“STORIES FROM OUR PEOPLE”: IMMIGRANTS, BROKERS, AND LITERACY AS AFFINITY

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

An ethnographic study of literacy histories of Romanian (im)migrants in the U.S., my dissertation explores the role of literacy brokers in the context of the transnational movement of people and texts. While recent scholarly accounts of literacy brokers—defined as individuals assisting others with writing—approach brokers mainly for their instrumental role as translators, editors, or scribes, my study proposes that literacy brokers’ emotional work of mediation must be further explored. I argue that literacy brokers perform mediation through what I call “literacy as affinity.” “Literacy as affinity,” an emotional discursive repertoire, comprises empathetic language, personal stories, and social connections embedded in the literate experience. Literacy as affinity intervenes in contexts of people’s mobility in spaces of in-betweenness, of transitions, and gaps in one’s experience. In doing so, it creates bridges of communication but also provides a sustainable infrastructure for one’s learning.

In this study, I approach the brokers’ work of affinity in multiple contexts—local communities, schools, libraries, and courtrooms—and through the lens of various types of brokers such as the state, community members, and various organizations. Drawing on thirty-two literacy history interviews, textual artifacts (travel documents, personal writings/ notes, advertisements for community events, ethnic newspapers), and archival research in Romania, I show how brokers’ work of affinity is experienced both as a loss and recovery of familiar texts, languages, and contexts. With each chapter, I follow the immigrant journey. After providing an overview of transnational mobility in the Introduction, in Chapter two I start my analysis of literacy brokers in Romania where the immigrant story begins. I emphasize the role of the totalitarian Romanian state in managing people’s affinities for the nation-state through literacy. Following the immigrant journey, in Chapter three and four I discuss the brokers’ emotional
investment as it unfolds in the lives of political refugees (Chapter three) and economic immigrants (Chapter four). The regulation of the personal through documents and institutional bureaucracies creates spaces of in-betweenness where brokers intervene to facilitate mediation. Such spaces may be marked by lack of English knowledge, limited familiarity with documents or legal writing, or gaps in cultural knowledge. In Chapter five, I examine the writing researcher as a broker and various affinities developed through personal, institutional, national or international affiliations.

In this dissertation, I argue that literacy brokers and their use of literacy as affinity provide a compelling case for why literacy education must acknowledge individual needs rather than instrumental ways to accomplish educational goals. At a time when universities try to acclimatize to digital, open courses and mass migration, my dissertation suggests that literacy brokers’ work of affinity serves both as a motivational support and a driving engine in accomplishing literate actions. To this end, literacy as affinity can offer a sustainable system for the literate experience, as it concerns the entire process of one’s literacy trajectory, both in and out of school. Sustainability and transfer are current concerns in education and this study offers a small intervention in this area by directing attention to the role of emotions in learning.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“The only thing I fear is that you will want to pursue a Ph.D. degree as well.” These were my father’s accompanying words at the airport in 2004, as I was leaving Romania to pursue a MA degree in TESOL at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I, of course, denied any such intentions. Two years later, my father’s intuitions proved right. I decided to pursue a Ph.D. in English, specializing in Writing Studies because I was deeply interested in the study of rhetoric, literacy, and writing. I came to this area with little prior knowledge, “fresh off the boat” as they say, creating my own niche. This dissertation is an attempt to claim that space.

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Soli Deo Gloria
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

In the book *Philadelphia: An open door for you* celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Philadelphia Romanian Church in Niles, IL, Rev. Galis narrates fragments about his arrival in the U.S. in the early 1970s. As he boarded on his last flight to Chicago, emotions ran wild, Rev. Galis writes. He wondered whether anyone would wait for him at the airport, whether he would have a place to live, and what sort of interactions he would forge with the local community of faith. His anxieties were appeased as a group of ten people waited for him. One slender man, who Rev. Galis did not know, approached him and said: “You, Rev. Galis, are coming to live with me until your family arrives” (p. 29). The same slender man introduced Rev. Galis to the south side of Chicago and the division of neighborhoods: “From the Oncius, I learned that we were in the South side of the city of Chicago and that neighborhoods were situated by nationalities as such: “In the South, there is the Polish, Yugoslavian, Slovak, African-American, Mexican neighborhood[s]. In the North, there were Scots, Germans, French, Romanians, Hungarians, Italians, and a part of the Spanish” (Galis, 2013, pp. 29-30).

Narratives like this make history. Personal stories—about leaving Romania and arriving in the U.S. but also accounts detailing how the personal intersects with particular institutions or social groups such as churches or ethnic communities—document experiences that transcend physical boundaries. From these immigrant narratives that circulate in such ethnic communities, I focus on the “slender man,” the one who approaches the newly arrived and mediates their process of becoming American. The “slender man” placates the fears of the unknown in a new country, walking with new immigrant through the steps and aspects of the new life: housing, jobs, enrolling children in school, social security, and so on. Providing a generic map of ethnic
neighborhoods, he is the trail guide concerning issues of ethnic divisions, hierarchical structures, and marginalization. Ultimately, the “slender man” functions as a broker—he brokers boundaries between the old world and the new world, between personal and larger socio-economic and political structures such as immigration and governmental agencies, administrative offices, local communities, schools, and churches. In this dissertation, my goal is to examine how this brokering operates through language, text, and culture.

I concentrate on the literacy broker’s emotional work in the process of mediating linguistic, cultural, and institutional boundaries. As other scholars have noted (Ahmed, 2004; Jacobs & Micciche, 2003), emotion comes from the Latin word, *emovere*, which means “to move out, to stir.” More importantly, to study emotion in the context of immigration—which implies physical mobility of people, a process of leaving a place and arriving to a new location—entails a study of mobility on multiple levels: social, economic, affective, and definitely, textual and literate. When immigrants travel, their literate repertoire and communicative practices accompany their passage across multiple contexts. They must repurpose their language and literacy inventory and adapt it to new contexts; they also need to compensate for the dispossession that comes with such movement. Loss in the context of literacy includes partial missing one’s language, loss of familiar audiences, loss of a social-cultural context that affords a space for meaning and situated knowledge. In this transnational movement, then, the emotional work of literacy brokers intervenes precisely in this gap. Drawing on Sara Ahmed’s (2004) work, I approach emotions as an expression of both individual and collective experiences, especially as the immigrant presence in the U.S. has frequently been cast in the public discourse as the “immigrant problem” or a threat to the safety of the American citizen. Thus, I envision the emotion work of literacy brokers mobilizing personal stories, language of empathy—which Ann
Jurecic (2011) defines as “multidimensional, flawed\(^1\), and fascinating” attending to both political and the cultural contexts—and an entire socio-economic and political infrastructure connected to situated literacies. With this emotional repertoire—or what I call _literacy as affinity_—literacy brokers intervene in multiple contexts: immigrant communities, churches, schools, governmental agencies, court rooms, libraries, all comprising a multitude of sites that are local, transnational or both. I highlight all these contexts, not because I intentionally sought to address them, but because my participants took me there. In doing so, they confirmed that literacy is much more intricate than we have acknowledged, that personal stories cross over into the public sphere, that filling out immigration forms are indeed rhetorical acts as Ellen Cushman (1998) notes, but they are highly political as well.

This dissertation is an ethnographic study of transnational literacy histories of Romanian immigrants who relocated to the U.S. before and after 1989 – the year that marks the official overturn of the Communist regime in Romania. Since these immigrants were educated for the most part during Nicolae Ceausescu’s political regime (1965-1989), I explore here the socio-economic and political conditions that shaped these immigrants’ literacy education in their home country but also the legacies they carried with them into the new country, the U.S. I embarked on this project with a broad research question exploring how people negotiate textual, cultural, and physical boundaries through literacy. As I progressed through the data collection process and as I consulted scholarship, my questions became more focused:

- Given these immigrants’ history of censored literacy and a pedagogy focused on the collective rather than the individual, how does one create a space for one self? How does the individual manage and maneuver larger institutions and to what end?

\(^1\) For more information about the complexities of empathy, see Ann Jurecic (2011)’s discussion of the contradictory views that literary and medical humanists relative to the post-humanist affect theorists. While the former see the potential of empathy for transformation, the latter problematize empathy as a source of political power.
• As immigrants move, which aspects of literacy education move with them and become recontextualized in the new country? What are the new literate practices emerging in the country of destination and how do people learn to perform them?

Once I started with data analysis and literacy brokers emerged as a central theme, my research questions provided the necessary frame for subsequent analysis, data collection, as well as the format of this current dissertation:

• Who are the literacy brokers in the context of immigration narratives and what roles do they take?

• What forms of literacy mediation do they perform and under what conditions—socio-economic and political?

• What implications can we derive from their emotional work and how does this impact our view of literacy in transnational contexts?

Theoretically, I situate this study of immigrant literacy at the intersection of composition and literacy studies (specifically scholarship on literacy brokers), emotion studies, and transnational studies. I start by locating my use of literacy brokers in the context of U.S. immigration and include a brief discussion of the broker in relation to sponsor—both as it has been theorized by Deborah Brandt (1998) in literacy studies and as it has functioned in the immigration discourse, a sponsor for immigration. Then, I follow with an overview of how literacy as affinity intervenes in various contexts and how brokers perform this work. Next, I explain how this study of transnational literacy fits in the larger context of the transnational turn and the internationalization of writing studies as a field. Given that the literacy broker is a marginally known term, I offer a survey of the scholarship in literacy brokering in order to
understand specific contexts where it has been used but also some limitations that create spaces for further inquiry.

The term, literacy brokers has gained much traction in New Literacy Studies (NLS), especially in cross-cultural studies of literacy (for example, Baynham, 1993; Kalman, 1999; Papen, 2010). In a rather comprehensive definition, Perry (2009) defines literacy brokering as “a process of seeking and or providing information assistance about some aspects of a given text or literacy practice. Brokers bridge linguistic, cultural, and textual divides for others” (p. 256). While current work on literacy brokers underscores their instrumental roles as translators, scribes, or helpers with texts, this study draws attention to literacy brokers’ emotional work performed in mediating texts locally and transnationally. I call this emotional work literacy as affinity—a discursive repertoire comprised of language of empathy and understanding, personal experiences, and even social relations embedded in the literate experience.

In the context of U.S. Immigration and Citizenship Services² (USCIS), the pursuit of legal papers creates a discursive market entangling individuals and state powers in complex ways. This market of legal papers regulated through forms, applications, or affidavits allows little room for the individual to negotiate his or her interaction with the state. Since in immigration discourse, having a sponsor is crucial for an alien seeking to obtain U.S. citizenship and since in composition and literacy studies, the notion of sponsorship or sponsors of literacy (Brandt, 1998) is a widely used analytical concept, a brief explanation on terminology is necessary. Brandt defines sponsors of literacy as “any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold

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² The change of name from Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) occurred in 2003 with the new restructuring of various offices and departments. Currently, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—established formally with the enactment of the Homeland Security Act in November 2002—includes three refashioned divisions: the CIS or USCIS, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Some of these units were formally included under INS.
literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way” (1998, p. 166). In the context of U.S. immigration, the notion of sponsorship implicates mobility, national identities, and access through one’s mediating role. Specifically, a sponsor in the immigration discourse means to bring to the U.S. or “petition for” (United States “Our history”). In this context, a sponsor supports the action and the process of moving from one place to another, in this case, a foreign national’s mobility to the U.S. Whether the petition supports a family member, employment or an asylum case, a sponsor is often framed in economic terms and is crucial in the pursuit of legal papers. Without a sponsor and an affidavit of support from the sponsor, the application is incomplete and cannot be processed. Despite the central role of sponsors in the context of immigration, in my study literacy brokers emerged as significant players on day-to-day interactions. Based on my participants’ account, literacy brokers are the ones who participate in the moment-by-moment interactions brokering texts, such as applications, declarations, documentation and knowledge gaps between the immigrant and state rhetorics. In immigration papers, the sponsor often times remains a formal inscription on a document, responding to governmental constraint but in reality achieving no significant impact on the petitioner. Framed by U.S. state parameters, the sponsor involved in the petition process has to be a U.S. citizen and must show evidence of income sufficient to support another person. On the other hand, literacy brokers are less visible, almost invisible in formal papers, yet their role shapes the processing of legal papers in significant ways. Unlike the sponsors who want their name acknowledged, as in the case of commercials that inspired Brandt’s choice of the sponsor metaphor, literacy brokers remain rather obscured in formal or institutionalized sites of writing. They do, however, emerge as significant actors in the everyday practices of literacy, particularly the mediation of the textual
immigration paths of immigrants. Their affective work is deeply intertwined in the process of migration and by extension, in other institutionalized contexts of writing.

Since literacy brokers in this study emerged as significant players in the lives of immigrants, particularly in the process of acquiring U.S. citizenship, I examine their role in mediating and mitigating the force of state powers as immigrants negotiate textual paths through the languages of institutions and nation-states\(^3\). The literacy histories come from both old immigrants—those who escaped Romania before 1989, when Romania was still under the Communist rule and new immigrants—those who left Romanian after 1989 when the borders were relatively open, yet still regulated through visas. The Romanian immigrants participating in this study learned to negotiate both internal and external boundaries during the Cold War period and after that, visa qualifications imposed on citizens from third world countries. Given Romania’s history of authoritarian state monopoly and socialist ideological control, a mobile identity is both liberating and conflicting in that political freedoms do not necessarily translated in economic possibilities of travel, employment, or exchange. The intricate connection between political and economic spheres is highly visible in the context of immigration. The Romanian emigration/ immigration in the 1970s and 1980s must be understood in terms of economic benefits and human rights advocacy, as these refugees were permitted, for the most part, to leave the country on grounds of religious, ethnic, or political persecution; many of them were given a passport and permission to depart, only as a result of significant international mediation and trade benefits that Western countries including the U.S. initiated with Romania. Although the U.S. and Romania had divergent interests—the U.S. was concerned with lobbying of human

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\(^3\) I refer to languages of nation-states and institutions in the same way that John Duffy uses the term rhetorics to denote “languages of governments, schools, media”—general frames of language and discourse wherein the individual operates. The plural form of rhetorics is used to suggest more than “a single, coherent, all-unifying ‘rhetoric’” (Duffy, 2007, p. 15).
rights and probably other interests, while Romania with extracting economic benefits from the U.S. through the Most Favored Nation status\(^4\) (MFN)—the U.S. became one of the central destinations for many Romanian refugees\(^5\). Many refugees found themselves navigating both Romanian emigration restrictions and U.S. immigration qualifications. The Romanian emigration/immigration after 1989 is generally framed in terms of economic pursuits and family reunification. Although the conditions of emigration after 1989 are different than those before 1989, particularly in the process of obtaining papers and crossing the border, travelling freely to the Western countries or obtaining a job are challenges that these Romanian immigrants had to face. In Chapter three, I offer a more detailed overview of the immigration conditions before 1989 and their connection to literacy brokering. In chapter four, I discuss the complexities of immigration categories—political, economic, and family reunification\(^6\)—and the ways in which these categories are negotiated to achieve personal goals. I show how individual immigrants use each other’s experience to broker gaps of knowledge in dealing with immigration papers.

