled manufacturing jobs disappeared, the service sector expanded, and migrant workers filled low-paid jobs as transnational markets opened up. A human resource model of literacy became the dominant discourse for addressing these large-scale changes, asserting that large sections of the adult population needed to update their skills in order to cope with the rapidly changing, competitive global environment of the knowledge economy (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996). This discourse is linked to neoliberalism, defined as a set of practices that promote a market-driven model of social and economic organization.

International and regional organizations increased in influence during this period. The European Union funded many literacy programs (Dale & Robertson, 2009), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) produced league tables of international educational achievement, including the International Adult Literacy Survey (OECD, 2000). Both agencies had an interest in aligning national qualifications frameworks for purposes of comparison and for promotion of the flexible movement of labor across national boundaries (Henry, Lingard, Rivzi, & Taylor, 2001). This resulted in strong pressure toward standardization of language policies and measurement, pressure that had been felt in many countries during this period, not least in the United States, where President George W. Bush promoted the *No Child Left Behind* policy (Larson, 2001; Popkewitz 2007). Policy borrowing was frequent (Ozga, 2007).

The New Labour government in the United Kingdom (1997–2010) developed a technocratic style of governance, characterized by closely managed and monitored systemic changes and the imposition of high-stakes, outcome-related targets (Seldon, 2007). This style of governance had immediate, everyday effects on teachers' lives (see Avis, 2009; Coffield et al., 2008). The *Skills for Life* strategy was pursued within these practices.

The notion of social exclusion imported from the European Union was prominent within New Labour's social policy (see Beech & Lee, 2008; McLeavey,

2008). Levitas (2005) distinguished between three coexisting discourses of social exclusion found within policy and research:

1. A radical, transformative notion identified with poverty of resources and a commitment to redistributing said resources

2. A discourse identifying social exclusion as labour/market attachment focused largely on integrating people into paid work

3. A moral underclass discourse that identifies problem groups, marginalized through a combination of factors including their own behavior and attitudes

Levitas suggested that Tony Blair's New Labour vision was a mixture of the second and the third, incorporating a meritocratic view of the "good society," where people were to be assured opportunities to advance within employment but then had to rely on their own efforts and responsibilities as citizens to become included. In our later analysis, we show these two discursive meanings in action in the *Skills for Life* document.

New Labour discourses of social exclusion reached across all fields of social policy as part of their aim to achieve *joined-up thinking* between government departments (Powell, 2008). Literacy was strongly linked with other policy concerns, such as the effects of digital technologies, community regeneration, supporting family learning, and the well-being of children and young people. *Skills for Life* itself was introduced as an integral part of an all-ages national literacy strategy in the context of debates about school failure. This resulted in somewhat incompatible pulls on adult literacy to function simultaneously as an extension of schooling, an aspect of lifelong learning, and a part of vocational training.

Adult literacy policy must therefore be considered within this changing constellation of national and international discourses and governance practices. New Labour's version of neoliberalism produced a unique range of discourses promoting social inclusion and economic prosperity, which can be traced in the unfolding of the *Skills for Life* strategy.

Framing the Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theorists argue that we should pay careful attention to discourse because of its key role in social change (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1992, 2003; Van Dijk, 1997). In this article, we mainly draw on Chouliaraki and Fairclough's approach to critical discourse theory and analysis, supplementing it with elements from Wodak's

(2001) discourse-historical method and Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) grammar of visual design. These methods are compatible, because they all use aspects of functional systemic linguistics (Halliday, 1994).

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) argued that social changes exist as discourses as well as processes; change is talked into being through discourses such as social inclusion and exclusion. These discourses shape and reshape social reality; they are part of the habitualized ways that people act together in the world. However, unlike poststructuralist discourse theorists such as Foucault, Chouliaraki and Fairclough did not argue that all social life is discourse. They drew on David Harvey's (1996) conceptualization of social processes being made up of moments, which are internally related but not totally reducible to each other. Fairclough (2003) renamed these as the following elements of social practices: (a) action and interaction, (b) social relations, (c) persons, (d) the material world, and (e) discourse.

Both Fairclough and Harvey described the relations between these elements as dialectical: We can act through discourse and also reflect on our actions and represent them in talk, images, and in designed texts. These discursive acts shape social action and disembed it from the local. They influence other actions both within and across social practices. For example, in the previous section, we referred to the shaping force of EU funding practices. These practices have a distinct material element that impacts adult literacy education through the financial support they grant or deny. Without money, programs cannot be run. However, what the European Union will fund is shaped by the prevailing discourses of literacy both in the European Union and in the wider international scene. In turn, these discourses have an impact on what literacy education can be offered in the different European countries.

Social practices like those of adult literacy education are not impermeable, isolated entities. They exist in networks of practices in a social order, such as the neoliberal global order or a national order of education. Within each network of practices we can, according to Fairclough (2001), identify an *order of discourse*—a specific set of discourses and genres that are available to be drawn upon and articulated together within any particular event or action, thereby ordering differing ways of making meaning on an intertextual level. When change takes place in habitualized ways of acting, it is through shifts in how genres and discourses are articulated together, within and across practices. In our analysis, we focus on this articulation of genres and discourses within our two chosen documents. We trace how *A Right to Read* brings into the adult literacy field a new discourse of functional literacy derived from the United States, and articulates it with existing U.K. deficit discourses. We trace how these deficit

discourses are later replaced by specific New Labour discourses of social exclusion, drawn from the global neoliberal order.

Fairclough used the term *discourse* to cover all forms of semiosis, not just language use. For example, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) referred to discourse as made up of all symbolic resources. Fairclough included the design features of texts, such as layout and color (see his argument about the technologization of discourse, for example, in Fairclough, 1996). However, most of his published work and the concepts he has developed focus on the linguistic choices and properties of discourses.

In our analysis, we were interested in the constructive work of the photographic images of individual learners, which are a part of the profiles included in the *Skills for Life* document. To examine the semiotic choices used to produce these portraits and their relation with the written texts that accompany them, we drew on Kress and van Leeuwen's theory of multimodality. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) argued that "the visual component of a text is an independently organized and structured message" (p. 17), and they provided a set of analytical concepts to explore such messages. Their work helps us understand and explain how the images are shaped by the discourse of positive transformation (see Pitt, 2010a, for a detailed discussion and application of the multimodal approach of van Leeuwen and Kress).

We drew on Wodak's (2001) discourse-historical approach in deciding which documents to analyze since she offered specific guidance on how to track discourses and discourse topics as they travel across texts and fields in time and space. She distinguished among different types of texts such as the following:

- Legal documents
- Documents involved with the formation of public opinion, advertising and propaganda
- Documents produced by political parties for promoting and presenting policy ideas
- Documents produced by political parties for executive and administrative purposes

These distinctions were very helpful for mapping the documentary trail of adult literacy policy. Our procedure at this stage was to use our review of developments in our chosen field of action (adult literacy policy in the United Kingdom from the early 1970's to the present) and map the key documents during that period of changing social practice. Precise policy moments and key documents relating to adult literacy are easy to identify and compare using the documentary archive and timelines assembled through our *Changing Faces* historical project mentioned earlier. Table 1 presents a selection of these key documents,

Table 1. Key Documents in Adult Literacy in the U.K. (1970–2001)

Name of Document	Purpose/Audience	Author
A Right To Read Manifesto (British Association of Settlements, 1974)	Promotional document designed to raise public awareness and kick-start national provision and government involvement. Followed by a promotional campaign by the British Broadcasting Corporation.	Volunteer agency
A strategy for the basic education of adults (Advisory Council for Adult Continuing Education, 1979)	One of a series of reviews for a government and professional audience. Produced just as 1979 Conservative government was elected.	Advisory committee appointed by the Secretary of State for Education
ALBSU 10-year review, (ALBSU,1985)	Self-evaluation document reviewing 10 years' work. Prepared as an accessible summary booklet to celebrate and promote the achievements of the agency.	The Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, a national agency funded by a time-limited government grant which was reviewed periodically for renewal
Literacy, numeracy and adults: Evidence from the national child development study. (Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit,1987)	Policymakers and general public, also a fund-raising tool for practitioners.	First research report analyzing data from the National Child Development Study, commissioned by the Manpower services Commission and the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU)
Review of Training Materials (Training Agency, 1989)	Aimed at front line staff in job centers,	Government funded training agency, successor to the Manpower services Commission
Basic Skills Accreditation Initiative: Word power and number power. (Basic Skills Unit/British Broadcasting Association, 1989).	First national qualifications produced for literacy. Mainly aimed at practitioners.	Jointly authored materials produced by the government-funded national Basic Skills Agency (BSA) and media organization, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)
Adult Illiteracy and Economic Performance (Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development. 1992)	A research report and review of evidence for policymakers and researchers.	Jointly authored by the European Union and t he Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
Developing Family Literacy (BSA,1994).	Promotional document introducing a new pedagogy, already established in the U.S., to all educators and the media.	Basic Skills Agency, a national government-funded agency
Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 (Schedule 2, Subject area 10)	Legislation designed to change the funding mechanism for post-school education and training. Drew boundaries around the subject areas eligible for funding within further education.	Conservative government under John Major
Basic Skills review (Department of Education and Employment, 1998)	National report suggesting future directions. Published just before New Labour government came into power.	Department of Education and Employment with Gillian Shepherd as Secretary of State
Further Education Funding Council Inspection report (Author,1998)	Report detailing strengths and weaknesses of subject area of basic skills.	Further Education Funding Council
Literacy, Economy, and Society (OECD,1997)	Results of an international survey, producing a league table of adult literacy in different countries, aiming to influence policymakers in those countries.	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
Moser Report, "A Fresh Start for Literacy" (Moser, 1999)	Report of a committee reviewing the state of adult literacy in England with the aim of recommending new developments in policy and practice. Multiple audiences policy, practice, and media.	Claus Moser, Committee Chair, and New Labour government of Tony Blair
Skills for Life (Department for Education Skills, 2001)	Promotional strategy document aimed at practitioners and providing bodies. Designed to raise public awareness and upscale and redirect national provision.	Department for Education and Skills, New Labour government

including the two we have chosen for detailed textual analysis. This table crystallizes some of the significant developments in policy and practice in adult literacy over the 30-year period that concerns us.

CDA concepts and analytic methods are designed to uncover and explain the relation between discourse and power. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) argued that unequal social relations and ideological effects are produced and reproduced through the specific semiotic choices made in discursive practices. Critics argued that such a committed stance makes objectivity and claims to truth impossible (see Schegloff, 1997). Fairclough and Wodak replied that because knowledge making is a social practice, it cannot take place outside of specific political and cultural formations, and therefore it can be neither universal nor neutral. However, they claimed that CDA methods of analysis are as "careful, rigorous and systematic" as any other qualitative research (1997, p. 258) because they entail the identification of the patterns of meaning and social effects generated by specific linguistic features. CDA links analysis of the macro-level social context with this micro-level analysis to identify orders of discourse and intertextual relations. As discussed earlier, Fairclough's work is limited by the degree to which he takes account of the increasing multimodality of everyday texts, and he is less specific than Wodak in his procedures for analyzing the social context of change. As he himself argued in Fairclough and Wodak (1997), full understanding of social change needs a range of qualitative methods, such as ethnographies of practice. That is why, in this article, we draw on our historical study of adult literacy in the United Kingdom (see Hamilton & Hillier, 2006).

Method

Selecting the Documents for Analysis

We described earlier the policy context that frames our understanding of representations of adult literacy learners. We also described how we mapped key adult literacy policy documents as recommended by Wodak's discourse-historical approach (Wodak, 2001). The documents in Table 1 vary by genre and the practices of which the authors were a part. Any of these documents would be interesting to analyze in its own right and could have been used to support our analysis. For example, it would be relevant to look at the frequent mass media promotions of adult literacy or examine representations of literacy in the popular media during this period (see Shahnaz & Hamilton, 2005; Williams & Zenger, 2007).

Finally, we settled on two key documents that were produced at each end of the historical period outlined in Table 1. The *A Right to Read* manifesto, written at the onset of adult literacy campaigns and policy in 1974, signaled the beginning of the formation of this field of social policy. The *Skills for Life* strategy document emerged from the policymaking of the New Labour government. It launched the most recent phase of policy and practice in adult literacy in 2001 and announced the first substantial national investment of funds in this field.

The two documents look very different from one another in their design and material production, but both are promotional documents that aim to make a practical difference to the field. Both have multiple authors and are made up of a mix of genres. Each emerges from different networks of practice at specific points in time, and each has a set of slightly different goals. The first is a campaigning text designed to kick-start government policy. The second sets out the first stage in the implementation of a funded policy already committed to by national government.

Analytical Procedures

The texts we chose for analysis are complex, multipurpose documents with many authors, and our aim was not to provide an exhaustive analysis of every aspect of them.[3] We began by examining the documents very carefully, looking at their macro features, such as overall generic structure and the organization of the different parts of the text. Then, since we were exploring issues of power and agency, we focused specifically on those parts of the texts that are concerned with representing literacy and literacy learners.

For the final, detailed analysis stage, we again read the whole text carefully, marking places where the topics we are interested in are raised. We initially looked for keywords related to the important discourses—for example, *literacy, illiteracy, literate, poor literacy skills, exclusion, duty*. These came from prior knowledge of the orders of discourse within which the texts are produced, and also from careful reading of the introductory sections, including the forewords and the executive summary in *Skills for Life*. These parts of the documents are key spaces for the text producers to provide the rationales and contextualization of their main messages. For example, a study of the *Skills for Life* executive summary brought to our attention the use of the abstract nouns *inertia* and *fatalism* related to literacy learners, suggesting a specific discourse. We were then able to search through the document to find all the other instances of these keywords and how they were used.

Analysis of two texts produced at different times and within diverse practices also helps in understanding what is *absent* from each particular text. Careful

reading and rereading is vital to this analytical process to explore the movements of discourses across practices and time.

Once we had identified key passages, we looked carefully at their generic structure. At the paragraph and sentence level, we looked closely at the lexical, syntactic, and grammatical choices that have been made to discern the mix of discourses, how these are articulated together, and the fine details of the construction of representations of literacy and learner agency. There are many potential grammatical features of English through which representations are stitched together (see Fairclough, 1992, for a full list). In this particular analysis, we found the following features to be significant in constructing meanings:

- Lexical choices such as metaphors
- Adjectives
- Nominalizations
- Evaluative words
- Dichotomous labeling and grouping of social actors
- The use of sentence structure to express foreground or background actions and attributes, such as end focus and reformulation

To analyze the photographs, we examined the arrangement of the visual content, camera angle and distance,

and the interpersonal effects of gaze (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

The analysis process can be demonstrated through the example of the learner profiles that are a part of both documents. Because these short, complete subtexts draw on a common genre, it is possible to explore fully the interweaving of different discourses and the overall structuring of representations of a particular individual. For example, in our analysis of *A Right to Read* learner profiles later, we trace how they give space to a range of social actions and relationships for each learner, and thus include the everyday complexity of such actions and relationships. Through detailed analysis of the grammatical choices, we argue, however, that the learners' difficulties with reading and writing are foregrounded and that this choice is a generic one that relates to the overall purpose of the document.

Our textual analysis is set out in the following sections to show the fine detail of the discursive work that constitutes these policies, alongside our knowledge of the practices and orders of discourse they are part of, which are also part of our analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Structure and Genre

Table 2 summarizes the layout and content of the two documents. The experience and response of the reader

Table 2. Structure and Contents of Two Policy Documents for Analysis

A Right to Read, 1974	*Skills for Life*, 2001
28 pages A5	52 pages A4
Page 1: Attributions of authors	
Page 2: Foreword by Geoffrey Clarkson, Development Officer of the British Association of Settlements (BAS)	Page 1: Foreword by David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education Student profile: Angela Black Table of contents Executive summary [pp. 6–7] Introduction [pp. 8–10] "Our Challenge" "A New Strategy"
Part 1: [pp 3–20] ● Explains the notion of functional literacy [pp. 1–5] ● Some examples of readability levels of everyday texts [pp. 6–10] ● Student profiles in the form of short written narratives to illustrate the adults are who are the focus of the campaign [pp. 11–17] ● Present provision [pp. 18–20]	Part 1: [pp. 11–32] "Our Priority Groups" ● Describes and discusses the adults in need of support ● Three student profiles: John Grundy, Wayne Alphonso Richards, and David Revell Student profile: Gary Hughes
Part 2: [pp. 21–25] ● Preamble ● 17 practical recommendations for policy development	Part 2: [pp. 34–53] "Delivering Higher Standards" ● Describes the policy mechanisms through which the strategy will be delivered* ● Includes two graphs and one map of the U.K. ● One student profile: Nasrin Sheikh
Statement of commitment from the BAS	Annexes list websites for further information and a digest of responses to the consultative statement

Note. *Contains sections on funding, planning, targets, technology, learner focus, assessment, National Test, core curriculum, teaching materials, quality assurance and inspection, and research.

is bound up with the physical design of these texts, which are integral to the genre chains of which they are a part. While our analysis shows some continuities in the aims and discourses between the two documents, they are materially very different from one another, and their physical forms manifest some of the social changes across this time period.

A Right to Read

A Right to Read is a modest, 28-page, bound booklet printed on A5 white matte paper with black print. The cover is printed on slightly heavier black matte paper with red and white lettering. The title, *A RIGHT TO READ*, takes up most of the front cover. It is boldly printed in red, which, in 1974 when it was produced, could be associated with radical, left-wing change. Even in today's saturated textual world, this is quite a high-impact design. The name of the organization that produced the booklet, the British Association of Settlements (BAS), is in small print at the bottom. Its logo is made more prominent through the use of a different font and a box, and the logo is repeated in a bigger font on the back cover. The rest of the booklet is unassuming. A small serif font is used throughout, and the only illustrations are black-and-white photographic reproductions of excerpts and diagrams from other texts. Some attention has been given to headline statements and subheadings in the text, but otherwise it is not broken up in any significant way.