In this ethnographic study of Romanian immigrants in the U.S., I argue that literacy brokers intervene with significant emotional work that ultimately cultivates human understanding through language and literacy. Literacy brokers assume more complex roles and responsibilities that what current scholarship on brokers seems to suggest. While brokers assist people with reading and writing, their role is not just instrumental in accomplishing a literate

\(^4\) Most Favored Nation (MFN) was an economic treatment given by the U.S. to a particular state. The benefits emerging from this special status included special trade rates, with Romania exporting goods of almost one billion dollar worth and importing about $300 million of American goods (Gwertzman, 1986).

\(^5\) Participants in the study and archival documents, specifically newspapers clips from the Gabanyi Collection (National Archives of Romania, see footnote 8) confirmed that the U.S. was among the top choices for Romanian refugees. Many asylum seekers had either a distant relative or some connection in the U.S.. Other destinations included Germany and Israel, where German and Jewish minorities chose to resettle.

\(^6\) U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) categories of immigration include the following paths through which a foreign national can become naturalized: humanitarian, family, and employment (United States, “Green Card”). There is a fourth category that includes multiple other options, but since my participants did not mention them, I limit my discussion to the three categories listed earlier.
action. They perform emotional work of mediation by using their own personal experiences, their connections, and language of empathy while also providing assistance with translating, dealing with legal papers, or compiling the immigration file. They also shift positions, accumulating knowledge from multiple contexts where they broker texts, languages, or cultural gaps. Brokers ultimately engage with literacy as affinity. Many writing contexts, particularly institutional sites—such as work places, governmental agencies, courtrooms, schools, and so on—aim to streamline communication and in doing so, remove the emotional fabric that often sustains or enhances literacy practices. Broadly, literacy as affinity is about sustainability. With its focus on relationality, literacy as affinity provides a framework where the literate experience endures in spite of gaps of knowledge about texts or discourse. Literacy as affinity matters for its ability to emerge in spaces of in-betweenness, of transitions, and uncertainty.

I use affinity as a capacious term comprising empathetic language, emotional and personal narratives, as well as those relations that create the infrastructure of texts, people, and communities. The study of emotion is certainly complex, precisely because it has been historically defined and studied as dichotomous category as Catherine A. Lutz (1990) explains: “something natural rather than cultural, irrational rather than rational, chaotic rather than ordered, subjective rather than universal, physical rather than mental or intellectual” (p. 69). However, research on emotions has come a long way. In this study, I conceive emotion drawing on Laura Micciche’s (2007) explanation of “emotion as a valuable rhetorical resource” (p. 1). Rather than just expressions of personal feelings, emotions have rhetorical force intersecting and shaping personal and interpersonal, social and political realities. Julie Lindquist (2004) also contends that “emotions are situated and constructed” connected to all aspects of the social (p. 201). And Lynn Worsham (1998) defines emotion as “the tight braid of affect and judgment,
socially and historically constructed and bodily lived through which the symbolic takes hold of and binds the individual to the social order” (p. 216). Based on these definitions, emotions are integral components in the fabric of everyday life, entangled in how people think, speak, and act socially and historically.

Building on these definitions, there are three essential dimensions of emotions that I wish to highlight. First, emotions should not be understood solely as an expression of one’s personal experience. Emotions can be both collective and connected to issues of political power. In *The Cultural politics of emotion* (2004), Ahmed expands on the circulation of the phrase “soft touch” to refer to the UK as a nation that has been too “emotional” allowing its borders to be assaulted by the presence of foreigners, the immigrants. She further argues that such images of “softness” conceive emotions as “attributes of collectives,” and as in the case of the nation, of those who belong within a particular jurisdiction and those who seem to trespass it (2). Collective emotions, particularly those that relate to the nation, constitute the grounds for antithetical subjectivities—us against them—potentially forming boundaries difficult to transgress or challenge. In Chapter two, I offer details about the ways in which the Communist regime sought to regiment and manufacture certain types of emotions in order to create a national Romanian subjectivity.

Similarly, immigrants that come to the U.S. are socialized through discourse in what it means to be American. I discuss this in Chapter four in terms of expectations to comply with a certain *image* of socio-economic stability and respectability.

Second, emotions are more than ways to stir or provoke certain effects. Ahmed (2004) for instance understands emotions as attachments and connections established between things. While I assent to this relationality of emotion, I make a subtle distinction between affinity and connections or alliances. Whether I call them alliances, partnerships, or connections, I
understand them as relations based on certain affinities, such as ethnic affinity, professional affinity, and so on. Thus, affinities provide the motive for creating partnerships. However, when I use literacy as affinity, I refer to the overarching emotion work that comes from sharing personal stories, language of empathy, and various partnerships created for or in the context of a literacy practice. Both these aspects are essential: the emotional and the attachments established through affinities of various sorts.

The third observation relates to the fact that emotions constitute an easy target for manipulation, constraint, or falsification. Studies on affect and emotion show that emotions are also tied, managed or regimented particularly in the context of institutions; or to use Megan Boler’s (1999) words, “emotions are a primary site of social control; they are also a site for political resistance and can mobilize social movements of liberation” (xii). Studying the connection between emotions and racism, Jennifer Trainor (2008) argues that schools as educational institutions represent a significant site where various affective experiences are being constructed. She further shows how “emotional regulation” occurs through institutional and language practices (p. 85). Similarly, Lindquist (2004) contends that institutions must acknowledge the “emotional labor” of writing teachers and emotional formations that emerge in the writing classroom.

In my project on immigrants, the institutional constraint operates through immigration agencies and bureaucratic practices. In this context, what state agents and bureaucrats value is procedural knowledge rather emotions: what forms to use for what purpose and how to fill out a given form in the most efficient way. For these types of tasks—filling out forms, translating, writing a document, and other—literacy brokers have been conceived as tools serving such specific literate ends. And similar to Lindquist’s example of the writing classroom, emotional
work in these bureaucratic writing contexts including immigration applications has been regulated and managed. In this study, I aim to show how literacy brokers recover emotional work lost in the context of immigration and humanize the system. Since literacy brokers hold multiple positions and develop bi-institutional perspectives, they perform the emotional work in the following ways: 1) through their own experiences of migration, they are able to tap into these personal narratives when they assist others with their literate immigration experience; 2) when institutions prescribe ways of being, reading and writing, literacy brokers are attuned to emotional regimentation and regulations, since they function “across” institutions. Their mobility allows them across institutions allows them develop a critical stance of institutional language and to recover the loss of affective language experiences. When literacy brokers function within the boundaries of the nation-state, particularly in situation when the state positions itself as a broker of knowledge and literacy such in the case of literacy education in Romania discussed in Chapter two, they manage and control personal experiences, language, and the relations and institutions that produce and distribute literacy education. The personal becomes regimented in the interest of the public and collective good, and language, through themes and genres, must reflect the affinities for the nation. While literacy brokers in the context of immigration and transnationalism can facilitate mobility, recontextualization and adaption to new contexts, they can also emplace subjects within certain discursive spaces, as in the case of the Romanian authoritarian state who emplaced its citizens through language and literacy. Various institutions, local or transnational, as well as non-for-profit organizations or nation-states operating through visa regulations can manage, restrict, or facilitate the mobility of individuals and their affinities.

Literacy as affinity should be understood as a process of establishing series of connections: personal, national, ethnic, or professional. In creating these affinities, literacy
actually builds sustainability. In a literacy-as-affinity model, writing and learning does not stop the moment the student finishes the assignment whether the assignment took place in or out of class. Rather, literacy as affinity has potential for transfer and motivation to write outside the classroom walls. Literacy as affinity sprawls to all aspects of the learner’s life, across contexts vertically and horizontally. This means that it will build connections with current social spheres but also with past and future rhetorical contexts. Without attention to the role of emotion in writing, the learning experience is both limiting in terms of the subjectivities involved—it engages a truncated self—and restricting as the learning is associated only with a classroom experience. Literacy as affinity built in the classroom can reach out to become a resource and platform for new projects and new initiatives. In studying the transnational literate experience of people, Hawisher et al. (2006) introduce a similar concept guanxi, defined as “a complex set of social networks operating through personal connections” (p. 620). Similarly to guanxi, literacy as affinity expands to communities, families, and other contexts in order to connect and support personal literacy experiences.

The significance of literacy as affinity comes from its power to bridge gaps. In this current study, immigrants write and develop literacy for the most part in non-traditional sites of education. This means that literacy operates in response to real-world exigencies. While it is regulated and sanctioned by various institutions, it is sustainable precisely because those involved conceive it as a series of affinities. People’s mobility brings forth gaps of knowledge, of experience, and definitely of language. Yet, the brokers’ work of affinity intervenes in these gaps. Thus, literacy as affinity is also about creating connections and bridges where loss, disconnect, or change happens. Recent research in neuroscience and cognitive psychology underscore the significance of emotion. Discussing the role of emotional processes in civic
discourse, Sharon Crowley (2006) draws on neurobiologist, Antonio Damasio’s work on brain injury. Damasio found that reason and emotion must work in tandem. Similarly, particularly in cases of cultural, discourse, and geopolitical shifts, the literacy’s emotion work becomes even more potent. Learners in and outside the classroom always have to transition to academia and out of academia, from one workplace to another, or from one culture to another. Given the pervasiveness of mobility, literacy as affinity mediates these in-between spaces.

The Transnational Turn in Literacy Studies

This dissertation joins the recent call for the internationalization of U.S. writing education (Hesford and Schell, 2008; Donahue, 2009) and for a translingual approach to reading and writing (Horner et al., 2011). U.S. scholars have already taken steps towards reassessing historical silences in composition, challenging monolingual myths and U.S.-centered research practices (Canagarajah, 2006; Matsuda, 2010; Trimbur, 2006). Broadly, my dissertation project contributes to current scholarship in rhetoric and composition and literacy studies by exploring literacy from a global perspective. Understanding writing and discourse in multiple contexts affords a space of inquiry of basic or complex issues of literacy. It illuminates what literacy means in certain contexts such as the immigration process or how literacy is changed and managed by an authoritarian state. It can also offer new perspectives on multilingualism and multicultural communication, which although emergent in regimented discourse and education in Communist Romania, constitute nevertheless, the core principles in a democratic society.

At the Symposium for the Study of Writing and Teaching Writing: Transnational Literacies (July, 2013) organized at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, engaged discussions on the “transnational turn” asked whether we can identity this moment in scholarship as
transnational and if we can, what characteristics define it. The summary notes of that scholarly conversation point to some critical moments that are indeed captured by the trans- in transnational or by both the trans- and the -national in transnational. The current moment, as scholars from Amherst symposium suggest, is marked by the “instability of subject, identity, and geographic positions”; the transnational engages with changes in technologies, with mass migration, with control of nation-states, as well as economic and efficiency models (budget-cuts, restructuring).

Whether referring to people, texts, or technologies, mobility is central in this transnational conversation. Mobility often signified in the trans- of transnational implicates not only physical movement from one context to another but as Rebecca Lorimer Leonard (2013) explains, it captures flexibility and movement through language and literacy. Lorimer Leonard (2013) exemplifies this with Suresh Canagarajah’s (2006) iconic phrase “shuttling” between languages—to suggest the movement that multilingual writers perform—and with Ilene Crawford’s (2010) definition of rhetoric as a “study and practice of movement” (p. 76). In the same vein, in A way to move, Dale Jacobs and Laura Micciche (2003) conceive rhetoric as inherently dynamic and in stating this, they seek to establish a connection between rhetoric and emotion. A further examination of mobility as a key trope in transnationalism demands critical inquiry of who is mobile and which literate and linguistic repertoires are portable, recontextualized, and valued in new contexts. Scholars have captured this paradox of mobility through phrases like: “simultaneous fluidity and fixity” (Lorimer Leonard, 2013, p. 14), “feeling stuck in motion, bound in freedom” or “immobility within movement” (Prendergast, 2008, p. 147), or through metaphoric images of tourists and vagabonds, whose mobility is conditioned and shaped by voluntary or involuntary decisions (Bauman, 1998, p. 93). Concerning the relation
between the migrant, other itinerants and the state, political scientist James Scott (1988) argues that it has been an ongoing state project to emplace, to “settle these mobile peoples” (p.1). Surnames names or family names, although taken for granted, are significant in the way in which they represent the relationship between the individual and the state’s process of legibility, i.e. of transforming its citizen into objectified subjects that can be accounted for. Unsurprisingly, as Scott explains, there is a direct correlation between the introduction of surnames and the development of written, official documents such as tithe records, manorial due rolls, marriage registers, censuses, tax records, and land records. They were necessary to the successful conduct of any administrative exercises involving large numbers of people who had to be individually identified and who were not known personally by the authorities (1998, p. 67).

This form of emplacement through documents as Scott (1998) and others have noted (Vieira, 2011) complicates romantic view of travel. Rather it unveils that mobility or the trans- in transnational is hierarchical and historically connected to regimes of control. Mobility, then, is in reality “differentiated mobility” to use Doreen Massey’s (1993) term (p. 62); for this reason, mobility affords an analysis of critical checkpoints, borders, and spaces of access and lack thereof. Mobility as it shapes literacy on the move has yet to be further explored since most studies of transnational or immigrant literacies have mainly dealt with the “after-effects of movement” where literacy is approached as “durable” rather than in-process (Lorimer Leonard, 2013, p. 16). In my work, I tried to capture both the fixity and the mobility of my participants, which is why I am interested in their narratives of immigration, in their literacy practices in Romania and the changes that occurred when immigrants started anew in the U.S. Most importantly, I believe that literacy brokers—as I explore them throughout their life trajectories rather than just discrete literacy events—at the very core are mobile subjects that mobilize
literacy resources for and with others.