The first page lists the names of those individuals who wrote, designed, and contributed to the booklet, with their organizational affiliations. This is followed by a one-page foreword attributed to Geoffrey Clarkson, Development Officer of the BAS. The foreword explains the history and mission of the BAS and locates the literacy campaign within that. There is no copyright statement on the document. An order form for further copies of the booklet is included on the final page, and on the front cover the price of 20 pence is printed.

The main body of the document is divided into two parts. Part 1 explains the notion of functional literacy and presents the research base for the campaigning claims and information about the adults who are the focus of the campaign. The first sentence of the main text is "There are at least two million functionally illiterate adults in England and Wales" (p. 4). Part 2 begins by repeating and elaborating the opening sentence from Part 1. It presents a remedial policy, in the form of a preamble and 17 recommendations, ending with a statement of commitment from the BAS. As we subsequently discuss, Part 2 provides a solution to the problem set out in Part 1.

In both its materiality and its structure, the *Right to Read* document has much in common with policy documents of the period. For example, the Russell Report and the Bullock Report, both produced in the early 1970s, are plainly produced, black-and-white, text-heavy, book-length documents that give considerable attention to the research background and rationale for policy proposals, followed by a list of recommendations. However, Part 1 of *A Right to Read* is a narrative rather than a list of numbered paragraphs, as was and still is customary in British policy documents. A set of student profiles in the form of short, written narratives are included, to illustrate the problem presented by the adults targeted by the campaign. We analyze these later.

Skills for Life

The *Skills for Life* strategy document is materially very different. Much longer and more complex, it includes a detailed policy rationale. Like all New Labour documents, it is a large, carefully designed booklet. It is printed on stiff, high-quality, A4 colored paper and opens sideways, with differently colored pages and logos on the front and back covers. It is illustrated with foldout pages containing full-color photographs of learners. The space is used liberally, with 58 pages of a highly readable, large san serif font and two-color maps and graphs. The text on the cover is understated. There is a photograph of a hand holding a red document carrying the title *Skills for Life*—perhaps to signify that this is a text to be picked up and used. The logo of the commissioning government department is included at the bottom right. The back cover has information about how to freely download or order hard copy versions of the report, plus a statement of copyright conditions.

The document begins with a foreword by the Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett, and includes a photograph of him and his scanned signature. No individual authors are mentioned anywhere else in the document. The foreword is followed by the first student profile, a table of contents, and an executive summary. The main body of the report is divided into two sections containing numbered paragraphs. The first is "Our Priority Groups," which describes and discusses the adults in need of support. The second, "Delivering Higher Standards," focuses on the policy mechanisms through which the strategy will be delivered, including the core curriculum, a national test, and professional standards for teachers. Annexes list websites for further information and a digest of anonymous responses to the consultative statement. The report ends with a bibliographic list of 12 references.

Both documents aim to put forth a persuasive case for the need for expenditure in this field, but the striking material differences between them signal significant technical and social change in the form of public documents over this 30-year span. The *Skills for Life*

document illustrates the broad move toward the marketization of policy discourse, what Fairclough calls the technologization (Fairclough, 1996) of language practices over these decades. We can detect the beginnings of this change on the covers of the *A Right to Read* booklet, with its bold title font and use of a logo to mark identity. Within this broader social shift, Fairclough argues that the New Labour government manifested a particular concern with perception management (Fairclough, 2000, 2001). Although *Skills for Life* presents new policy initiatives, it also promotes them through packaging the strategy like a commercial company document. The design strongly echoes the genre of the corporate annual reports of this era.[4] Such texts are produced within the managerial governance practices of New Labour. The commercial production of policy texts ties in with their aims to manage the field of adult education through these new measures.

The governing infrastructure introduced in the *Skills for Life* strategy document was subsequently enforced though funding and audit mechanisms that strongly highlighted preferred readings of the policy. Practitioners were further incorporated into the policy discourse through tightly structured staff development programs. The policy was central to the United Kingdom's social exclusion agenda, and EU funding was dependent on its success. The U.K. government was thus assiduous in implementing the infrastructure it had designed, and the strategy was subsequently carried out to plan (see Department for Work and Pensions, 2001).

Textual Analysis

A Right to Read: Deficit and Disability

The *A Right to Read* manifesto was written by volunteer activists whose aim was to create a new field of national educational practice. Local and national government, therefore, was part of its intended audience. This provenance differs from the other documents we selected for our initial review and accounts for some of the different discourses that constitute it. However, it also shares a common purpose with the later government document to *promote* its policies as well as to inform the reader of them. Several of the authors went on to become key people in the developing field, including Alan Wells, who directed the national agency until 2001, and Jenny Stevens, who became a national development officer for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

The promotional purposes of the manifesto are stated clearly in Clarkson's foreword: "We decided to use this experience to *publicize* the extent of the problem of adult illiteracy in Britain and to *press* for the formulation of a national solution" (p. 2, our emphasis).

The rhetorical needs *to publicize* and *to press for* drive the organization of the overall text into a problem-and-solution pattern through the two parts of the text, as described earlier. This organizational pattern is common to persuasive texts of many kinds (Hoey, 2001). We examine how this problem-and-solution format, combined with the campaigning objectives of the authors, means that the learners occupy a position as a problem from the outset.

The dominant representation of adult literacy that constitutes this text is that of functional literacy, which at the time was being promoted internationally by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United States (Levine, 1982). Indeed, this manifesto is one of the seminal texts that introduced this set of beliefs about adult literacy and education practices into the United Kingdom. This discourse has since been consistently prominent in the field of policy and practice (see Hamilton, 1996; Leitch, 2006; OECD, 1997, 2000).

The term *functional literacy* is introduced with the U.S. National Reading Center definition on page 5:

> A person is functionally literate when he [*sic*] has command of reading skills that permit him [*sic*] to go about his daily activities successfully on the job or to move about society normally and with comprehension of the usual printed expressions and messages he encounters.

Literacy is represented here as everyday engagement with the written word through the activity of reading. The emphasis on the everyday is exemplified through an analysis of the readability levels of a label on a bottle of bleach, newspaper articles, a recipe, and a page from a government leaflet about benefits. These items are all illustrated by black-and-white photographs.

Through its focus on the kinds of reading and writing encountered by learners on a daily basis, this discourse took reading out of the sphere of the school and the kinds of texts used there, and had a deep impact on adult pedagogical practices in the United Kingdom (see Eggar, MacFarlane, Grant, Tuckett, & Lesirge, 1977; Mace, 1979; MacFarlane, 1976). The act of writing, however, was absent from this definition of literacy. The individuals in the learner profiles of this text, which we discuss later, referred to the need to write— for example, checks, official forms, letters, phone messages, bookkeeping documents, time sheets—but literacy was defined here as reading. Writing was not included as part of the definition until a later date (see Hamilton & Hillier, 2006).

The discourse of functional literacy argues that literacy is a necessary part of daily life, and therefore, literacy teaching is needed for those adults who have not reached the appropriate level so that they can access normality (as signaled by the use of "move

about society normally"). This argument brings the everyday world of the adult learner into the classroom, but it also potentially positions this learner as abnormal or deficient, a position that is taken up in this document, as we later show.

This discourse is not the only one drawn on in *A Right to Read.* In both the title of the document and in the foreword, this discourse is woven in with a discourse of social participation: To participate, to exercise certain rights, to choose between alternatives, and to solve problems, people need the certain basic skills of (a) listening, (b) talking, (c) reading, and (d) writing (Foreword, p. 2).

A focus on the roles and rights of all citizens was, and still is, part of the vision of the BAS (see www .bassac.org.uk), which initiated the literacy campaign. The foreword, written by an activist, positions the learner as enabled to become a fully active agent in society ("exercise rights," "participate"). This positioning is in contrast to the representation of individual action in the U.S. definition of the literacy user quoted earlier ("to go about," "to move about"), which does not carry the extra inflection of active citizenship.

This empowering portrait of the learner is, however, to be found only in the foreword. Immediately after the paragraph defining functional literacy, the focus switches to those who *lack* this functional literacy ("The best way to illustrate the practical effects of functional illiteracy," p. 5), and the representation of the learner becomes one of individual deficit as the problem to be solved. In contrast to the positive positioning of the foreword, Part 1 draws on a mix of deficit discourses that equates a lack of literacy with illness or disability:

- Two million people effectively *isolated* from many of the benefits. (p. 4)
- Adults whose *disability* is illiteracy. (p. 11)
- They *suffer from* a high level of illiteracy. (p. 11)
- Many of them are extremely ashamed of their *handicap.* (p. 11)

These constructions dramatize the deficit through extreme metaphors (disability, suffer from, handicap), and reduce adult identities to the aspects of their lives that are problematic. They are attributed reading ages equating them to 9-year-old children (p. 4), and they are characterized as ashamed, hiding, fearful, and isolated. Describing literacy learners as handicapped or suffering from a disability is a discourse that was widespread in early texts on adult literacy education (see Scribner, 1984; also Barton, 2008, pp. 10–13 discusses UNESCO's use of the metaphor of illiteracy as disease).

This reduced representation omits the achievements and resourcefulness of these two million people to persuade the reader of the need for funding. We demonstrate later how the complex mix in peoples' lives of active, everyday, and social participation, alongside the need for literacy education, is documented in the learner profiles in this part of the *A Right to Read* text. These individual voices are framed, however, by a dominant, expert voice that also dramatizes what they lack.

Skills for Life: Exclusion and Duty

We now move forward to the era of the New Labour government, which began in 1997. As discussed earlier, much has changed in the policy and social environment since the *A Right to Read* campaign. We turn to the document *Skills for Life*, in which the rationale and measures for the new strategy were set out in 2001. The neoliberal discourse of the new knowledge economy that we find in this document has been dominant throughout this period, reaching back into the previous Conservative government, and has been widely drawn on in social policy texts (Fairclough, 1999; Pitt, 2002).

This document sets up new structures within the adult education field under the new label of "skills for life." These structures are backed up by substantial funding, so the impact on the field is a material one. Like *A Right to Read*, this document not only explains but also promotes and justifies these new measures. Its aims shape how potential adult literacy learners are represented. As our analysis shows, the top-down *Skills for Life* strategy constitutes adult literacy learners as a problem that the new policies will remedy. It does so through a complex and not always consistent mix of normative discourses that construct certain kinds of citizens. There are parallels with New Labour texts in other fields of social policy, including early childhood education (Osgood, 2009), training programs for the unemployed, and neighborhood renewal initiatives (MacLeavy, 2008).

In this document, we see discourses of exclusion and duty that are absent from the earlier one. Whereas *A Right to Read* presents a generalized "two million functionally illiterate adults" (p. 4), in *Skills for Life*, specific priority groups of adults are targeted for literacy education. These include the unemployed and those on benefits, prisoners, those with "low skills," and "other groups at risk of exclusion," such as people who live in disadvantaged communities. The specification of such groupings and these new discourses represent the latest incarnation of an underclass that has been constructed by successive governments (see Welshman, 2006). Rose (1989) argued that contemporary forms of governance draw on the expert knowledge of their populations, pro-

vided through research, to understand and bring people into line with dominant social norms through their desires for success and inclusion (Pitt 2008, 2010b). The opportunities for education offered through these new measures are part of such control processes: "for these people to stick with their learning and actually improve their skills, they need to remain well-motivated and find the learning relevant to their needs" (para. 20).

The message is consistent with Ball's (2009) assertion that new modes of governance are producing "new kinds of willing subjects" (p. 537), who are encouraged to regulate their own behavior within constraints set by government. Creating specific groups and positioning them as excluded through their lack of skills and qualifications enables the government to show how it is working to invite them in.

Discourse of Exclusion

As Fairclough (2000) pointed out, the concept of social exclusion offers opportunities to explore the social and economic processes that are causing this exclusion: Who or what excludes? But as he said, it can also be used as a noun to represent exclusion as a possible condition that people suffer from. He argued that this second usage is the one mainly drawn on in New Labour discourses, and we can see this at work in the *Skills for Life* document, where the noun *exclusion* dominates and is associated with illness and other undesired states. The word *exclusion* appears 11 times in the text. These instances are listed in full in the Appendix. For example, people with poor literacy, numeracy, and language skills tend to be on lower incomes or unemployed, and they are more prone to ill health and social exclusion (p. 6).

Exclusion in itself is a negative concept, and this negativity is reinforced by its use with words that we usually use to describe states that are harmful, such as *suffer*, *prone to*, and *at risk of*, as in the previous excerpt. The phrase *at risk of exclusion*, for example, occurs five times, and is used as a subheading: "Other groups at risk of exclusion."

There is only one use of the verb *exclude* in this document. It is not, though, used to explore economic causal forces, such as global capitalist practices, but to construct (albeit in a hedged rather than strong way) those targeted as the agents of their own misery:

> Of course, people with these poor literacy and numeracy skills get by, usually by relying on others for help or by avoiding situations where they need to read, write or calculate. But, because they lack literacy and numeracy skills, *they and their families may well exclude themselves* from advantages that others take for granted. (para. 2, our emphasis)

That there is an ongoing debate in the field about learner agency and the causes of exclusion is signaled through the use of "of course" at the beginning of this paragraph, which indexes the dialogue that was part of the production process of this document. The words of those being dialogued with, though, are reformulated here through the authorial voices. The phrasing "get by" and "avoiding" is a grudging representation of the potential resourcefulness of those struggling with literacy and numeracy, and the choice of "relying on others" emphasizes the dimension of dependence. As we later see, dependence is a significant factor voiced by the learners themselves in the earlier *A Right to Read* narratives, but we also learn of their active involvement in society and reciprocal relationships with others, complexities that are missing from the representation in these two sentences. The give and take and collaboration that characterize everyday literacy at all levels of society is well documented in the ethnographic literature of literacy studies (e.g., see Brandt, 1998; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Mace, 1998; Pahl & Rowsell, 2006). This literature suggests a more nuanced view of the issue of dependency. The discursive positioning here emphasizes the deficit of the groups depicted as part of the overall rationale for introducing new measures.

In paragraph 69 of the *Skills for Life document*, the trace of an alternative discourse about learner agency is articulated alongside the discourse of exclusion:

> The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education and the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service are working to develop awareness of literacy and numeracy skills within the local voluntary and community sector, involving learners in the design and delivery of programmes in order to increase their commitment and motivation. We will support and look to extend this work and enable an estimated 50,000 of these adults at risk of social exclusion to improve their literacy and numeracy by 2004.

Here, as part of a longer list of successful community projects, the two associations are described as "involving learners in the design and delivery of programmes." This is a reference to the learner-centered approach and critical pedagogy we mentioned earlier. In this paragraph, this approach is explained as a way to "increase their commitment and motivation," which is indeed one of the aims. There is no reference here though to notions of collective empowerment and active citizenship, which are also a part of this approach of building the curriculum around the collective needs of communities. Although this way of working is endorsed in this paragraph, it ends with the dominant discourse of exclusion. There is no attempt to address how such an approach would fit in with the new core curriculum introduced in this document,

which makes such learner involvement much more difficult to achieve.

These two paragraphs carry traces of a different set of discourses of learner agency and literacy education, but as our analysis shows, they are embedded within and framed by the dominant discourse of exclusion.

The deficit discourse of exclusion is also blended in with the discourse of functional illiteracy that was introduced through *A Right to Read*, as we can see in the earlier excerpts ("people with poor literacy, numeracy and language skills"; "because they lack literacy and numeracy skills"). The descriptors of their skills as "reduced," "poor," "inadequate," or "deficiencies" add in extra deficit and are used as the main causal factor of this condition of exclusion. Here, the functional literacy discourse is very closely linked with employment and economic change, within the neoliberal discourse of the knowledge economy, as we show later in this section.

An additional suggestion of adults' complicity in their own exclusion is the use of the negative states of inertia and fatalism. These concepts first occur in the executive summary at the beginning of the *Skills for Life* document, where they are presented as states generally within the field and also explicitly attributed to the target learners: "Inertia and fatalism—not least among low-skilled individuals—are our chief enemies. We must be bold and imaginative to overcome them." (p. 7, "Executive Summary")

In these two sentences, people's negative actions and attitudes are made into independent, generalized actors through the use of nominalization. They are presented as hostile figures through the use of the metaphor of war ("chief enemies"), and "low-skilled individuals" are set up, opposed to the "heroic" actions of their government ("bold and imaginative"). This piece of persuasive rhetoric comes at the very end of the executive summary. As in all political discourse, it presents the politicians in a good light, but the potential learners become demonized as obstacles to the progress of strategies. They are also represented as passive entities who need to be activated by the government initiatives, in stark contrast to the tales of transformation of the individual narratives inserted into the text and analyzed later.

However, in the introduction to the strategy document that follows the executive summary, the use of inertia and fatalism comes in the section introducing "A New Strategy" and is specifically attributed to *past* initiatives: "Past initiatives to improve literacy and numeracy skills have produced limited progress and sometimes bred a culture of inertia and fatalism about the ability to make big improvements in this area" (para. 7).

This negative evaluation serves to justify the bold and imaginative policies of the new strategy. As we can see here, there is some slippage between the attribution of inertia and fatalism in these two sections. The use of abstract nouns leaves it open as to who can be seen as being inert and fatalistic, but the whole paragraph addresses those who make and carry out policy. Learners are only referred to once, in the last sentence of this paragraph, as the objects of policy action: "by engaging potential learners through every possible means."

Much further on in the document, the section called "Unemployed people and benefit claimants" represents this specific subgroup as having negatives attitudes to their own advancement: "And yet there is evidence that some unemployed adults still have a deep-seated reluctance to address their literacy and numeracy skills needs" (para. 24).