The second dimension of transnationalism centers on the nation as an analytical tool. Although many scholars have theorized the “nation” in transnational—Michael Kearney (1995)’s view of the state as the “guardian of national borders” or Vieira (2011)’s exploration of the undocumented—I will refer to Briggs et al. (2008)’s discussion of the nation as a contradictory but powerful analytic. Acknowledging that transnational has been deployed as a way to advance the U.S.’s interests in particular countries, Briggs et al. (2008) focus on the nation as way to show its contradiction and to expose the rhetoric around and behind certain nationalistic practices. In their view, nation and nation-centric discourses must be contested, leading to inquiries into elements that are often used to define a nation—“the people, the language, the literature, the history, the culture, the environment” (p. 627). All these attributes of a nation are critical sites of inquiry in my study. The immigrants in my study go through processes of negotiations, particularly when individuals born in Romania are revoked citizenship due to their ethnic, religious, or political disaffiliation contradicting tenets of a Romanian socialist nation. Language, especially knowing the right language at the right time, facilitates movement of some people—those whose knowledge of English or German is proficient—while it immobilizes others in low-paying jobs, namely those who learned only Russian and other languages with no exchange value in the U.S. But, language also directs attention to discourses of institutions, of nation-states, or bureaucracy that exert power over those who prove to be less than proficient. Literature, history, culture, and geopolitical spaces are constitutive of the lives of immigrants as they reflect on the literacy education in Romania (Chapter two) but also on the “mentalities”—those ways of thinking and being—that immigrants carry with them in the U.S..

Based on this overview of scholarship, I argue that the transnational turn in literacy
studies carries deep implications for studying and understanding reading and writing. Some of these propositions have been advanced by scholars such as Christiane Donahue (2009). In this work, Donahue (2009) draws attention both to sites of inquiry that have been neglected such as multicultural classrooms and to scholarship on writing that has not be translated—therefore, ignored—or correlated with U.S. scholarly interests in composition studies. In exposing the various ways that “international” has been taken up by U.S. compositionists, Donahue (2009) suggests that there is a need to move away from import-export models, where the U.S. compositionists export their knowledge and expertise to other non-U.S. sites or reconsider productively comparative intercultural models rather than old contrastive rhetoric scholarship beyond binary analysis. Ultimately, Donahue’s (2009) critique reverses the question of how scholarship on writing in the world might align with U.S. scholars and asks how U.S. composition work might connect with others in the world.

By taking a transnational approach, my work aims to disrupt nation-centric models, whether in the U.S., in Romania, or in any other country, advancing the nation as an analytic that must be interrogated. Chapter two focused on Romanian literacy education accomplishes this and so does the perspective of economic immigrants highlighted in Chapter four—offering a critique of the U.S. discourse on immigration and the legitimate categories eligible for U.S. citizenship. My goal in this study has been to capture people’s perspectives, as is the goal of ethnographic research; in my study, the participants are immigrants and it is their perspectives as mobile subjects intersecting the powers of nation-states that I will foreground in this project. As immigrants move, they are often able to interrogate or at least to achieve a critical distance from certain impositions of nation-states and their impact on the individual. By extension, a transnational perspective can help scholars interrogate relationship between nation-states and
literacy education emerging in these contexts; it can also unveil the type of relationships established by nation-states, the discourses and the purposes they resort to.

Analytical Framework: An Overview of Language and Literacy Brokering-Definitions and Practices

Literacy mediation has been studied in multiple social contexts such as tourism and advertising (Papen, 2010), the public plaza (Kalman, 1999), academic publishing (Lillis and Curry, 2006), and school settings (Orellana, Meza, & Pietsch, 2002) and for this reason, it contributes to a broad understanding of various social contexts where literacy brokers operate. Several scholars in literacy studies and language socialization scholarship have approached the notion of brokering and mediation in the context of local or international communities, that necessitate some bridging of linguistic, cultural, or rhetorical knowledge. Although most studies do not make this distinction, I recognize language brokering and literacy brokering as connected yet developed in two distinct bodies of scholarship. The first, language brokering mainly focuses on children immigrants in the context of family, whereas the latter, literacy brokering covers studies from more diverse settings, which implicitly diversifies the conception of brokers as well as the brokering practices implicated in this process.

In definitions of language brokering, brokers are described as facilitators or mediators between “two linguistically and/or culturally different parties” (Tse, 1996, p. 485). Building on Tse’s definition, Catherine M. Mazak (2006) further explains that such definitions include three types of participants: the broker, the member of the family or community, and a member of the “outside world” (p. 98). However, as she notes, the third party, the “representatives of the ‘outside world’” are rarely visible, which is why, she conceptualizes language brokering as a
two-party interaction: brokers and clients (Mazak, 2006, p. 99). Whether visible or obscured, I believe that language and literacy brokering entails mediation between at least three parties, and it is precisely the 3rd element that makes brokering distinct from sponsorship. It is this middle position between various parties, between various partnerships and “engagement with different stakeholders” as literature on corporate brokering puts it (Tomasini et al., 2010), that makes the broker not only “sponsor,” but facilitator and representative of the interest of two or more parties; generally, the broker adopts a strategic positing between the needs of one party (demand) and the requirements of a giving party (supply). As such, in this study, the broker, the immigrants as well as representatives of the state, institution, or the “outside world” as Mazak (2006) explains, are all important parties in the process of understanding the relationship between literacy and mobility from a transnational perspective.

The broader concept of literacy brokering—a definition I have referenced earlier in this chapter, comes from Kristen H. Perry (2009) and her study of Sudanese refugees. Perry (2009) proposes a comprehensive definition of literacy brokering, as an umbrella term that encompasses mediation in terms of texts, language, and culture. Her definition is further supplemented with specific details as to what the actual brokering entails: translation of words or phrases, paraphrasing, mediation of cultural information, or explanation of genre-related expectations of particular texts. In most literature about language brokering wherein brokers are generally identified as children interpreting or translating for their parents, similar brokering strategies are listed: interpreting, explaining, paying bills, talking to doctors, and so on (e.g. Chu, 1999; Martinez et al., 2009; Morales et al., 2012). As it can be inferred from the title of my dissertation and the language used already in this introduction, I decided to use Perry (2009)’s definition precisely because it includes language brokering, thereby permitting references to multiple
brokering strategies by employing only one term. A more difficult decision has been to choose between literacy broker and textual broker. The broader spectrum provided by the first term literacy can lead to vague conceptions of its province, especially considering disciplinary distinctions. While the term textual broker provides the specificity that literacy broker lacks, I opted for literacy broker because it is inclusive enough to cover texts or language but also because it connotes larger socio-economic and political contexts that shape the literate experience. This connection to larger spheres of human activity is premised on the fact that literacy is a social act of producing, interpreting, or circulating text, often coupled with other symbolic communicative signs.

Rather than a skilled-based approach to literacy, I understand literacy as a reading and writing practice deeply contextualized in social-cultural, economic and political configurations (Brandt, 2001; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996). In this definition, I draw on scholarship from New Literacy Studies and Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1981) dialogism. A dialogic view of language is related to Bakhtin’s the notion of “revoicing” or appropriation that takes places the communicator enters dialogue by using other people’s words, concepts and apply them to new situations. Also, language for Bakhtin (1981) is marked by addressivity; it is geared towards an audience, awaiting some form of response. In addition to this emphasis on the socio-cultural and political context that shapes literacy, I often invoke the term rhetoric or rhetorics. I use this term first of all to suggest that literacy is not just situated but highly rhetorical—that is, a literacy practice implicates a communicator, a text, and context, all constitutive of each other and interacting with larger forces in order to accomplish a particular goal or engender action. In this rhetorical conception of literacy, I pay close attention to individual literacy relative to larger forces—or to what John Duffy calls rhetorics. Duffy (2007) defines rhetorics as “ways of using language and
other symbols by institutions, groups, or individuals for the purpose of shaping conceptions of reality” (p. 15). These languages of governments, schools, or nation-states shape individual worlds as they constitute “the frameworks in which individual acts of reading and writing take place” (Duffy, 2007, p. 15).

Although as previously explain, the overarching term in this study is literacy brokers, I occasionally use the term *language* brokering to refer specifically to a language exchange situation, such as translation in court setting; this is consistent with how language brokering has been referred to in current scholarship. Another specific instance of literacy brokering may concern a specific text or document brokering, for instance filling out an application for immigration. Judy Kalman (1999) for instance uses the term *document event* to define the literate activity that is centered on working with a document. All these terms offer some specificity—whether a language exchange or text-related events—and are included under the broader term of literacy brokering. Such a distinction facilitates a better understanding both of the general concept of literacy brokering but also of what is implied in this concept in this particular study. Concrete instances of literacy—selecting the appropriate application, filling out forms, reading about or listening to the radio about a particular information useful for immigration, writing letters to sponsors in the U.S., writing petitions for obtaining travel documents—can afford a better understanding of what brokering entails and what literacy brokers do.

Returning to the notion of literacy and language brokering, apart from clarifications on terminology, scholarship on brokering brings forth the numerous contexts where literacy brokers operate. In studies of language brokering, the primary social context is the immigrant community where immigrant children function as brokers in obtaining health services, in educational settings, or bank transactions (Martinez et al., 2012). Besides the heightened focus
on children as the seemingly the sole language brokers in these communities, these studies mainly treat language brokering in a family context in interaction with larger local communities and institutions, generally schools. While this work is valuable in reflecting on these linguistic negotiative roles that these children take, it is important to consider other types of language and literacy brokers and how brokering operates beyond the family context because the nature of brokering may change and so might the profile of the broker. For instance, in literature on children as language brokers, the role of brokering has often been assumed by the oldest child or by a female child (Morales et al., 2012; Orellana et al., 2003). In the context of immigration, and specifically in my study, there is a clear male dominance in the process of citizenship, as mobility especially in cases of religious or political persecution from Eastern Europe has been conceived as a male endeavor, as a male’s responsibility to open and secure the path towards citizenship for the rest of the family.

Additional studies on literacy brokers examine a variety of social contexts. For instance, Lillis and Curry (2006) analyze brokering and mediation of texts in academic publishing. In their analysis of text trajectories from local contexts to the actual publishing of these texts in English language academic journals, Lillis & Curry (2006) argue that in the process of the writing, reviewing, revising and rewriting these academic texts, there is a considerable process of brokering or mediation. Other studies emphasized the role of community interpreters and mediators of literacy in the community (Baynham, 1993), scribes mediating literacy practices in public plazas (Kalman, 1999), writing scholars as information brokers in transnational contexts (Lunsford, 2012). The role of these mediators concerns bridging gaps in linguistic knowledge such as dealing with issues of content and genre conventions (Lillis & Curry, 2006), mode mediation between oral, written, or visual discourse (Baynham, 1993) but also larger concerns
such as different approaches to writing instruction and disciplinary terminologies and practices (Lunsford, 2012).

Noteworthy in this scholarship is the international as well as cross-cultural dimension of literacy and textual mediation. These studies include literacy and texts from Hungary, Slovakia, Portugal, Spain (Lillis & Curry, 2006), from a Moroccan community in London, United Kingdom (Baynham, 1993), writing in the plaza in Mexico (Kalman, 1999), and tourism-related texts in Namibia (Papen, 2010). While studies on language brokering concern more local practices in immigrant communities, they involve mediation between languages, often between languages of institutions; mediation of culture is pervasively present as well (Chu, 1999; Martinez et al. 2009; Morales et al., 2012). Mediation in the study of literacy and text circulation seems to be central when we take the global turn, perhaps because when texts and people become mobilized, the inequality of relations between languages, registers, or discourses becomes more visible, and often harder to overcome.

While the range of social contexts that literacy brokers cover in these studies is impressive, it is rare that literacy brokers themselves are explored through a series of literacy situations or relative to previous experiences of literacy education. Often, brokers are individuals that matter only to the extent that they perform a certain literacy-related action. Besides the gendering of language brokers in the case of children, there is little information about who these brokers are. Since in these studies brokers matter only to the point of their contribution to the brokering activity, they are often conceived in fixed positions, on a middle ground without necessarily clarifying the parties involved in the literacy or language interactions. Such fixed roles may lead to the reification of the mediator, locking the individual mediator in a singular role. In my study, the broker adopts a more dynamic position and engages with multiple
perspectives and roles. To use a phrase one of the participants discussed in Chapter three, the broker adopts “multiple hats.” This dynamic model emphasizes mobility through language and adaptability to new contexts, which is even more relevant when discussed in conjunction to relatively structured patterns of discourse in bureaucratic contexts. The literacy broker as a flexible subjectivity emerged in part due to my choice of data collection, the literacy history—which I discuss in more detail. The literacy history provides the means through which I gained a broader understanding of the broker’s literacy experience across contexts.

Finally, although not a study of literacy brokers per se—in that the term literacy or language broker is not mentioned—Ellen Cushman’s (1998) work on literacy of an African-American inner city community is imbued with textual brokering and knowledge mediation. In this study, Cushman (1998) analyzes relations between individuals and gatekeepers, and overall power structures from below and complexities of critical consciousness in everyday situations. In critiquing Marxist scholars who have taken solely a top-down approach to power, Cushman aptly shows that in using their own language and categories, such as “marginalized,” “subaltern,” “dominated,” these scholars “define individuals by what they do not have, do not do, do not measure up to” (Cushman, 1998, p. xix). In doing so, they miss small interventions, those “pedestrian linguistic activities” as Cushman calls them, that although without visible impact on the social structures, produce local changes and affirm individual agency. I reference Cushman’s study here because I view literacy brokers as those agents that make these “small, pedestrian interventions” and because her study in many ways resonates with my study, particularly in the way it engages with unequal power structures and bureaucracy. Also, in connecting my study to Cushman’s work, I suggest that literacy brokers are extensible to other communities and practices where forms of injustice and marginalization are present.
Methods: Data Collection and Analysis

My dissertation combines archival research and ethnographic methods. This choice of methods is informed by the research questions and purpose of the study: to understand the relation between personal literacy stories and official literacy education. Ethnographic data includes literacy history interviews (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984) with Romanian immigrants, observation notes of literacy-related events in the Romanian immigrant community located in Chicago, IL, and documents and artifacts functioning as “witnesses” of the immigration experience (e.g. letters from refuges camps, legal documents, etc.). Literacy histories, a qualitative research method used in social sciences, is appropriate for my study because through narratives of daily events of ordinary people, the researcher can explore broader connections to communities, states, or institutions (Bertaux, 1981; Duffy, 2007). Literacy history interviews in my study focus on the relation between the immigration experience and reading/writing practices in both the country of origin, Romania and the host country, the United States. Since February 2012 to present, under the University of Illinois IRB approval, I collected thirty-two interviews, each interview lasting between one to three hours.

Additionally, participants in the study shared with me personal artifacts such as correspondence to family/friends, family pictures, blogs and any other documents related to their immigration experience. I have also collected documents related to cultural and community related events such event flyers, ethnic newspapers (The Romanian Tribune, Colorado Beetle, The International Current), brochures distributed at various community events such as

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7 To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, I use pseudonyms for all participants except for those who hold official or public roles in the community. All participants identified by their real names consented to the disclosure of their real names and many, in fact, prefer it to pseudonyms. However, to ensure protection of identifiable information, I only used real names when it was absolutely necessary as in the case of public officials.
book signings (for instance, Horia Dicher’s *Earthly manuscripts: Baroque journal*\(^8\)) in March 2012, Romanian Heritage Festival (June 2011, June 2012), and Romanian Film Festival (July 2012). In addition, I complement ethnographic work in the Romanian community with historical archival research in Romania. With the support of a Liberal Arts and Sciences summer fellowship in 2011, I conducted archival work in Romania, collecting primary and secondary sources as a way to retrace the official context of literacy education in the 1970s and 1980s of Communist Romania. Through archival work at Library of the Academy, Central University Library and the National State Archives\(^9\) in Romania, I was able to obtain digital copies of newspapers (*The Spark, The Youth Spark*) and almanacs from the 1970s and 1980s, school magazines (*The Country’s Hawks, The Daring*), school curricula, as well as various primary documents of the Communist Party documenting its ideological campaign in educational reforms (minutes from the Congress of Political and Cultural Socialist Education, 1982; speeches from the Congress of education and learning, 1973; 1980; 1982, 1987-1988, etc.), numerous brochures of pioneer organizations, including student compositions, and literary works.

For data analysis, I use a constructivist approach to grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) that holds the relationship with the participants as central in guiding data collection and data analysis (p. 130). My initial coding categories were informed by the research questions and included: 1) genres and discourses intertwined in the migration process (e.g., documents, blogs, letters), 2) types of literacies alternative to official literacy education, and 3) literacy and spaces that shape one’s learning experience. Informed by grounded theory that takes a comparative

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\(^8\) After the book signing event, Horia Dicher became a participant in my study. His book, *Earthly manuscripts: Baroque journal* was published in Romania in 2011 by the Niculescu Publishing House, a Romanian press. In this book, Dicher relates personal experiences from childhood to adulthood, oscillating “like an electron” as he explains between his Romania and the Atlantic shore.

approach to data and “emergent categories” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 23), I later developed new categories of analysis emergent from a series of interviews already conducted. Among these, citizenship broadly defined and cultural identification, were significant themes that connected to literacy and the immigration experience. Interestingly, higher emphasis was put not on becoming a U.S. citizen, as one might expect in the case of an immigrant, but on processes of losing citizenship and human rights violations by the country of origin.

Romanian Immigrant Community: Access and Profiles

Access to the Romanian immigrant community in Chicago has been quite different than my access to materials and institutions in Romania. In 2007, I met my first future-to-be participant, Ema. My encounter with Ema was mediated through my sister who at the time was living in Atlanta. Since the Romanian community in Atlanta has ties with the Romanian community in Chicago, I was introduced to Ema and to a few other Romanians in Chicago, when a group of Romanians from Atlanta came to visit Chicago. Ema and then later, Filip—a Romanian living in Chicago but not in the Romanian community—became my first participants for a small scale ethnography conducted in Dr. Anne Dyson’s class. From Ema, I first learned about the Romanian Tribune, the Romanian ethnic newspaper and through her I became connected to Steven Bonica, the director of the Romanian Tribune, the initiator and organizer of the Romanian Cultural Heritage in Niles who is also the owner of the Romanian library. Steven was a key link in establishing contact with other Romanians and with numerous resources and events in the Romanian community. Although arranging an interview with Steven took several weeks and multiple rescheduling, Steven brokered my access as follows:
In just one example, I showed how access to one person, in this case Steven Bonica who is centrally located in the community facilitated access to ten different people and multiple other clusters in the community. Although access to the community started with my own personal contact, I was able to move out of my own networks to others. Sometimes, participants voluntarily made suggestions and mediated access to other people. In this way, almost each participant served as a broker and a recruiter for more participants. As such, the model of brokering that works in the community follows literally the snowball effect. The other recruitment approaches—my announcement in the newspaper or flyers distributed at the Romanian Heritage Festival, and email announcement sent to list serves—yielded hardly any response. In Chapter five, I discuss in more detail the importance of connections in and outside the community. Connections established based on ethnic, national, or other type of affinities facilitate access to informants and thus, shaped immensely the recruitment process of the research study.

To provide a better understanding of my participants, I include here a few profiles and some background about them. Of the thirty-two participants, I selected a few who, on the basis of their contribution, became more remarkable.

Steven Bonica: Steven Bonica was the key bond in my research as I illustrated earlier.
Both his personal narrative—having to leave Romania when his entire family was persecuted on religious grounds—and his public engagement in the Romania community were crucial to my research. As the owner of the *Romanian Tribune* and organizer of the *Romanian Heritage Festival*, Steven helped with sharing his story, with materials about the Romanian community, such as newspapers but also books that I could not find elsewhere, and of course with connecting me to many other potential participants. Steven comes from Oradea, a city in Romania where I was born and this coincidence, minor as it is, did in fact contribute to establishing a good initial rapport. From there on, he became a friend I could trust for various research related questions.

*Octavian Cojan:* Mr. Cojan came to the U.S. in 1974. As a member of the Romanian Auto Club, he had the chance to sign up for a tourist trip with the purpose of visiting various Eastern European countries and their capitals: Budapest, Prague, Berlin (in the former German Federal Republic). On that trip, together with his wife, they decided not to return back to Romania. Instead, they changed their itinerary and went to a refugee camp in Austria. Mr. Cojan is an important political leader in the Romanian community since his business office in Chicago housed many administrative actions that took place especially before the establishment of the Romanian Consulate in Chicago. Mr. Cojan has a wide knowledge of the Romanian community and has represented the community in various media. For many years, through his business, Mr. Cojan was able to transport literature, newspapers, and other reading materials from Romania to Chicago and thus, keep the community informed.

*Lucia:* Lucia’s path to citizenship was facilitated by her husband and father-in-law. She arrived in the U.S. in 1983. After her father-in-law heard on the Radio Free Europe about the Most Favored Nation (MFN) status which provided an open door for Romanian Evangelical Christians to leave the country, her father-in-law took the initiative to file the papers for the
entire family. Lucia, thus, came to the U.S. accompanied by her husband and her first child and nine additional members of the family: parents-in-law and their children. Lucia did not speak English when she came to the U.S. She remembered the need to learn English when she was sick in the hospital and had to communicate in writing with the hospital staff. The experience was humiliating since while in pain, she could not express what she needed. Motivated by this difficulty to communicate, Lucia started to teach herself reading and writing in English by building on her previous knowledge of religious novels. Since she already knew the main plot of some of these books, she would focus on reading in English and using the dictionary for the words she did not know.

**Dr. Savici:** Dr. Savici came to the U.S. in 1981. Because of his Serbian ethnicity, he was able to cross the border into Yugoslavia and sought political asylum at the U.S. embassy. Dr. Savici was a doctor in Romania and managed to further studies in the U.S. in order to take a position in the medical field. He started a career in neuropathology and currently, he owns his own private practice. At Mr. Savici’s medical office, I came across many other Romanians. Not only did Mr. Savici have many artifacts that could easily identify him as a Romanian, but he had books in Romanian that he lend out to people. He offered to share some with me too.

**Sorin:** Sorin belongs to the new immigrant wave. He came with a Work & Travel visa and decided to overstay his visa and make his own path towards U.S. citizenship. His family joined him a few years after and he enrolled in college to continue his studies. Sorin is one of many “economic immigrants,” a cohort of young Romanians who dropped out of college in Romania in order to pursue their dream of “making it” elsewhere. In Romania, Sorin and many like him could not “dream” of having a decent life, without the widespread corruption and maneuverings in all aspects of life. Lack of legal papers made Sorin and his friends take jobs
they would have never considered in Romania—taxi driving or construction. Sorin and his cohort are generally as well educated as the political immigrants; some have college degrees and most if not all speak English fairly well. In fact, those who speak only limited English are often singled out. Obtaining legal papers has been their most pressing concern.

_Adina:_ Adina’s path to the U.S. is a mystery. Like Sorin, she is one who came with a solid literacy capital: excellent English and communication skills that she has developed while working for an international non-for profit organization in Romania. Having a degree in law and working for a prestigious non-profit organization, Adina nevertheless was discontent. While the organization professed mobility through its presence in Romania, it sought to keep the “local people local,” as Adina recalls. She resented this immobility and decided to come to the U.S. In Adina’s narrative, one theme emerges forcefully: the will and determination to do what she wanted. Adina reads and writes in multiple languages. She has varied interests from _the Economist_ to fiction and non-fiction novels. Currently she is actively involved in promoting the Romanian culture in the diaspora through various media, in particular multimedia.

_Claudiu:_ Claudiu came to the U.S. through the mediation of a non-profit organization. He got married to a Romanian American and settled in the Romanian community. He speaks multiple languages and has a degree in English and Romanian; he was able to repurpose his education from Romania quite successfully. Adapting his skills to the U.S. market, Claudiu started his own translation and interpretation business. He often serves as a community interpreter or translator, offering his services benevolently. The fact that Claudiu took various roles—such as a community interpreter, a legal translator, or a privately hired interpreter/translator—allowed him to present the issue of language and discourse from multiple perspectives. Certainly, these viewpoints are all shaped by the contexts where he is working: the
community, legal court settings, and one-on-one translation services.

**Diana:** Diana came to the U.S. as a new immigrant. Her path towards citizenship is unknown. She left a stable university position in Romania, but was disillusioned with a corrupt system that promoted nepotism in all areas of social life. Although her current situation is constrained due to limited job opportunities and her lack of papers, Diana wants to write her story about her refusal to live in Romania. In many ways, Diana represents the new immigrant, dissatisfied with Romania’s postcommunist situation that curtailed hopes for a better future, particularly for the young generation. Although Diana speaks English fairly well, she prefers to write in Romanian. She also enjoys living amongst Romanians in Chicago, which she perceives as both a blessing and curse.

**Ema:** Ema came to the U.S. because she needed a change. She had visited before the U.S. before and decided to apply to a graduate program at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her college degree obtained in Romania was in Journalism and French. She applied for a MA program in French language and literature. French, ironically, became her preferred medium of communication, resorting to it as a discursive space of comfort. Although she spoke English, her memories of her first years in school are marked by an ability to express herself sometimes in any language. The fact that she was alone, without her family, made the entire experience more difficult. She remembers feeling “deficient” in English, in writing, and in school-related activities. However, Ema started to write in a different context, for the Romanian newspaper. In a community setting, Ema found a space where she could express herself freely. Ema has been instrumental in connecting me with various members of the Romanian community.

Access to various materials especially about the Romanian experience has been shaped by own positionality as a Romanian ethnic researcher. In Chapter five, I provide more details about my role as a researcher and the way in which being multilingual facilitated a relatively easy understanding of texts; being ethnically Romanian also allowed me to talk more easily with people from the Romanian community and to be perceived as one of them, even though I have never actually lived in the Romanian community in Chicago. Since I unpack my positionality as a researcher more extensively in Chapter five, I highlight here a few crucial instances when I gained access various materials and resources.

As a researcher of an immigrant group that has received little attention in scholarship on immigration and even less in scholarship on writing and literacy studies, at first I encountered some difficulties in finding resources about Romanian immigrants in the U.S. *A study of assimilation among the Roumanians in the United States* (1929) is one of the few scholarly studies on Romanian immigrants, a sociological study conducted by Christine Avghi Galatzi for her doctoral degree at Columbia University. The scarcity of academic resources was compensated by numerous resources I gathered from and through the brokering of my participants. Most of the resources I collected circulated in the community, but at least one important book was recommended by Steven Bonica when I mentioned to him the difficulty of finding information about Romanian immigrants. Steven introduced me to *The Romanians in America, 1748-1974: A chronology & factbook* (1975)—a useful collection of various primary sources found in various immigrant communities. This collection represents the extensive work of Vladimir F. Wertsman, a Jewish Romanian librarian from New York. Steven also brokered my access to the entire archive of the Romanian newspaper, the *Romanian Tribune*. The
Romanian Heritage Festival was another center location where I was able to gather numerous artifacts about the Romanian community, about events, and activities. Community events also facilitated access to other immigrant newspapers (e.g. *Gandacul de Colorado, The International Current*) to festival brochures or community booklets, but also books circulating in the Romanian community. For instance, at the 2011 *Romanian Heritage Festival*, the author’s corner featured the book *No Paved Way to Freedom* by Sharon Rushton. The author wrote a novel based on an interview with a Romanian refugee who had a spectacular escape story. The escape narrative was featured in another book that is quite famous in the Romanian community: *Escape from Romania to 9/11: Rebuilding the American Dream*. I learned about this book from another participant in the study. In the spring of 2013, the same book was featured at a book event at the Romanian Heritage Festival, where the ghostwriter, Mary Radnofsky was present. The book is a collaborative effort between Radnofsky and Liviu Borota a Romanian immigrant whose story provided the narrative structure of the novel. The book event took place on February 23, 2013 and the poster, sponsored by the Romanian Book Club announced that this was an “anniversary event” suggesting that it was not the first time the book had been presented (see Appendix A). The title strategically connects the story of escape from Romania to the story of survival after 9/11 events in the U.S.. Regarding the authorship, there is a clear partnership established between a Romanian and an American: Liviu Borota, “in collaboration with Mary Radnofsky, Ph.D.” Mary Radnofsky’s website introduces the author as a ghost writer, making it easy to assume that she contributed with the language and writing while Liviu Borota, with the story. Given the co-authorship, the story is written in English and most likely for an American audience. Making use of her writing skills, mastery of the English language, and her Ph.D.
credentials, Radnofsky becomes a broker for Borota’s story. Also, the Romanian Book Club mediates the publicity of the event and implicitly of the book and Borota’s story.