This paragraph discusses ways of compelling those claiming government benefits to take part in particular courses to address their skills needs. The effectiveness of such courses and the proposal to make them compulsory are controversial issues (see MacLeavy, 2008). Dwyer (2004) has documented the prevalence of this discourse of conditionality across a wide area of contemporary social policy, both national and international. He suggests that this discourse signals an underlying shift in thinking about citizenship. He distinguishes between the "negative" rights of the citizen (protection against discrimination) and "positive" rights such as welfare payments, education, and health services. He argues that the move to make these positive benefits conditional on various kinds of behaviors from the recipients disproportionately affects poor people and is not balanced by the promises of other rights and conditions, such as equal opportunities. However, these debates about conditionality are not addressed in the *Skills for Life* document, and complex issues of resistance and compulsory training are reduced to a picture of the claimant rejecting the opportunity of education or development (see paragraph 24, quoted earlier). The summary writer reduces these complexities still further, compressing these separate critiques and connecting states of apathy with any potential adult learner who has some difficulties with reading and writing. Those who only read the executive summary are given a reductive representation of the agency and motivation of all adults who have literacy difficulties.

Discourse of Duty

Another neoliberal discourse that has a small but significant presence in this document is that of lifelong learning as a duty. It is drawn on directly twice. In the section detailing the different priority groups, the paragraph describing jobseekers introduces this concept: "As we now regard it as a duty on government to take adult literacy and numeracy seriously, so we will

impose duties on the relevant agencies—*and in certain cases on the individuals themselves*—to do so too" (para. 15, our emphasis).

The second use is in paragraph 33: "The new duties under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill will lead to an increase in the likely take-up of places by students with learning difficulties and disabilities."

In both cases, duty is mainly attributed to institutional actors, and what they, including the government, are obliged to do. In paragraph 33, it is the providers of education who are legally bound to specific new duties under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill. However, in paragraph 15 earlier, the *beneficiaries* of these actions are slipped into this list through the additional clause "and in certain cases on the individuals themselves." This discourse of duty contrasts with liberal discourses of education as a right of all citizens, as in the title of our other text, *A Right to Read*.

The word *rights* is only used twice (see Appendix). In paragraph 59, with reference to young adults (here 16–17 year olds), it is part of a more traditional discourse of citizenship where teenagers are to be encouraged "to take up *their statutory right* to time off for study or training" (our emphasis). The right represented here is a constitutional one to be taken up. However, in the section describing the priority group of unemployed people, it occurs collocated with responsibilities: "Our proposed pilots will give us the information we need to determine how to develop a new national policy for improving the literacy and numeracy of jobseekers which takes account of both their *rights and their responsibilities*" (para. 25, our emphasis).

The phrase "rights and responsibilities" was key to the discourse promoted by New Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair, especially in his approach to crime policy. Writing for the British Observer newspaper just before the opening of Parliament in which new policies are announced, he declared that "rights and responsibilities have always been at the heart of my politics" (Blair, 2002, para. 9). This discourse is part of the wider neoliberal order of discourse, which reconfigures the concept of citizens' rights to education and welfare into a relationship of mutual obligation within the logic of global capitalism (Fairclough, 2003). In the *Skills for Life* document, it is part of how job seekers are represented as their benefits become tied to specific conditions. Literacy education is one of these conditions and becomes articulated with the giving or withholding of benefits.

The discourse of rights and responsibilities introduces a new relationship with the government as benefactor as well as upholder of citizen rights. The government's role is further expanded through the use of the word *entitlement*, first in a paragraph explaining government strategies to "engage potential learners": "Giving all adults who want to improve their literacy and numeracy skills an *entitlement* to free training in a format that reflects their individual needs and which is available when and where they need it" (para. 11, our emphasis).

The second use occurs near the end of the document in a paragraph explaining measures that the government will take within its own departments: "And it will give all its staff with literacy or numeracy difficulties at Level 1 or below an entitlement to time off for training" (para. 41).

In both of these statements, the human rights of individual citizens are transformed into entities that governments can give or withhold, like government benefits. Thus, through the way these discourses are drawn on in this document, a right to education becomes a duty to retrain and, as we shall see when we look at the learner narratives, to transform. This shift in meaning is achieved through a deficit portrait of the learner, framed within the discourse of social exclusion. The deficits are not only of skills but also of motivation. In *A Right to Read*, the resistance to participation in learning is represented as stemming from the emotions of fear and shame; for example, "Very few dare expose themselves to the possibility of ridicule by coming forward and asking for help" (p. 11). The later New Labour discourses of duty and inertia introduce a punitive element into these discourses of governance, where literacy education is positioned as a prerequisite to social inclusion and subsequent individual success.

The discourses of exclusion and functional literacy also embed the neoliberal logic that an individual's decision to learn new skills is deeply connected to the prosperity and productivity of the whole nation. In paragraph 4 of the Introduction, it is argued that people with low skills impact negatively on us all as a nation. Here is part of that argument: "One in five employers reports a significant gap in their workers' skills. And over a third of those companies with a literacy and numeracy skills gap say that they have lost business or orders to competitors because of it" (para. 4).

The inadequacies of employees are represented as damaging the British commercial sector, although it is the inanimate gap that is blamed here rather than individuals. This argument is repeated later in the document:

> And up to half of the 7 million people are in jobs. Many are in low-skilled or short-term employment. We must increase these people's earnings potential, and the country's wealth and productivity, by giving them the literacy and numeracy skills they need to participate in a global, knowledge-based economy. (para. 17)

There is no exploration here of the causes of low wages, other than an individual's lack of skill.

These discourses bring the wider policy move of evaluating education in terms of its economic productivity into the field of adult education, and they are shaped by the twin goals of increasing prosperity and social inclusion. The learner is positioned as excluded from society solely because of literacy or numeracy deficits, and education is seen as both the carrot and the stick to relieve the nation of this "burden to individuals and society" (para. 13).

This analysis of the mix of discourses in the two documents shows how deficit discourses dominate in both, overwhelming discourses from practitioners and social activists that represent a much wider range of learner agency. These deficit discourses embed a dichotomy of literacy education as positive and transformational and of literacy difficulties as negative. The analysis also shows how the presence of a range of new, neoliberal discourses of exclusion and duty in *Skills for Life* tie literacy education into the national economy and shift the meanings of the role of the literacy learner within it.

The Learner Profiles

We turn now to the presentations of particular individuals who have benefitted from the new measures being promoted through these texts. Can details from the lives of actual individuals provide an alternative representation of those targeted, including the complexity that is absent from the dominant discursive generalizations elsewhere in the texts? The profiles provide the only textual spaces where the voices of those targeted by the policies can be directly heard. They all contain the reported speech of the learners, and so we assume they are based on interviews with these individuals. We show through the following analysis that the voices in these profiles are actually heavily framed and shaped by the goals of the texts.

A Right to Read

In *A Right to Read*, 6 of the 25 pages present the life stories of six learners, four males and two females: Brian, Tony, Mary, Keith, Susan, and Andrew. Three of the four men have skilled work. The youngest one, 17-year-old Tony, is doing less skilled painting and decorating. Both women are described as housewives, and the jobs they did before marriage and children are not specified. These gendered employment patterns reflect the full employment and family practices of the early 1970s. All six describe themselves as fully involved in the workplace, family, or local community, not excluded by the struggles with written language they all describe as part of their lives.

The profiles are placed after information about the need for functional literacy and a detailed explanation of the high reading demands of everyday texts. The authorial voice introducing these individual voices draws heavily on the deficit discourse discussed earlier. The section is titled "Illiterate Adults," and it starts, "Who are the illiterate adults? They are a wide variety of men and women doing all sorts of different jobs, suffering from their inability to read in different ways. Here are six of them" (p. 11).

This title and introduction foreground deficit through the repeated use of negative prefixes (e.g., *ill*iteracy, *ill*iterate, *in*ability). This is extended by the choice of the action of *suffering*, which sets the adults up as helplessly in thrall to this pain, in contrast to their positive engagement in the social world ("doing all sorts of different jobs"). The stigma is reinforced through the stated use of pseudonyms to respect "their general wish for anonymity."

Detailed scrutiny of these profiles reveals that these are not straightforward transcripts but carefully constructed stories. The directly quoted individual voice, in the first person, is combined with an anonymous authorial voice that introduces and describes the individual in the third person. For example, Brian is described as "quite articulate but can neither read nor write" (p. 12). The first person individual voice makes up most of each profile, punctuated by authorial summaries and paraphrases, which weave in and around their words and revoice them. We are told, for example, about Mary, "Now she's pleased with her progress" (p. 14).

When paraphrasing is used, the reader cannot know whose version of the story he or she is reading. In these profiles, a paraphrase is occasionally followed by the direct speech of the individual repeating the same point, as in the opening sentences about Keith: He is quite sure he would have been a good deal more successful if only he could have learned to read and write. "I've done well for myself, but if I could have read and written I could have done a lot better. I'm positive" (pp. 14–15).