Another example of gaining access to materials, comes from a visit in the Romanian community in Florida. Although I was on vacation, in various conversations with friends and their families, I mentioned work and my study’s focus on the Romanian immigrant community in Chicago. Immediately, one of the ladies pulled out two books from her home library, both about Romanian Baptists in the U.S. One of the books, *The History of Romanian Baptists from America* (1953) written by Rev. Vasile Jones, caught my attention since it covered the first part of the 20th century, the exact period that received little to no coverage in specialized literature. A publication of the Romanian Baptist Association of America, *The History* includes information about the association, the missionary work of the association, the relief fund, the association’s monthly magazine, *The Illuminator* (Rom. *Luminatorul*), youth fellowship, and historical information about churches, members of the association and independent churches. All is valuable information that deserves further study.

Finally, a noteworthy resource also made available through the brokering of community members is a booklet titled *Remarkable People and Activities of Romanians from Chicago* (2007). The purpose of this booklet is to introduce “people of value” from diverse areas of the Romanian community in order to “make known the country of Romania, Romanian culture and science in America” (Cobirzan, p. 3). The stories of these successful people from various socio-economic domains constitute the deployment of a rhetoric of success that is pervasively present in the Romanian community. Stories of those “who made it” permeate the newspapers.

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10 In addition to Christine A. Galatzi’s study (1929) and Vladimir F. Wertsman’s collection (1975), there are at least two monographs published about a Romanian immigrant community from Gary, Indiana, and one about the Romanian immigrant community in Cleveland, OH. These additional sources have been extremely valuable but more difficult to find given the fact that they are published by local publishing houses, and rarely included in academic databases.
conversations, and even community events. In fact, the beginning of the ethnic newspaper, *The Romanian Tribune* is connected to the publication of “stories of success,” of those Romanians who made it (Bonica, Personal Interview, Feb. 2012).

I list these sources here because my participants brokered my access to information and materials that most academic databases do not include: current ethnic newspapers (the *Romanian Tribune*), personal stories of escape (e.g., *No paved way to freedom*, *Escape from Romania to 9/11*), and historical and religious texts such as the *History of the Romanian Baptists in America* (1953) or church texts such as church bulletins which offer details about literacy of an ethnic group. Finally, books published by community members about community members, *Remarkable people and activities of Romanians in Chicago*, brokered my understanding of the community through the lens of famous people, their businesses, and recognition devices in the community. The fact that these resources were not easily accessible through a library search proves that access must be brokered; it also reveals some spaces of inquiry that need further attention. Community members seek to document their personal experiences; they do so by telling their story of escape at family gatherings or sometimes they resort to other brokers, that is literacy brokers who write their story and make it available to others. On numerous occasions, participants shared remarkable stories of escape, especially of those that were somewhat out of the ordinary and encouraged me to elicit stories from those people in the community. My current participants all shared of sense of confidence and contentment as they contributed with their own story of immigration. While personal narratives have been increasingly more present in writing class curricula, these narratives also show that deep, personal experiences prompt people to

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I was able to find several collections of old Romanian newspapers (e.g. the *Roumanian Pioneer*) written in English at the Main Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It was a serendipitous finding, since one of the collections had not even been recorded in the library’s database.
write. And when they cannot write, they use other means or other people to make their voices heard.

Another site for inquiry concerns religious literacy and religious texts. As I mentioned earlier, some texts about the history of Romanian evangelical Christians in the U.S reveal a particular ethnic group’s effort to establish its legitimacy and create events and church bulletins. In doing so, they document their presence, but also their religious identity as evangelicals coming from a mostly Eastern Orthodox country. Recently, rhetoric & composition and literacy scholars started to engage more critically, rather than dismissively with role of religion in students’ lives, paying attention to how religious identity and religious texts shape the lives of literate people. Several studies have noted the pervasive presence of religious texts and religious literacy in immigrant communities (e.g., Ek, 2008; Farr, 2000; Hones, 2011; Vieira, 2011) but also the need to reconsider personal, professional, or disciplinary biases concerning the role of religion in producing critical and analytically sound writing in the writing classroom (e.g. DePalma, 2011; Ringer, 2013). Similarly, in my study, histories of immigrants and other religious texts like church bulletins have been valuable resources in understanding the way in which the church as an institution can shape one’s literacy. One of the orthodox churches I visited has an impressive Romanian library and offers Romanian lessons to American-born children from Romanian families. Thus, a religious institution does not always promote solely religious literacy although certainly the spiritual nurture is the main goal of the church, as one of the priests explained during our interview. This area of religious literacy and religious texts needs further exploration, particularly for the Romanian immigrant community, consisting of numerous refugees who fled Romania because of religious oppression.
Finally, one major category of brokered materials represents ethnic newspapers. One of the starting points in my research was occasioned by reading an article written by Ema, my first participant, article that got published in *The Romanian Tribune*. Although the topic of ethnic newspapers remained marginally discussed in this dissertation, it represents an important site of inquiry for future study. My goal is to explore how ethnic newspapers represent both a local and transnational form of literacy. In addition to data I have collected already, I hope to extend this work through additional archival research on other ethnic newspapers, investigating their role in promoting multilingualism as a daily experience. Specifically, I plan to examine the work of Theodore Andrica, the so-called “broken-English editor” who has been considered the founder of “ethnic journalism” (*The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*). In this future project, I hope to develop a line of inquiry in conversation with recent scholarship on multilingual and translingual approaches that conceptualize language difference as a resource rather than an impediment to one’s learning.

Chapter Overview

In this study, I offer a critical reappraisal of the literacy broker—a term particularly used in the field of economics—to capture aspects of relationality and exchange that the term sponsor of literacy does not fully cover. Most importantly, this project shows that literacy brokers use a language of affinity, personal narratives, and social capital to perform critical negotiative work in the otherwise standardized discursive context of immigration where applications and forms constrain individual rhetorical repertoires. One such literacy broker, Eugen, illustrates this mediation not only when he serves as a translator in the community, but also when he advocates for the cause of asylum seekers trapped in refugee camps in Europe. Using his literacy and social capital, Eugen approached visa-sponsoring organizations using language of affinity: “We
pleaded our case. I read a few stories. I read a few letters that I received from people in the refugee camps. And I said, “Look, these are stories from our people. They escaped from Communist Romania. If we do not do the papers for them to come to the United States, they’ll be sent back to Romania, and they’ll be imprisoned.” In the context of rapid global flows and expedited mobility, various dimensions of transnational literacy—social contexts, histories, and audiences—are lost, even if temporarily. Literacy brokers’ work of affinity, I argue, recaptures what has been lost and recontextualizes the mobile subject’s experience. Engaging social contexts both locally and transnationally, literacy as affinity extends beyond utilitarian purposes.

To accomplish these goals, this dissertation explores literacy brokers in three main contexts: 1) the Romanian context, a nation-centric site of literacy education; 2) the Romanian immigrant community with its two groups of immigrants: old immigrants discussed in Chapter three and new immigrants’ perspectives detailed in Chapter four; 3) research sites connected to transnational study: archives, libraries, online sites, and so on.

Chapter two, entitled “Iron-Cast Literacies and the Role of the Authoritarian State as a Literacy Broker,” discusses the figure of the literacy broker in the context of mass literacy campaigns. Modeling the Soviet example, Romania’s literacy campaign—known as “the fight against illiteracy” in the words of President Nicolae Ceausescu—was central to the constitution of the “new socialist man.” This ideology originates with Lenin’s own proclamation that “the illiterate person stands outside politics” (Arnove & Graff, 1987, p. 7). Considering literacy’s central place in the Communist agenda, I use this chapter to explore the interconnections between literacy, affinity, and politics in the Romanian context. I argue that the Romanian state functioned as the ultimate broker, legitimizing itself as the only author, distributor, subject, and object of literacy. In this capacity, the nation became the sole arbiter of one’s affinity. Seeing the
Romanian state in a central position of brokering, managing, and controlling literacy affords a better understanding of the way in which the state sought to incapacitate educational and cultural institutions, teachers, and reading and writing practices.

In chapter three, “Literacy Brokers and the Emotional Work of Mediation in the Lives of Romanian Political Refugees,” I explore how literacy brokers’ work of affinity operates transnationally. In this chapter, I report on a data set that focuses on political refugees at a time when Romanian borders were strictly monitored by the Romanian state. Rather than solely addressing translation or assistance with legal documents, I show that literacy brokers also use personal stories of oppression to mobilize both personal and public agendas. In this case, personal affinities become the vehicle for impact upon and change of larger political structures. To accomplish this, literacy brokers work within and across institutions, and in so doing, they gain what I call a “bi-institutional” perspective. This perspective presupposes that brokers do not think and act solely from “within” institutions; rather, they think and act “across” institutions. As they move from context to context, literacy brokers accumulate rich language, cultural repertoires, and structures of feelings that are deployed locally and transnationally. The significance of the brokering here resides not in the fact that affinity is reciprocated or treated transactionally; rather, the work of affinity accomplished through personal stories becomes a channel for human rights advocacy, while at the same time it humanizes a system that otherwise tends to reduce immigrants to “case studies.”

“Illicit Brokering and the Legible “File Self,”” my project’s fourth chapter, addresses a different category of brokering that operates at the margins of legality: illicit practices and affinities of the disadvantaged. Contrary to the refugees discussed in the previous chapter whose travel is facilitated by political treaties, new immigrants travel for economic reasons. They learn
to navigate visa restrictions and work qualifications. In this chapter, I explore further the notion of affinity by highlighting co-brokering and cumulative agency created through partnerships within and across one’s ethnic group. I show how economic immigrants use co-brokering to negotiate legal papers, documentation, and application procedures, all comprising “file selves,” a term developed by anthropologist Julie Y. Chu (2010). In process of compiling their “files selves,” these immigrants learn “to build texts,” creating hidden transcripts that mimic the official language of bureaucracy. In this chapter, I show how co-brokering emerges as a by-product of affinities of the marginalized, of those who struggle with socioeconomic, legal or racial disadvantages. As such, literacy as affinity serves to build transitory communities and affiliations that harnessed together can exert power to maneuver rigid systems of control, exemplified by visa requirements or immigration categories.

In the fifth chapter, “The Researcher as a Broker in Transnational Literacy Research,” I use the literacy broker frame to explore the researcher’s ethos. I envision the researcher as a broker of knowledge but also as a person who makes use of his or her own affinities with certain groups of power to broker the research path. To this end, I use the notion of particularism and universalism (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2005) to further investigate ways in which the researcher’s positionality and methodologies are brokered to accomplish research goals. In assessing literacy brokers’ work in multiple contexts and roles, “Stories from Our People” argues that literacy as affinity and its mediational role is essential for research, methodologies, and pedagogies of impact across languages, cultures, and learning contexts.
CHAPTER TWO
IRON-CAST LITERACIES AND THE ROLE OF THE AUTHORITARIAN STATE AS A LITERACY BROKER

A 3rd grade Reading textbook published in 1987 starts with the lyrics of a famous Romanian song “The Union.” Underneath the lyrics, the following acknowledgement has been inserted: “[Excerpt] From comrade Nicolae Ceausescu’s speech at the grand assembly of December 5, 1981 dedicated to disarmament and peace:”

As shown in the image, a student, most likely a 3rd grader had crossed out comrade Nicolae Ceausescu, leaving the rest of the text intact. This act of textual alteration, small as it is, achieves a remarkable task. It removes textually precisely the center of ideological control, Nicolae Ceausescu, who was often represented as perfectly fusing his identity with the Communist party. Whether visually or textually in the public rhetoric, Ceausescu was the image and the embodiment of the party12. This blending of identities has often been achieved through repetition, particularly in slogans but also in songs and poems dedicated to Ceausescu. Ceausescu was the party and the party was Ceausescu. As this example shows, in Communist Romania literacy—whether in the form of textbooks, reading magazines, pioneer magazine (The Daring) or pioneer writing—became the main vehicle to distribute the party’s ideology.

In this chapter, I approach literacy brokering through the image of the authoritarian state which, I argue, functioned as the ultimate broker of literacy as affinity. I examine how the

12 I use the party in singular to refer to the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) and since there was only one functional party, I will only occasionally refer to it as the RCP.
state—and its extended presence in everyday lives: teachers, pioneer organizations, and numerous ideological magazines—sought to socialize students in how to feel for Romania, for the Romanian patria (engl. homeland or fatherland\(^{13}\)). In this analysis, I focus on the latter decade of Communist rule, the 1980s and follow the extension of the Communist party’s presence and control over school literacy and all domains pertaining to everyday literate lives of teens and children. As ultimate broker, the Romanian state was to use literacy as tool for manipulating people’s affinity for the country. This was accomplished through limiting literacy’s purpose to proclaim “the Party, Ceausescu, and Romania”—a slogan that even today may resonate with many Romanians. In many ways, we could consider the Romanian state as a sponsor of literacy. Viewed from the broker’s perspective, however, the State as a mediator but also as annihilator of alternative literacies emerges more forcefully, allowing and legitimizing solely the Party-line literacy. In Perry’s definition, brokers are defined as “bridg[ing] linguistic, cultural and textual divides for others,” (p. 256); from this definition, at the core of the broker’s identity is his or her middle-position. In this sense, seeing the State in this central position of brokering, managing, and controlling literacy affords a better understanding of the way in which the Romanian state managed to incapacitate educational and cultural institutions, teachers, and reading and writing practices. I argue that the state as the ultimate literacy broker of one’s affinity expanded its presence through various agents of mediation—schools, teachers, pioneer organizations, etc.—thus reaching into the everyday life of teens and children. Its force encroached on small, everyday activities—weekends filled with patriotic work, summer camps, pioneer circles as extracurricular activities—including people’s free time, their emotional

\(^{13}\)Both translations were a good rendition of the Romanian term, patria. Yet, I wish to emphasize that fatherland connotes a patriarchal ancestry and lineage, which represented mainly the rhetoric of the Communist party and its attempt to establish the legitimacy of the Romanian nation. I also use patria, to establish the semantic connection to patria and patriotic work.
attachments, and social relations. In doing so, the state used education and schools to create an infrastructure, to use Trainor (2008)’s term, that would facilitate the formation of particular discursive practices. Students, for instance, were required to cover long reading lists during their vacations and when returning back to school, to write eulogies to the Communist life and party’s achievements. They were encouraged to develop “feelings” for the patria and to perform them through poems, songs, or reading of various by texts. Through literate genres, such as the pioneer report and the poem, the state brokered its ideological presence and managed to recruit children and teens as brokers of the party’s image. The state’s ideological impact ultimately came from its capacity to position itself as a broker of literacy, managing the distribution and production of literate products and subjects. Literacy, thus, was highly manipulated in order to produce a citizen who would feel for the patria through everyday reading and writing.

I situate this chapter in this context of mass literacy and the role of centralized powers in managing individual literacies. Given the importance of advancing a socialist doctrine in schools, textbooks and literacy education in 1980s in Romania, the Romanian state functioned as a broker of literacy and affinity in two ways:

1) First, in the case of educational institutions, the State brokered its ideology through the manipulation of textbooks and teachers. Textbooks as well as school curricula were altered to reflect discursively and visually image of the party. Specifically, literacy textbooks circulated selected themes aimed at developing one’s affinity for the socialist patria. Since the State found ideological gaps between the lives of the children and teens and those of adults and political citizens, literacy and rhetorical practices in schools were intended to turn children and teens in “little workers,” representatives of a particular social class contributing to the making of the socialist state. If everyone in the socialist state was called to work, so were children and teens.
Historian Stephen Kotkin (1995) explains “in the Soviet context, work was not simply a material necessity, but also a civic obligation. Everyone had the right to work; no one had the right not to work” (p. 202). Similarly, in Romania, everyone including children and teens were deemed as important patriotic workers through their school activities, specifically through their reading and writing practices. In addition to textbooks, teachers were instrumental in brokering the party’s ideology. As workers for the State, I argue that teachers acted on a spectrum from inflexible monologic positions where they themselves mirrored the exact rigid discourse of the official rhetoric, mixed mono-dialogic discourses to truly dialogic discursive positions.

2) The State also brokered its ideological presence and control through magazines and extracurricular activities. To extend its reach beyond educational institutions, the Romanian state positioned itself as a broker of free time. Beside school-related activities and textbooks that functioned within educational institutions, the State’s theory of loisir, of managing children’s free time developed through the expansion of pioneer organizations and pioneer houses. The pioneer organizations aimed to socialize children (2nd grade through 8th grade) into the Party’s socialist agenda; a particular ethos had to be formed, turning children into political subjects especially as they were automatically enrolled in student organizations. In all this extracurriculum, patriotic feelings were routinized through a wide range of activities, many of which involved reading and writing. While pioneer organization intersected with school activities, most of their work extended to summer camps, patriotic work (outside of school), celebrations and festivities for the Party, and most notably, special interests clubs called circles. The Daring was the pioneer organization’s magazine, to which each devoted pioneer had to subscribe. Its purpose was to inform, but also to better mobilize the profile of little citizens and the patriotic work that defined them. Patriotic work, it was hoped, would better tie one to the nation.
In this extracurricular state project, I pay attention to the role that specific genres—the pioneer report and the poem—played in carrying more forcefully the party’s ideological themes and images. These two genres certainly contributed to the making of the “everyday socialist life” through language and discourse since they were meant to mirror daily events and the mundane pioneer life. But, while the pioneer report and the poem were employed as means to produce the socialist man, I argue that these genres brokered the socialist life as a sensorial, bodily experience rather than mere consciousness raising. It is precisely this attempt to broker the image of the state through bodily senses, to create images of ideological satisfaction that led to people’s rejection of the communist ideals. By regimenting feelings for the patria and seeking to create these images—images of Romania as land of prosperity, of high technological advancement, of the ideal place to live one’s childhood—the State subjugated the personal to the interest of the collective. As I show later in this chapter, my participants recall ideological education as a poor attempt to produce patriotic feelings. As students, my informants reported that most teachers were welcomed with derision whenever there was an attempt to glorify the outstanding state of the patria.

To understand how the State brokered its ideological presence through textbooks and educational institutions and through magazines and extracurricular activities, one has to learn more about the larger context of education. A look at the general backdrop of education will expose the larger forces that have been highly influential in shaping literacy in Romania. I highlight three areas that impacted literacy education: political agendas, socio-economic contexts, and institutions and commissions of control. First of all, education, specifically literacy education was a means to advance a political agenda. Therefore, a brief discussion of national campaigns is necessary as it reveals the connection that the socialist regime established between
literacy and politics. A second point of discussion constitutes the emergence of second economies in communist Romania. This section contributes to the main argument of this chapter, positing the State positioned itself as a broker of literacy rather than a sponsor. Since the term broker is a conceptual tool originating in economics, one needs to pay attention to socioeconomic contingencies of a totalitarian state and how these realities shape reading and writing. The formation of second economies and the production socio-economic subjects through secret files and cataloguing provides a general frame for ideological control through textbooks and magazines. Finally, a discussion of ideological control over education through specific institutions unveils the structures employed by the Party to broker the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Thus, politics, socio-economies and institutions all shape the formation and process of literacy brokering discussed in this chapter.

To advance this line of argument in this chapter, I draw on archival research conducted in Romania in 2011. I use textbooks, school magazines (*The Country’s Hawks, The Daring*), school curricula from the 1970s and 1980s as well as various primary documents of the Communist party documenting its ideological campaign in educational reforms (minutes from the Congress of Political and Cultural Socialist Education, 1982; speeches from the Congress of education and learning, 1973; 1980; 1982, 1987-1988, etc.), brochures and guides of pioneer organizations, including student compositions, and literary works. I analyzed these documents using grounded theory. First, I identified salient themes and then, I selected key foci that would encapsulate both the most significant and general aspects about literacy in Romania in the last Communist decade. The State’s presence and the ideological content in textbooks, schools, and in everyday life emerged as a significant theme. With this theme in mind, I identified the contexts of literacy education where ideological control was prevalent. The process of locating these contexts was
motivated by questions: What was the socio-economic and political context that shaped literacy education of Romanian immigrants before their departure to the U.S.? What were the most pervasive features of the official literacy education in Romania in the 1970s and 1980s? Similarly, in my analysis of interviews with the participants in the study, I followed emergent recurrent themes; in the case of interviews, teachers and their shifting position emerged as central agents that shaped individual literacy experiences. Of the numerous educational materials housed at Library of the Academy in Romania and the Romanian National Archives, I selected those that aligned with my questions and with the themes that emerged from interviews.

Literacy Campaigns and Unintended Consequences

In National literacy campaigns, Arnove and Graff (1987) suggest that “large-scale efforts to provide literacy have not been tied to the level of wealth, industrialization, urbanization, or democratization of a society nor to a particular type of political regime” (p. 2). Rather, literacy served as mobilizing engine of the masses in situations when “centralizing authorities” sought to achieve “moral or political consensus.” In this sense, literacy campaigns concern primarily the advancement of a particular doctrine, whether religious or socio-political. In communist Romania, the advancement of the socialist doctrine has certainly been the main concern as various educational reforms have been implemented. While the year 1948 in Romania marks the major education reform through a series of laws and decrees, the year when the centralization and censorship of information start to reinforce the State’s power over education, under Ceausescu’s directive, an ideological campaign through literacy was forcefully implemented in the latter part of the Communist regime (1971-1989). Following the Soviet model, the literacy campaign in Romania or the “fight against illiteracy” as Ceausescu would call it, was central in
the making of the “new man” and the reshaping of one’s consciousness according to socialist doctrine. Without the ability to read, the political subject was considered outside of the realm of politics or so explains Lenin in the context of the 1917 Russian revolution:

The illiterate person stands outside politics. First it is necessary to teach the alphabet. Without it, there are only rumors, fairy tales, prejudice, but no politics.” (Arnove & Graff, 1987, p. 7)

The interconnectedness between literacy and politics is well established here, and evidently, through literacy, the Romanian state propagated its political agenda. But, as Arnove & Graff show, literacy campaigns or programs were often preoccupied with quantitative rather than qualitative results. Similarly, in the Romanian context, literacy was not measured by how proficient one was in using competently the language of the State; rather the quantification of literate subjects prevailed over quality of education. Reporting the number of graduating students, even though figures were often falsified, was a central task; numbers represented an objective tool measuring the level of success of the education campaign. Generally, the outcomes of literacy campaigns/programs have been difficult to evaluate since they always produce unexpected effects such as resistance to centralized models or a preoccupation with “undemanding” readings (in the Soviet Union) or with romance and adventure stories rather than how to organize a collective (as in the case of People’s Republic of China) (Arnove & Graff, p. 26). Nevertheless, examining the State as a centralized power and its role in brokering literacy reveals intricate relationships between literacy and State powers. A vehicle for promoting a particular doctrine, literacy produces powerful shifts even if the end results may be multiple and unexpected, often different from initial goals.
In its effort to use mass regimentation of teachers and students, the State positioned itself as a broker of literate practices, but despite many reforms, I argue that its success was only limited. The state’s literacy campaign fell short from attaining its main goal—creating the prototype of the Communist citizen—precisely because it sought to regiment people’s affinity through literacy. As the State advanced the nation as the sole arbiter of affinity, of one’s reading and writing experiences, it denied alternative interactions with texts and discourses. The state succeeded, however, to create a certain type of literate citizen, who has learned to value reading, particularly distinguished authors and multiple languages. All these comprise a cultural capital with which most participants in my study pride themselves. It is a cultural capital that shapes an individual into “a man with culture,” a non-material asset that seems disjoint from any economic constraints. Most participants with whom I talked rejected the ideological dimension of education in Romania, but ironically valued all other aspects. Similar to the 3rd grader’s act of removing the center of ideological control of the textbook, the Romanians learned to value literacy and the “man of culture” descriptor, but refused the Party’s encroachment on their affinities. In fact, the immigrants in my study placed a high value on the education received in Romania, particularly required readings and their cosmopolitan identification as well as their ability to speak multiple languages and to embrace other cultures with great ease. They also denounced the profit-driven American society relative to education and culture, but valued the economic advantage they have gained through their jobs in the U.S..

Second Economies and Socioeconomic Profiles

In understanding the State as a broker of literacy, one must look at the larger socioeconomic context that shaped literacy in communist Romania. As mentioned earlier, children
and teens were cast as little workers and schools can best be regarded as factories where the main activity of these little workers takes place. In this context, literacy is manufactured as a product of mass consumption following the Fordist model of learning. Yet, this centralized model of production is quite different from a capitalist economy model, from the model that Deborah Brandt (1998) has used to discuss the connection between literacy and economic development. Brandt introduces sponsors of literacy in a frame where literacy participates actively in “engines of profit and competitive advantage;” or to be more specific, literacy functions as a “lubricant for consumer markets,” as a way to “integrate corporate markets,” or as “raw material in the mass production of information” (1998, p. 166). The economic rhetoric surrounding this conception of literacy includes profit, competitive advantage, consumer markets, and mass production. This language of economics is very different from the discursive context of communist Romania where the ultimate end was the production of a “new socialist man.” Different than the productive citizen in capitalist systems—marked by competition, initiative, and profit—the profile of socialist “new man” included cultural, political and economic features: work ethics; worker’s profile as it fit with patria’s economic and technological development; national identity through ties to one’s native land, to one’s national history and national literature; a revolutionary spirit; desire for technological advancement and a constant cultivation of one’s love for nature. All these represent modes of expressing affinity for the patria as they related to historical ties, to literary works, but also to ways of investing one’s affinity in the interest of the country. Because these forms of capital are substantially non-tangible economic products, with little purchase value outside the national context of Romania, the inherent value of these literacies might appear limited. Given this socialist economic model, when the economic capital resides solely in the hands of the State, it would be difficult to use a capitalist vocabulary, such as sponsors and
discursive markets. For this reason, the metaphor of the broker whose emphasis is on mediation and social relations captures more befittingly the type of relations established between the State and its citizens.

Communist Romania focused its energy on control over production rather than promotion of consumption. This explains in part the regime’s obsession with work and work productivity. This attention to regimenting production and products led to development of two types of economic systems: 1) the “first” or “the official” economy, where central authorities exercised their control, and 2) the “second” or “informal” economy, which emerged as a strategic process of counteracting the control of the official economy (Verdery, 1996). Secondary economy consisted of a variety of strategies and methods, ranging from “quasi-legal to the definitely illegal” (Verdery, 1996, p. 27). Anthropologist Katherine Verdery (1996) further explains that while moonlighting for extra money was not illegal, people did various types of work with materials or tools snitched generally from the workplace. This type of informal economy generated a particular vocabulary, eventually leading to the development of particular mentalities. I will briefly mention only two such words that carry with them particular mentalities: hatar and bacsis and the expressions: to do a hatar [ha-tur] (engl. to do/ pay one a favor) and to pay or give bacsis [buck- shee-sh] (engl. to give bribe). Both bacsis and hatar carry some nuances of illegality, of operating somewhat at the limits of state regulations or constraints. While the first term hatar establishes a relationship of almost mutual service, a relationship established in the informal economy, the latter term bacsis points to a strategy of subverting the authority of the state by paying a sum of money to break through open a closed door. In a 2010 interview, Romanian historian Florin Constantiniu explains Romania’s inability to create a viable democracy and sustainable economy by pointing to the legacy of these two mentalities, hatar
and bacsis (Popescu, 2011). They represent a way of thinking and being in the world, that evades the state and establishes a barter system based on preferential relationships.

This mentality underscores the strategic way of acting, being, or speaking that seeks to game the system, particularly a controlling, authoritarian regime. Acknowledging this mentality and secondary economies can further explain how their function extends to other domains of the social life, beyond the economic realm. Translating this mentality of second economies in the context of language and literacy, people learned to develop different registers depending on context. While people did learn to speak the official language—the language that historian Stephen Kotkin calls “speaking Bolshevik”—people would also resort to their “secondary” or subversive language, to readings and writings that were not officially approved. In reality, the official economy of language and literacy, the one brokered by the State was secondary to most of its citizens. The Romanian people had to learn this official language, to practice it, and to cast it in particular forms and genres acceptable in official language of the state. “Speaking Bolshevik,” as Kotkin (1995) explains, does not simply mean “speaking” the official language. He contends that this language of self-identification, a language showing affiliation with a particular social role, such as the wife of a locomotive worker in his example, did not necessarily mean that the wife wrote, thought, and behaved in this social role. Rather, mere participation or using the language of the Party was sufficient:

We should not interpret her letter to mean she believed in what she likely wrote and signed. It was not necessary to believe. It was necessary, however, to participate as if one believed. (Kotkin, p. 220)

This participation and socialization in the official language of the State constituted an important practice for children in communist Romania. Children, like all other citizens of the country,
became little workers *participating* in the construction of the socialist patria. They did not have to “believe” in the system or “believe” the system. Participation, that is the rhetoric of bodies and their quantification, constitute sufficient action to gratify the system.