Each narrative is introduced and framed by the authorial voice in this way, a device that results in the voice of the learner being used to illustrate and explain this frame.

This authorial shaping is also at work at the end of each profile. As in the conventional style of Euro-American stories, the narratives are brought to a degree of closure. Three profiles finish with the transformation that is typical of this genre when used in persuasive texts, such as self-help books and advertisements (see Pitt, 2008).

- From Susan: "But now I go to the shops and everything on my own." (p. 16)

- From Andrew: "Now, it's not so bad. I can actually open a paper and read it." (p. 17)
- From Tony: "Now I can read them [letters] for myself." (p. 13)

These positive changes or actions in the person's own words are put at the end of each story to give a sense of a happy ending. Of the others, Mary's finishes with the positive action of seeking help, saying, "That's what made me go for help" (p. 14). Keith's transformation comes near the end; he says, "Now I can do the books for my business. I do all my own cheques. I do practically everything now" (p. 16), but his aspiration to be "normal" is used to close his story. He closes with, "I just want to be natural like anyone else. I just want to be ordinary" (p. 16). Brian's profile ends with him asking for tuition, and waiting for tuition to begin. His final words list others he has met who also can't read—"The best man at my wedding….a couple of youngsters at work, and a couple of the older ones too" (p. 13). All of these endings serve the campaigning aims of the text to show the need for, and the benefits of, funding adult literacy education.

Although these stories are carefully constructed by the expert voice, there is generous space given to the six individual voices, unlike the learner profiles in *Skills for Life*, which we discuss next. Through both their own and the author's words, we learn of their achievements, as well as their needs, and their inclusion within mainstream society. For example, Brian is a skilled man with a car and job and has been offered a promotion. Tony is employed, has girlfriends, and goes on holidays. Mary has worked and is now married with children; she survived being orphaned and put in a home. Keith is a "successful 45-year-old London shopkeeper" who was good at other things in school. Susan is a single mother with children who found work after leaving school at 14.

If we compare these diverse actions with the negative label of the section title, illiterate adults, and the deficit discourses analyzed earlier, we can see how the deficit discourses reduce the complex lives of people who have significant needs but who are also active and successful in other aspects of their lives.

These learners also refer to a range of personal strategies they engage in to address their lack of knowledge, thereby presenting themselves as active and motivated to learn rather than passive and helpless, as in the disability and functional illiteracy discourses discussed earlier.

- From Mary: "We [Mary and husband] used to get little books and start reading, especially the things that interested us like articles about saving for the home." (p. 14)

- From Susan: "I've been trying to pick up my reading and my spelling ever since I left school." (p. 16)
- From Andrew: "When I became an NCO I could instruct men. I could learn something, but it would take me something like a month to get through a little course, to prepare a lesson on a new subject." (p. 17)
- From Brian: "Where I work there are quite a few like me, and one word that one of us doesn't know [when filling in time sheets at work] another will." (p. 12)

These descriptions give insights into the informal, cooperative strategies that people use to interact with a world full of literacy. As mentioned before, such strategies have been widely documented in literacy studies research (see Street and Lefstein, 2008) and are part of the way that all members of textually mediated societies deal with texts. These strategies also illustrate the actions presented as getting by in *Skills for Life*, as discussed earlier.

The profiles bring together the individuals' actions with their need for expert education. The author summarizes and acknowledges these differences:

- [Brian] is quite articulate *but* can neither read nor write. (p. 12)
- [Brian's] a skilled man, but his reading difficulties have prevented him. (p. 12)
- [Keith] is quite sure he would have been a good deal more successful *if only* he could have learned to read and write. (pp. 14–15, our emphasis)

However, in these descriptions, the outstanding need is placed in the focus position of an English sentence. Compare them with "Although he has reading difficulties, he is a skilled man," where the achievement is placed as the important piece of information in the end slot. This authorial choice of construction puts the focus on the individuals' lack of literacy knowledge, which is perhaps inevitable here as the aim of these stories is to persuade the reader of the importance of the problem and their needs. But this analysis shows how these profiles are shaped by the overall needs of the manifesto to construct the lack of literacy as a dramatic problem. However, these stories also give room for the breadth of activities missing from the deficit discourses that surround them.

Skills for Life

We now move forward a quarter of a century again to the *Skills for Life* strategy document, which also includes profiles of individual learners. In this

document, more space is given to photographs of each learner than to their words. In *A Right to Read*, the profiles are pseudonymous and the only images are black-and-white reproductions of everyday texts. In *Skills for Life*, there are foldout pages with full-page, color photographs of seven individuals inserted on the inside with the verbal profile. The reader finds the photograph by unfolding this page to reveal the visual presence. Full names are given in red at the top of the written description, and there is no reference to the use of pseudonyms. These profiles are placed seemingly at random throughout the document, unlike the *A Right to Read* profiles, which are integrated into the argument within a designated section of the text. No explicit connection is made between any of the *Skills for Life* profiles and the section where it is placed, and there is no reference to them in the contents list. Indeed, the only reference to them comes in the foreword by David Blunkett, in a paragraph about the predicted positive outcomes of this new strategy: "Together we can create a new climate for learning which can and will change lives—as shown by the learners described here" (p. 3). The first profile comes straight after this foreword.

The foreword is the first part of the folded page that opens up to show the photograph of the learner Angela Black, so the inquisitive reader is instantly introduced to the way to find these photographs. Blunkett's reference couples the narratives to positive change through a strong, generalized assertion that is characteristic of political discourse ("*can and will change lives*"). It provides the rationale for their inclusion as concrete illustrations of what these measures will achieve. Because they are randomly placed and unreferenced, the reader only comes across the rest of the profiles by chance, and has to do the work of unfolding the double page to discover each photograph. This design excludes the profiles from the arguments of the text and so gives a much weaker framing than in *A Right to Read*. However, our analysis shows that both the images and words are carefully constructed to echo Blunkett's theme of transformation.

There are seven profiles, five men and two women, a number and proportion that is similar to those of *A Right to Read*. However, there are some striking dissimilarities between these two sets of learners. Only one of the *Skills for Life* learners, Gary Hughes, is presented as being in work, and he is described as becoming a community tutor after his own successful experiences of adult education. There is also ethnic diversity within this sample, which was not an explicit feature of the *A Right to Read* profiles. Two individuals are described as coming to the United Kingdom from other countries: Wayne Alphonso Richards from Jamaica and Nasrin Sheikh from Kenya. Nasrin is studying English as an additional language, a subject

that was not part of the earlier manifesto. For another two of these learners, Angela Black and Paul Wragg, chronic illness is presented as a major obstacle to education and employment. Although all these individuals are described as successfully engaged in various basic skills, IT, and vocational courses, their profiles suggest many more difficulties with full involvement in mainstream social life, for a mix of different reasons, than the learners featured in *A Right to Read*. Unemployment, migration, illness, and low-paid work linked with a lack of qualifications are aspects of daily life that the new strategies presented in this document are addressing; and they are also represented as part of the actual lives of the individuals chosen. Their diverse difficulties, though, are backgrounded by the brevity of the narratives and the focus on positive transformation through employment and education.

We start this analysis with the photographic constructions as they are given twice the space of the words. Each individual is posed with specific props that relate to the written narrative. Each photograph includes a variety of literacy artifacts such as books, newspapers, or a flipchart with writing on it, and five of the photos show one or more computers. The use of props as attributes to establish individual identity is a typical convention of media photographs (see Hamilton, 2000). The settings can be identified through the furniture as institutional and include a classroom, a recording studio, and an office.

Each individual fills half to three quarters of the frame, with a close-up torso shot, and all look confidently and directly at the reader through the camera lens. As Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) pointed out, this direct gaze avoids the sense of objectification that would be implied if they had been instructed to look away from the lens. When represented participants look at the viewer, vectors formed by the participants' eyelines connect the participants with the viewer. Contact is established, even if it is only on an imaginary level (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

The close-up shot also establishes the kind of close personal distance that is part of the cultural norms of face-to-face interaction in English, and these choices made by the photographer invite the reader to engage with the subject on an equal and personal basis—a positioning which differs from those set up in the deficit discourses explored earlier.

We can use the photograph of Wayne Alphonso Richards as an example of the detailed construction of these images. He is posed smiling and sitting at a studio sound-mixing board with headphones around his neck and a computer monitor in the background. He is holding out a CD to the camera lens so that it is in the foreground, and the printed writing on it, in a circle, can be easily read. These props connect with his ambition to become a sound engineer, which we learn by

reading the text. On the disk are two sentences: "I feel very cool and calm, thinking constructively. It has made me different" (p. 21). The first sentence is a reproduction of his quoted speech in the written text. The second sentence seems to be a summary made by an anonymous author, as he is reported saying, "I think coming on the course has changed me. It's made me have a wide open mind" (p. 20). The sentence "It has made me different" is a shorter reformulation of this description, which fits into the small, circular space of the disk. In three of the other photos, some of the written text or references to its content is also inserted into appropriate props, such as writing on a flipchart and in an advertisement on the job vacancy page of a newspaper. These details, along with the careful choice of setting, show that elaborate, professional attention has been paid to these visual representations.