A second important trait of the Romanian economic system under Communism concerns the producing and manufacturing of “personal files.” Similar to the production of goods, Herbert Zilber speaks of the “production of files,” containing “real and falsified histories;” these files represented a significant form of control of the regime, seeking to create “political subjects” (Verdery, 1996, p. 24):

This new industry has an army of workers: the informers. It works with ultramodern electronic equipment (microphones, tape recorders, etc.) plus an army of typewriters, without all this, socialism could not have survived. In the socialist bloc, people and things existed only through their files. All our existence is in the hand of him who possesses files and constituted by him who constructs them. Real people are but reflections of their files.

This industry of secret information implies an industry of writing. Writing became a recorder of daily life of all those discontent or seemingly discontent with Ceausescu’s ideal *patria* and the ideological principles of the “golden age,” (Rom. *epoca de aur*) as Ceausescu used to call it. This production of secret files and writing serving as a recorder of every day life created an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust, changing communication from talk to whisper, even in the privacy of one’s home.

Even if children were rarely targeted by the Secret police unless their parents were blacklisted or under close surveillance, they too were “catalogued” in official school records. Each class of students had its “catalog,” the U.S. equivalent of a teacher’s roll, where all teachers for
that class would record grades and attendance. Each class had one and the same *catalog* (the exact word in Romanian); this meant that teachers were able to view all students’ grades or attendance to all subjects not just in one subject area. This *catalog*, as its name suggests, did *catalog* students. While students were listed alphabetically, at the end of the *catalog*, additional information about each student was included. At the beginning of each year, each class teacher collected specific information from the students, which was then included in the *catalog*. For each student, the following information was requested: the student’s name, date of birth, the parents’ name(s), parents’ profession, and religion. Similar to the workers in a factory who had their “labor book” and identification through various work histories and documents (Kotkin, p. 216), children too were cataloged and identified through their parents’ social and professional positions. Certainly, there were other documents of identification—the student’s grade book or the pioneer record book. Yet the *catalog* functioned a recorder of the student’s labor and as a daily tool of classification, based on the parents’ social or economic background and religious identification. Through the information it gathered, the catalog certainly exerted a power of influence over the treatment given to each student. To this day, these school catalogs are official school records, stored and locked in special cabinets in schools. Besides teachers, school directors and educational inspectors have access to them. Functioning as selective tools of classification, the socioeconomic information in the catalog determined the way these students were assigned roles, tasks, or privileges in the classroom and in various activities beyond school. Historian Sheila Fitzpatrick (2001) explains that for Bolsheviks, class was generally considered an objective category established on the basis of hard data: economic and work-related information. However, there was also a subjective dimension of social class since many were deeply preoccupied with the “construction of a “good” social identity” (p. 474). Fitzpatrick
explains further that it was not uncommon for people to go through different occupations, particularly as new jobs related to the Party’s ideology emerged: “certain common trajectories – born a peasant, now a worker; born a worker, now a member of the new intelligentsia – were so familiar and (from a Soviet standpoint) admirable that they needed only a minimum of explanation” (p. 475). For children, such mobile trajectories were slightly more difficult to achieve. Children, in the context of Communist Romania, were slotted into their parents’ socioeconomic class and treated accordingly. The only flexibility in this classification could have been achieved through the mediation of teachers. Teachers could function sometimes as brokers between students and the State. As discussed earlier, since the State functioned as the ultimate broker, it sought to produce its power through various other brokers. Such were teachers in schools. Later in the chapter, I will develop more extensively the brokering role of teachers with specific examples from Stefan’s life. If the party’s goal was to manufacture and control people’s affinity for the patria, teachers contribute to this state project, as they were the extension of the party into students’ everyday life. But thus far, my intention was to establish the socio-economic context of education and how it impacted the lives of students and their formal education. Given that in literacy is conceptualized as a social practice, connecting economic systems to literacy education affords a better understanding for why the State functioned as an ultimate broker. The broker holds that middle position between multiple stakeholders. When this position is occupied by a centralizing power, such as an authoritarian State, it reorganizes all social relations, identities, and interactions. It also recasts its power and control into multiple other relations: small centers of control in regional areas or organizations that mobilize citizens on behalf of the centralized power of the State, leading to the formation of local agents of control. In the case of
schools and educations, teachers become such agents that orient education towards the official discourse of the Party.

The Ideological Turn: Consolidating Institutional Structures

In this socioeconomic context of informal economies and brokers, ideology emerges as a central site of literacy brokering in education. In the 1980s, the latter period of Ceausescu’s regime, the cult of personality of “the most beloved son of the people,” expanded along with the monopoly of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) in every aspect of the social life. The domineering discourse of the Communist party sought to promote only one voice, one ideology to be taught, one leader to be followed. Anything that fell outside of the purview of the Communist party had to be censored and often annihilated. During Ceausescu’s presidential years (1965-1989), massive transformations of education exercised under the influence of the Stalinist theorist Anton S. Makarenko sought to militarize the schools, which became authoritarian, collective, and regimented (Persu, 1998). As early as 1967 with the establishment of the Commission on Ideology (Verdery, 1991, p. 100), textbooks and school curricula had to receive the approval of ideology commissions. The ideological turn further enhanced the State’s reach through pioneer organizations, another ingenious action to strengthen the monopoly of the Communist Party over every aspect of life, including free time. Another manifestation of the ideological control was exerted in the form of numerous festivals and State-instituted holidays meant to celebrate the Party, particularly the grandiose mass event “the Song of Romania,” aimed at celebrating socialist ideology and culture through songs, poems, and other creative works.
For many Romanians, ideology is a very loaded term. In describing ideology as the relation between rhetorics and social and political contexts, James Berlin purposefully chooses to define ideology in its “neutral sense” (1987, p.4). In this chapter, I use the term “ideology” to refer specifically to the Marxist-Leninist principles and its uptake by the Romanian Communist Party. While the Ideology Commission was instituted in 1967, in the following years Ceausescu launched a more aggressive ideological control in education, reflected in his famous July speeches (July 6 and July 9, 1971). In *National ideology under socialism* (1991), Verdery refers to Ceausescu’s regime of control as “symbolic-ideological,” compared to previous ones, identified as remunerative and coercive (using force) (pp. 85-86). The ideological control under Ceausescu, while not physically damaging as in Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej’s time took “an obsessive-preventive” approach to any adverse ideologies and actions (*Presidential commission*, 2007, p 519). This approach was ensured through an informant network, the informal economy governed by the State, which created an informant network through the recruitment of collaborators, residents, and conspiracy hosts (Neagoe-Plesa, 2008, p.11). This network represented the infrastructure for the economy of personal files, which consolidated the Party’s control over people’s lives.

The main purpose of Ceausescu’s July Theses (1971) and subsequent actions was to reinforce the Party’s socialist realism philosophy and control of the main institutions of mass communication (e.g. “the Song of Romania”) (Mentea, 2011). A censorship campaign implicated directly printing houses and cultural and educational institutions. These institutions are traditionally what we might think of as brokers of literacy, except that they all functioned under the authority of one broker, the State. In September 1971, the State Council established the Council of Socialist Culture and Education (CSCE); in November 1977, CSCE’s structure...
started to be consolidated especially since in December of the same year, a series of press and printing committees and agencies were either demitted or restructured (e.g. the State Committee of Press and Printing – demised; Romanian Radio Television and Romanian Press Agency – restructured). In all this, the CSCE became subordinate to the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) and then to the Council of Ministers.

In 1977, CSCE’s new responsibility concerned the organization of the national festival the “Song of Romania” whose main purpose was to engage the nation on all levels. The “Song of Romania” was first launched in June 2-4, 1976, at the first Congress of Socialist Culture and Political Education and was meant to be “a mass manifestation of diligence, and labor, an opportunity to educate the young generation” (2nd Congress of socialist culture and political education, 1982, p. 84). Its purpose was a reinforcement of the political-ideological education of the masses, through manifestations of so-called creative and interpretative cultural expressions. Patriotic songs, poems reflected the illusionary “happiness,” the “glorious future,” parental care of the party and its leaders, turning the “the Song of Romania” into a mass masquerade where students, teachers, workers, the entire country mobilized to bring homage to the party, and to its most “beloved” leader. This spectacle meant to honor and eulogize the Party and its leaders mobilized hundreds and thousands of people in performing the Party’s ideology whether they believed in it or not. The ridicule of this performance resides in the fact that it was party initiative’s, specifically Ceausescu’s idea, to recruit people to praise the Party—a self-serving, self-orchestrated performance.

14 In official documents of the Central Committee, the Propaganda and Agitation Section, the plenary meeting minutes offer specific details about how to organize the festival, and how to involve workers, students, and all citizens in this mass festival.
By far the most significant change with the ideological turn relates to the language and discourse. The language of the Party, in addition to giving voice to socialist ideology, it sought to annihilate alternative discourses. In an effort to elucidate the impact of totalitarian regimes on language and discourse, historian Jan Gross argues:

the communist rule changes language so it no longer reflects or represents reality;
metaphor becomes more important than prosaic discourse, and magical words replace descriptive and logical ones. (as cited in Verdery, 1991, p. 89)

Verdery (1991), on the other hand, does not see this alteration as a “destruction of language,” but describes it as a “retooling of language qua means of ideological production” (p. 89). The result of this change produces an authoritarian discourse whose goal is “to reduce words, to straightjacket them into singular intentions,” impeding growth of multiple voices or interpretations (p. 90). This discourse, as Bakhtin describes it comes with “authority already fused to it,” and school textbooks represent a suitable space for this discourse to thrive. As Michael Apple (1986) writes, textbooks have authority to legitimize knowledge (p. 81) and they certainly did so in the Romanian context. Those singular meanings constituted the “official discourse” reflecting the Party’s ideology and its control. Reading became highly emphasized as a means of consciousness-raising, and the spread of literature became the Party’s megaphone through pamphlets, speeches, and a thriving mass production of magazines and newsletters for all school levels. Writing, on the other hand, was meant to be an exclusive tool of the selected few appointed to represent the “hands,” the “eyes”, and “the voice” of the Communist Party and its ideology. However, as the example at the beginning of the chapter shows, small acts of disobedience such as defacing a textbook suggest that any discourse, even the authoritarian ones, engage multiple voices albeit it does so sometimes involuntarily. This means that people have far
more agency than expected; also, literacy has a powerful dialogic force that if channeled well, can shape communication.

Textbooks and School Curricula as Ideological Tools

The Ideological Commission’s role was to censure the context of textbooks and curricula so that these reading materials reflected the Party’s language and image. The commission paid equal attention to layout, images, as well as text. Each textbook was framed by well-chosen elements; each textbook started with Nicolae Ceausescu’s image, followed by the Romanian national anthem titled “Three colors, I know in the world,” the three colors representing the Romanian flag: red, yellow, and blue. Some textbooks included a famous song, called the “Union” as the beginning illustration of this chapter explained. Defacing one or some of these symbols was fairly typical. I found several other examples in other textbooks. However, since I consulted mainly copies from Central University Library in Bucharest, the frequency of these acts was reduced.
In the Romanian language, the literacy textbooks I reference here are called *Citire* (engl. *Reading*) or *Limba română* (engl. *the Romanian Language*). These titles misleadingly suggest a focus solely on reading. In reality, *Reading* or *Romanian* as school subjects offered training in language, writing, and literature. For this reason, I will use an approximate term and will call them *literacy* textbooks. These literacy textbooks carried discursively the presence of the Party through a set of themes: nature, history, family, and the party. Through each of these themes, the State used literacy and language to broker’s one’s affinity for the patria. Basically, the goal was to ensure that the Romanian ethos and the Romanian nation are at the center of one’s learning.

Although I refer here only to *Reading* textbook for 3rd graders, the literacy textbooks for 4th, 6th, and 8th grade cover the same recurrent themes. The 3rd grade *Reading* textbook published in 1987 included the following key themes: 1) *nature-related texts* (e.g. “How fall starts,” “Winter,” “the Fir tree,” “What happens under snow”); 2) *historical texts about the ancestors of the Romanian people* (e.g. “From the lives of the Dacians,” “The Wars of Traian and Decebal,” “The Mother and the Son” (reference to Steven the Great, an important Romanian historical figure); 3) *the Party and implicit Party ideology*: emphasis on work, laboring the land (e.g. “Work is dear to us,” “The Day of the Republic,” “The story of the magazine: *The Country’s Hawks*”); and 4) *family life and its role in shaping the student’s consciousness* (e.g. “The Hands,” “My Father,” “Grandma”).