The polished visual presentation of individual learners connects to both the New Labour concerns with image discussed earlier and to the work of the national Basic Skills Agency (BSA) over the previous quarter of a century, which went to great lengths to produce high-quality publications in order not to reinforce the general perception of marginality in the field of adult literacy.

These visual representations of learners authenticate the accompanying narratives through the embodied presence of individual people. They elaborate a message of confidence, inclusion, and transformation that is in direct opposition to the discourses of deficit and exclusion occurring in the parts of this document that justify the need for new strategies. The visual discourses here—of literacy, technology, and work—connect to the dominant government discourse of the knowledge economy. Their professional design is part of the technologized approach to contemporary government documents, and it also adds a touch of color and diverse individuality to a text that has no other visual image, apart from the photograph of David Blunkett. The reader can be further motivated and persuaded of the truths and the optimism of these words by viewing these real people, who physically embody the testimony of change.

Turning to the written narratives, these are made up of a mix of an anonymous authorial voice and the learners' voices, as in *A Right to Read*. In these stories, however, it is the author's voice that dominates. The learners' accounts of themselves are inset as direct quotations, but the narratives are mainly written in the third person and are much shorter than those in *A Right to Read*. Each profile is between five and eight short paragraphs set in a larger font than the rest of the document to fill the page space. This verbal brevity suggests that the photograph stands in here for the voice of the individual. After a short introduction of one or two sentences, each profile follows the

problem-and-solution structure. The problems are usually introduced in the second paragraph and the profile then focuses on the solution, which is how the basic skills courses have changed them. The stories are edited to fit this message. This editing is done through the use of the authorial voice to advance the plot and reduce the timescale. A detailed analysis of the construction of one profile, David Revell's, shows how each is as carefully constructed as their photographs.

The first two introductory sentences present David Revell positively through the third person of the author: "David Revell is ambitious. He aims to get a job as a manager, possibly in the leisure and tourism field" (p. 29). This is followed by a paragraph that briefly refers to problems ("after a long time of different kinds of difficulties," p. 29) before returning to the positive tone: "David thinks that things are beginning to go his way. He started his New Deal course at South Tyneside College in September" (p. 29). In these two sentences, the government New Deal course is linked to the optimistic tone. The "difficulties" are later specified as concerning school and work:

> David's school days were a struggle. He left without any qualifications. "I'm not sure why, but however hard I tried, things didn't seem to click at school. Following a period of being in and out of work, I realized that if I was to get on in life, I needed to get some new skills." (p. 29)

Here, David's description of his school days is immediately followed by his description of his work experience, presumably taken from an interview. His words are selected and repositioned without explicit authorial comment and embedded within the third-person narrative.

His New Deal course is not explained in the profile, but it is referred to elsewhere in the document and discussed by us earlier as part of the discourse of duty. New Deal is tied into the state benefits system. Claimants who have been unemployed for a certain length of time are encouraged by the Jobcentre staff to participate in relevant courses. The *Skills for Life* document announces the piloting of new initiatives designed to increase this participation through financial incentives or disincentives (paragraphs 23–27). Duty and obligation are, however, absent from David's profile. The last two sentences tell the story of David joining this course, one in his own words and the second in those of the author:

> "Following a period of being in and out of work, I realised that if I was to get on in life, I needed to get some new skills." He picked up a leaflet on New Deal and realized this was an opportunity to do just that. (p. 29)

In the second sentence (the final one of the profile) the author omits any explicit timescale, and by placing

this sentence after David's account of his work experiences, the impression is given that the discovery of information about a training course followed seamlessly from the emergence of David's perception of a particular need. Absent is any discussion of possible causal factors for David's unsatisfactory employment experiences. Also left out is a description of the pathway that brought him together with the New Deal leaflet. Time is telescoped and the places, people, and pressures involved in this change of direction are omitted. David is presented as the sole agent of the actions "realized" and "picked up."

Compare this account of individual agency with the strong institutional obligation expressed elsewhere in the text: "In two pilot areas, we propose to go further and introduce a requirement that those unemployed people with literacy and numeracy deficiencies must address their needs. If they fail to do so they risk losing benefits" (para. 25).

The obligation that is part of the discourse of duty ("requirement," "must") is replaced in this narrative with a representation that highlights only David's agency. The only other active agents named in this narrative are the basic skills staff, and they are presented as facilitating and supporting David: "[He] was aware that his English was not all that good, but trusted that the basic skills staff on the course would help him sort out his problems. And they are" (p. 29). All other possible actors who might have had some impact on David's actions are backgrounded or suppressed in phrases such as "David's school days" and "a period of being in and out of work" and "a leaflet on New Deal" (p. 29).

All the profiles present transformation through formal vocational learning. This message is foregrounded through the editing and photographic work. The tag "And they are" is an example of this. Its informal, speech-like construction mirrors that of the incomplete sentences to be found in informal spoken English (Carter & McCarthy, 1997), and it is typical of the kind of marketing discourse to be found in the advertisements and promotional texts that surround us (Pitt, 2008). Similarly, these texts aim to construct words and images to persuade and to illustrate the positive effects of specific commodities or social activities. They are carefully constructed to produce the new kind of active subject that Ball highlights as part of the new modes of governance (Ball, 2009).

In these *Skills for Life* profiles, each individual smiles confidently at us through the camera lens, but we cannot be sure of the transformations through basic skills courses offered in these polished representations since only Gary is described as having actually achieved some kind of official closure to his problems through work as a community tutor. Having a job is presented as a significant aim of each individual; for example, "She [Nasrin] hopes to find a job soon" (p. 46), and "When it [the course] is over, John intends to get another job on a production line, 'among the lads,' he says" (p. 13). John is the oldest learner in these profiles at 57. He is studying Maths and IT and is quoted as enthusiastic about how they have improved his daily life. Yet his aim here is stated as getting the same kind of work he has always done. The change in his profile is more like that of the *A Right to Read* learners ("I've got more confidence and I'm proud I can work things out—like my gas bill"). Absent from this profile are the probable causes of his current unemployment, the decades of change in the workplace, and the dwindling of the kind of manufacturing jobs John used to have. They are also absent from the deficit discourses that focus on individual lack of literacy and numeracy as a cause of exclusion.

Conclusion

We set out to answer the following questions:

- How do policy discourses shape public understanding of adult literacy learners and the goals of literacy education?
- Specifically, how is the agency of adult literacy learners represented within the changing social relations of policy and practice?

A recent review of discourse studies of literacy (Rex et al., 2010) suggests that our focus on policy documents is unusual. However, our critical discourse analysis of two texts separated by nearly three decades of policy and practice suggests that such documents are a key site for extending our understanding of how the relationships between local and transnational literacies are organized. Our analysis, summarized here, offers detailed evidence for how this is accomplished.

We analyzed the policy texts in relation to the wider social and policy context of adult literacy education over a recent historical period in order to show how they both reflect and shape changing practices within the accelerating pressures of globalization. In our contextual overview, we described the substantial changes in the U.K. social and political environment with which adult literacy education has engaged since the 1970s. The full employment of the early 1970s has gone; workplaces and employment markets have been reshaped through new technologies and the practices of powerful multinational corporations. There are new flows of migrant labor and, in many cases, conditions of work and job security have deteriorated, especially for those with few formal qualifications.

These changes are not unique to the United Kingdom, but in different ways are felt by countries across the globe. New regional and international allegiances have emerged, particularly through the European Union and the OECD, and we identified multiple layers of policy influence (international, regional, and national) that disseminate discourses across an international arena. There is a persistent functional, individual deficit approach to literacy in the policy texts that has wide international provenance. In the later *Skills for Life* document we also traced the neoliberal discourses of social inclusion and conditionality in relation to citizenship, which are now dominant in the policy strategies of the European Union and the OECD. These discourses currently organize a broad range of policy action in the United Kingdom and beyond, and this is why we refer to them as orders of discourse.

The constant and dominant theme of functional literacy and illiteracy as individual deficit is expressed differently in each of the documents as it becomes articulated with other discourses: The notion of everyday relevance is replaced by vocational relevance in the later one. The theme of social participation in *A Right to Read* is transformed into the idea of social inclusion in *Skills for Life* and this in turn becomes narrowed to economic inclusion through paid employment. In this way, the many potentials of literacy are presented in a concretized and limited way, shaped through the neoliberal orders of discourse. Alternative discourses are marginalized.

This deficit discourse focuses attention on what adult literacy learners have not got, in terms of formal education, income, and lack of opportunities, and these absences are constructed as deficits. The agency and resourcefulness of adult literacy learners are backgrounded by the campaigning and promotional purposes of the texts, and the learners are instead constructed as being needy and powerless in various ways. Despite the humanitarian motivation that often lies behind the commitment to adult literacy, our analysis reveals how even documents motivated by inclusive aims are necessarily constructed using the discursive resources of the wider policy area, which may undermine these aims.

Varying means are used in the policy discourse to align identities and everyday practices with policy. One device used in both the texts we analyzed was the inclusion of narrative profiles of individual adults that are carefully framed and edited by the authors of the texts to provide personalized but selective illustrations of policy categories and priorities. In the later *Skills for Life* document, personification is enhanced through the use of carefully constructed, high-impact photographs. The deficit discourse also enters into these learner profiles. This is particularly vividly demonstrated in the carefully constructed visual images of learners in the *Skills for Life* document in which the individual lives of the chosen learners are recontextualized into wholesome but impersonal learning spaces and presented as polished, easy transformations, aiming to bring the priority groups into the mainstream through their desire for well-paid, satisfying work. The effect of these discourses and the framing of learner voices is to smooth out the complexities and contradictions in adults lives, and the realities of the employment market, to fit in with the goals of the policy; to background other causal factors; and to remove the profiles from the wider context within which people live and make sense of their experiences.

We found two significant changes amid considerable continuity in the discourses of deficit and functionality. The first of these is a change is in the discourse of rights and the kind of citizen that is being constructed. Unlike the rights discourse that frames the *A Right to Read* manifesto, a discourse of conditionality in the social contract between the individual and the state is evident in the *Skills for Life* document, expressed through the theme of exclusion and duty. As we showed in the analysis, the discourse of duty subtly shifts the rights of citizens into the control of the government. This aligns it with the view of citizenship that is now pervasive in social policy (Newman, Clarke, Smith, & Vidler, 2007). It also signals that the discourses of governance through education that are also powerful in shaping these policies are not sufficient to address and control the troublesome social groupings on the margins.

The second striking change is the developing marketization of such written texts and the ways that New Labour chose to promote its messages about literacy. The style of the textual artifacts produced in the *Skills for Life* strategy is part of a wider corporatization that was introduced during the 1980s and 1990s and has accelerated since then. This style contributes to the pervasive message that we all, as citizens, live and are evaluated in terms of a corporate environment with its goals of profit-making, competition, and unequal, low-trust relationships. Thus, the use of particular kinds of representations does the work of shaping and constituting a discursive and moral order for literacy within which citizens act, make sense of our experiences, and judge ourselves and others—what Smith (2005) called *the relations of ruling*. This technologization of the discourse is part of a more general shift toward a managerial style of governance, whereby policy is enforced through the use of closely monitored performance indicators, outcome related targets, and mandated staff development. Such measures were built into the *Skills for Life* strategy and made it difficult for practitioners to resist the new practices and discourses (see Hamilton, 2009).

Policy is not, of course, the same as practice. What we have in these documents are particular, but powerful, takes on complex social realities and on the debates about how to manage them. Policy discourses offer ready frames for talking about a fluid and highly mediatized issue like literacy. These perspectives, we have argued, draw on and change broader orders of discourse long sedimented into discussions about literacy learning and failure: The "lazy" child becomes the fatalistic and "inert" adult. Specific discourses, shared on a global level by national governments, are reworked to shape national policies and strategies that then impact on all the participants within the field of adult literacy as well as on other fields of social policy. These leave little room for alternative discourses and practices, and align adult literacy educators and learners with globally dominant imaginaries of inclusion, equality, and success. We believe that the simplified and misleading representations of literacy and literacy learners revealed in these policy documents are counterproductive. As Luke (2003) said, public policy that is not historically and sociologically well grounded is likely to have "limited, accidental, and contradictory effects" (p. 136).

While practitioners may be aware of the effects of this reworking on local activities, it is not always easy for them to get information about the wider picture. The kind of critical research presented in this article can help piece together the lines of influence and distant activities that animate the local sphere. It can strengthen the visibility of local discourses and realities by emphasizing the importance of day-by-day interactions of literacy, and thus overcome the inevitable decontextualizations that result from standardized policy responses initiated a long way from home.

The voices of practitioners who might bridge these worlds are not heard in these documents, and the policy vision does not draw on the substantial knowledge that has now been generated from ethnographic research of local practice. There is still, therefore, a gap to be closed, a task which offers challenges to all, wherever we are positioned in the field of adult literacy.

Notes

[1] The project *Changing Faces, a History of Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL 1970–2000* was conducted between 2001 and 2004. ESRC Ref No: R000239387.

[2] Although *Skills for Life* was formulated by the U.K. government in Westminster, it only applies to England because education is the responsibility of the devolved administrations in the other countries of the United Kingdom (Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland).

[3] Links to the full text of the two documents and timelines can be found on the Changing Faces project website at www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/edres/changingfaces/archive.htm.

[4] See for example Sainsbury's Annual Summary Review Report www.jsainsbury.co.uk/files/reports/ar2001/review_2001.pdf.

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Mary Hamilton is a professor of adult learning and literacy in the Department of Educational Research, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK; e-mail m.hamilton@lancaster.ac.uk.

Kathy Pitt is a research fellow in the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK; e-mail k.pitt@lancaster.ac.uk.

Appendix

Occurrences of Two Keywords in Excerpts From *Skills for Life*

A. Exclusion

Contents, p. 5

1. Other groups *at risk of exclusion*

Executive Summary, p. 6

2. People with poor literacy, numeracy and language skills tend to be on lower incomes or unemployed, and they are more prone to ill health and *social exclusion*.

Skills for Life, the Government's strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills, sets out how we plan to tackle this problem.

3. Our priority is to improve the skills of those groups where literacy and numeracy needs are greatest and where we can make most impact, particularly:

- Unemployed people and benefit claimants;
- prisoners and those supervised in the community;
- public sector employees;
- low-skilled people in employment; and
- other groups *at risk of exclusion*.

Introduction, para. 3

4. And they are more prone to health problems and *to suffer social exclusion*. New technology is significantly increasing the need to read, write and use numbers confidently and effectively.

Our Priority Groups

5. para. 18

We cannot ignore other groups with specific disadvantages and *at risk of exclusion* from mainstream society due to their lack of literacy and numeracy skills. These include homeless people, those with drug and alcohol problems, refugees and other non-native English speakers, and some who live in disadvantaged communities.

6. p. 14, Figure 1

Other groups *at high risk of exclusion* due to poor literacy and numeracy skills, including

- Around 60,000 homeless people with literacy and numeracy needs
- Up to 1 million refugees, successful asylum seekers and other speakers of English as an additional language
- Parents with poor basic skills, including the 250,000 lone parents with no qualifications
- Around 1.7 million adults with literacy and numeracy needs who live in disadvantaged communities

7. Other groups *at risk of exclusion* (heading, p. 27)

8. para. 62

Many of those in the priority groups already listed, such as jobseekers, are *at high risk of social exclusion*.

9. para. 66

Other groups *at risk of exclusion*—including drug or alcohol abusers, traveling families, and older adults in the community as well as in residential care homes—are most regularly reached by many thousands of organizations and individuals in the voluntary and community sector.

10. para. 69

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education and the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service are working to develop awareness of literacy and numeracy skills within the local voluntary and community sector, involving learners in the design and delivery of programs to increase their commitment and motivation. We will support and look to extend this work and enable an estimated 50,000 of these adults *at risk of social exclusion* to improve their literacy and numeracy by 2004.

11. Parents, para. 72

And through Sure Start, our early years program to tackle child poverty and *social exclusion*, we will offer access to literacy and numeracy training, with childcare and crèche support, at convenient and unthreatening locations where parents already visit or collect their children.

B. Entitlement/Rights

Introduction, para. 11

1. We will engage potential learners by:

Giving all adults who want to improve their literacy and numeracy skills *an entitlement* to free training in a format that reflects their individual needs and which is available when and where they need it.

Our Priority Groups

2. Unemployed people and benefit claimants, para. 25.

Our proposed pilots will give us the information we need to determine how to develop a new national policy for improving the literacy and numeracy of jobseekers which takes account of both *their rights* and their responsibilities.

3. Public sector employees, para. 41

The Department for Education and Employment will also be proactive in identifying those with needs among new and existing staff, in part by undertaking a sampling exercise to determine the scale of need. And it will give all its staff with literacy or numeracy difficulties at Level 1 or below *an entitlement* to time off for training.

4. Young adults, para. 59

Their [Connexions] work, supported by our promotional and information activity, will be focused on those sectors and occupations where there is particular need—in the manufacturing, construction and the wholesale or retail industrial sectors, where many young people work, and among craft occupations (such as plumbers and carpenters) and caring occupations (such as childcare and residential care workers), where literacy and numeracy skills needs are disproportionately present among young men and young women respectively. Personal advisers will encourage all those who are 16 or 17 years old to take up *their statutory right* to time off for study or training.

Delivering Higher Standards

5. Funding and planning, para. 96

All literacy and numeracy students are eligible for Individual Learning Accounts which will cover the costs of books, examination fees and similar costs. We will aim to provide a simple guide, for all literacy and numeracy skills learners, on the financial and other support *they are entitled to*, such as Individual Learning Accounts or money from access funds.

Note. [1] Page numbers refer to the printed document. Paragraph numbers provided when available from the source. All emphasis has been added.