Each of the four themes—nature, Romanian history/ancestry, family, and the party—emphasizes a form of affinity. It is an affinity for the patria while all other affinities are dismissed. The first theme “nature” sets the scene for one’s learning. Nature signifies a location, the ideal space, where the Romanian nation lives. But, readings focused on nature underline a deeper philosophical thought of Romanian writers, namely an organic, intimate connection
between man and nature; nature or the geographical space becomes the cradle of a nation, a place of nurture of identity formation. The second theme focusing on history and ancestry reiterates that the Romanian patria is of noble descent (a reference here to both Dacian and Roman ancestors) and an independent nation. The emphasis on independence has dual connotations. One alludes to the Romanians’ efforts to unify its territories and shake off foreign rule. Another dimension relates to Ceausescu’s political strategy to remove Romania from the Russian influence, therefore it references an ideological independence. For this reason, communism in Romania took a particular flavor as Ceausescu added his own contribution to the Romanian ethos; in Ceausescu’s notorious speeches, Romania has always been involved in a “struggle for freedom, justice, and unity” (Mungescu 2004). The third theme engages the institution of the family, which as Verdery suggests, was foundational in a socialist state inasmuch as the Party constructed its presence as a family. Family as an intimate space, a space that creates affinities between its members has been a central trope in the party’s discourse. The family functions both as a way to reinforce each member’s participation in the socialist patria, but also as a metonymy for the party and its role in parenting and raising ideologically-minded children. Texts featuring the family also served to advance a socio-economic class, a particular profession that the parent had to model to their child. Parents are either factory workers, drivers, or workers on a construction site or in some type of blue-collar job. They are the hands and feet of the Party both physically and metaphorically, making the Romanian nation. School children, however, as these textbooks show, were somewhat predestined to follow their parents’ socio-economic class, and

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15 In Comrades No More, De Nevers (2003) explains that under Ceausescu, socialism was only “nominally” present, highly centralized, but rather than collective, it was a “one-man dictatorship” (p. 243). Verdery (1991) take a more sophisticated approach to why in Romania, socialism merge with nationalism. After an overview of explanations proposed by various scholars, Verdery suggests that in addition to subtracting Romania from a Russian monopoly that has always been somewhat resented in Romania even under Gheorghiu Dej, the discourse of the nation has always been a home discourse, deeply ingrained in the Romanian ethos (p. 125).
their parents’ career path was scripted by larger socio-economic and political conditions. The last theme focused on the Party and the socialist ideology in reality permeated these textbooks all throughout. This theme seeks to engage directly with cultivating feelings for the Party and developing an emic vocabulary about the country’s prosperity; in doing so, the texts focused directly on the party contributed to the formation of a culture where each member participates in anniversary events, speaks about the country’s prosperity, recites, sings, and celebrates the socialist life.

To illustrate even further how these themes were reinforced by the Central Committee before they even reached the classroom, I turn to textbooks revisions imposed by the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee in 1984, when a series of textbooks (1st through 8th grade) were undergoing changes. These revisions were initiated in the meetings of the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee, therefore I am relying here on minutes and notes from these meetings. I limit my focus to the 1st grade reading textbook, the ABC since in the minutes and notes of the Propaganda and Agitation Department, the ABC received special attention. It was called “the fundamental book of a nation.” In Appendix B, I have included an overview of revisions for various grade levels, as they were reflected in the titles of the texts.

Some revisions include general changes, such as the inclusion of authors’ names or changes in content to make the readings and images more age-appropriate. These concerns are justified by the psychological and physiological changes in children, as the reviewers suggest. For instance, it is recommended that more poems for memorization suitable for 7 year olds should be included. Another category of changes includes specific details that reinforce the Romanian ethos through images and various socialist symbols and values. Textbook reviewers,
as agents of ideological control, paid special attention to details that otherwise might have gone unnoticed:

- on the page teaching the letter S: the reviewers recommended: “must draw a Romanian sun, not one with Egyptian tendency;”

- on the lesson on letter D: there are two remarks: “the costume is “Russian-like,”” and “the coalminers can be replaced with teens.” Neither Russian nor Egyptian references are to be tolerated since the students must perceive everything as of Romanians and for Romanians.

- The removal of coalminers is important here since their presence can potentially be linked to one of the few reactionary events under Ceausescu, the miners’ strike of 1977.

- lesson on letter P: it is recommended to include the symbol of bread, (in Rom., paine), as a symbol of the prosperity and “high” living standards of the Romanians, another recurrent theme of the Communist Party;

- on page 9: the reviewers make specific recommendation regarding an image: “the Image ‘the Festivity of Opening the New Year” “the sky should be colored in blue and the school courtyard should be paved with tiles.”

As these examples suggest the ABC, “the fundamental book of a nation” must guide one’s literacy through association between letters and images, between words and concepts that tie one’s affinity to the nation. The sun, teens or images of bread must construct the image of a prosperous nation or the land of happy childhood. In the final revisions, the reviewer lists a series of words and phrases, that must be edited out since they are beyond the level of comprehension of 1st graders: colors with wings (Rom. culori inaripate), the ancestors’ cradle (Rom. vatra stramoseasca), impetuous (Rom. navalnic), aspiration (Rom. nazuinta), a red flag like a song
(Rom. steagul rosu ca un cantec). All these phrases and words in Romanian have a rather archaic or poetic nuance, typically not used in colloquial speech but ideologically imbued with the party’s way of speaking, peppered with metaphors and patriotic feelings disconnected from reality.

In the case of textbooks for grades beyond 1st grade, most revisions reinforce recurrent ideological themes, constituting the “official” discourse of the party: nature and synergy between man and nature, noble origin of the Romanian people and historical continuity narrative, the Communist party and love for patria, and family as the cradle of one’s development. In addition to these, an additional 5th theme seems to emerge: Ceausescu theme. In several textbooks, 2nd, 3rd and 7th grade, poems and other odes are directly addressed to either comrade Nicolae Ceausescu or to Elena Ceausescu, his wife, or to both. Some examples of texts dedicated to the Ceausescus include: “The Party, Ceausescu, Romania,” “Song to Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu,” “To comrade Elena Ceausescu,” “Nicolae Ceausescu’s Epoch” and other.

With these curricular changes, literacy becomes central in providing a cohesive textual image of the nation, through geography, the nation’s place, history, political identity and social communities such as the family. While evidently textbooks carry the ideological baggage of the dominant class, as Michael Apple suggests, I would argue that the ideological of the dominant class also connects to ideologies of the nation or more precisely, to the intimate patria. In fact such was the focus on the nation that starting with 1986 these revisions required corresponding school subjects: Romanian, History, Geography and Political Science (for more advanced grade levels) to be studied only in Romanian. Prior to this change, education for German and Hungarian minorities was taking place in their own respective language; but with these revisions, the Romanian language became the adequate and only means to express a people’s affinity for
the nation, for the Romanian patria. German and Hungarian could easily carry the meanings socialist ideologies, but only the Romanian language could accomplish the affinity and actually contribute to the cohesiveness of one patria. With this change in language of instruction, both literacy and language are given power to regulate affinities. It is striking to see that the communist Party had a tremendous appreciation of language and literacy and the powerful role they had in shaping one’s learning and ethos.

While these ideologized textbooks aimed to provide models of literary expression both in form and content, writing took a somewhat secondary role. Serving as an ideological tool similar to reading, writing was an exercise in imitating of texts that have already been “approved” as ideologically fitting. Writing in these textbooks encourages students to “apply” knowledge from these texts and to model and align their language and genre to the Party’s ideology. In a pedagogical guide to teaching composition for 5th-8th grade, even open composition prompts are highly prescriptive. One type of compositions is writing a narrative with a focused theme and a set of given words. Not surprisingly, the key words are feelings for the patria: contentment or diligence and additional words associated with these emotions suggests the actions or a series of actions that might capture those emotions:

*contentment:* street, pioneering, a bag, a militia post, meeting, gratefulness

or

*diligence:* vacation, patriotic work, lawns/ sampling, [pioneer] squad, hectare, diplomas.

As someone who has learned to write this type of compositions, I find it easy to predict the expected narrative: Some pioneers find a lost bag in the street; they go to the militia post and are helped with much enthusiasm. The militia set up a meeting with the original owner of the lost bag. The owner later expresses his/ her gratefulness in the local newspaper, praising such
exemplary acts of humanity. The second narrative on diligence would probably follow this pattern: *Pioneers have been rewarded with honorary diplomas for their diligent work over the summer vacation. Several pioneer squads from the neighborhood, decided out of their own initiative, to spend a good part of their summer, planting saplings and maintaining school lawns in preparation for the new school year. This work was performed in addition to help with planting hundreds of hectare in the local village. Such pioneer work demonstrates a spirit of initiation worthy to follow.*

To a certain extent, the pedagogical approach employed for reading and other subjects applied to the teaching writing and composition. Dictation, repetition of key socialist themes, and model-driven writing exercises underline a philosophy promoting an authoritarian discourse. Bahktin (1981) explains that authoritarian discourse is *a priori*; it does not invite dialogism, it does not blend with other voices; it remains intact, fixed, and “fully sufficient” (pp. 342-343). In the composition exercise exemplified earlier, words are already supplied and their fixity is achieved as feelings of contentment, of friendship, or diligence are always tied to the Party and its activities. Although a “free” or “open” composition should allow for multiple narratives to emerge, in an authoritarian discourse, only one narrative can materialize the focus on the patria and its ideology.

**Brokering Free Time: Pioneer Organizations and Pioneer Writing Genres**

If reading and writing carried the ideological freight through themes and affinities for the patria and through prescribed ways of composing, literacy outside the institutional context of learning was embedded in the mundane. Writing, in particular, became instrumental in recording everyday life in communist Romania. Whether students assumed roles such as the chronicler, the columnist, or the reporter in various contexts such as summer camps, patriotic activities, or
festivals, they were participating and making the socialist life through writing. This is the second strategy that the State used to broker its ideology in the “everydayness” of people’s lives. In such banal contexts, students’ feelings were regulated through doing patriotic work and writing and reading about patriotic work. In discussing the public sphere in Communist Romania, Gail Kligman (1990) writes that through “everydayness” of the state power, the state seized its citizens’ time, space, and modes of communication (p. 398). Similarly, children’s free time, their extracurricular activities were replenished with readings about everyday socialist life and with specific writing genres—reports, poems, and odes for the Party and its leaders—through which the Party brokered its presence. This “everydayness” brokering was achieved through pioneer organizations. The role of these pioneer organizations in regulating literacy and affinity is rather obscure precisely because they operated through routinized activities. Trainor (2008) highlights such structures when she discusses the role of schools in formation of racial discourses and attitudes. She exposes the “infrastructure of school” as having “powerful, but largely unacknowledged, pedagogical and persuasive force” (p. 85). Although the pioneer organizations functioned in and out of school, they created a similar infrastructure in they way they regimented students’ free time, activities, readings, and writing practices.

As mentioned earlier, education reform in Romania during the Communist period modeled Makarenko’s principles: authoritarian, collective, and regimented (Persu, 1998). To accomplish this type of education, in addition to formal education in schools, the State brokered its presence through the establishment and fortification of pioneer organizations. The pioneer organization enrolled 7 to 14 year old children allowed the Party to manage children’s breaks, vacations, and weekends. A similar structure governed two different organizations the Country’s Hawks for pre-school children and respectively, The Union of Communist Youth (UCY), which
automatically regimented all high school and college students. Through these socialist organizations: the Pioneer Organization, the Country’s Hawks, and the Union of Communist Youth (UCY) every member of society including children and teens, were accounted for as members of the patria: the pioneers, the country’s hawks, and the UTC-ists (members of the UCY, in Romanian Uniunea Tineretului Communist). Being a pioneer in itself sought to cultivate feelings of pride for being selected and ceremoniously welcomed in the ranks of the patria’s family.

Literacy played a significant role in this socialization, since magazines such as the Daring became the primary engine of language and literacy regimentation for these socialist organizations for children and teens. Through literate activities (clubs, recitals, performances) as well as hands-on patriotic work, pioneer organizations mobilized, as Arnove & Graff (1987) explain “large numbers of learners and teachers by centralizing authority, (…) [through] elements of both compulsion and social pressure to propagate a particular doctrine” (p. 2). The goal was the Party’s doctrine, and the means comprised all forms of social engagement: readers, activities, work in school, work outside school, etc.

In one of Ceausescu’s legendary speeches at the 3rd National Conference of the Pioneer Organization, he attempts to establish the role of pioneer organizations and their connection to broader national goals:

the pioneer organization have an important role in the educating children to be creative, to work creatively, and to respect the history of the Romanian people, and its majestic craftsmanship in the revolutionary transformation of society, in the spirit of the children’s wishes and determination, of young adults of tomorrow to bring their contribution to the
flourishing of our country (The 3rd National Conference of the Pioneer Organization, 1976).

This excerpt, like many other of Ceausescu’s speeches, reiterates the Party line: children and the youth should be preoccupied with the “flourishing” of the country through creativity, will power, and transformative skills. In a subsequent examination of pioneer life and activities exemplified in school magazines, poems and readings, we will learn that “the flourishing” of the country is achieved through creative works that acclaim the Party and its leaders and most importantly through patriotic work and advancement of the factory worker’s skills and ingenuity—the ideal candidate in advancing the Party’s ideology. In one of many pedagogical guides for socialist education entitled Pioneers and Work (1974), the goal of pioneer organization is clearly established: it must advance the doctrine of communist education: “education through work and for work of the new generation” (p. 5). Since work included not only school activities but extracurricular work, the Party managed to permeate all aspects of the social life.

Extracurricular activities, however, included aspects of life beyond work, such as entertainment and recreation. Interestingly, the roots of the pioneer organization are traced back to the organization Romania’s Pioneers (1945) initially known as the Scouts of Romania (established before 1914), which had a touristic purpose but gradually became a political mechanism (p. 4). In 1948 the pioneer organization spread nation-wide and in April of 1966, it was subordinate to the Central Committee of the Communist Party. As the sequence of years reveals, it is under Ceausescu (who became President in 1965) that pioneer organization become repurposed through the Party’s ideologies and used to “reeducate” the “new man.” With the political turn, it is not surprising that in Ceausescu’s period, the purpose of the pioneer organization was refashioned to express the struggle of the working class youth for more
prosperous life, as a the manual for teacher training, *The Content and Methodology of Pioneer Activity* (1978) relates.

One of the greatest accomplishments of the pioneer organization resides in the wide rage of activities offered. While pioneer organizations organized Party-related festivities, compulsory community work/labor, such as harvesting, or recycling etc., they also started special-interest groups, called circles. On the surface, the special-interest circles appealed to the students’ interests in various areas: theater, photography, archaeology, literature, expeditions, and certain many focused on technology and science. Despite their appeal to children, the structure of this pioneer organization, particularly their strategic locations, called pioneer houses, organized locally, regionally, and nationally served as essential mechanism of collective regimentation. Through the proliferation of these circles and pioneer the State succeeded to broker his reach into the everyday life of its little citizens. The type of everyday control was less discernible than the explicit textbook manipulation.

In these pioneer activities, striving to reflect a “happy” socialist pseudo-reality, literacy contributed to shaping the socialist life, but in turn it was shaped by everyday events. In literacy-related pioneer circles—creative writing circles, the reporter’s circles—but also in pioneer expeditions or summer camps, students were encouraged to write and participate in the making of the socialist life through their writing skills. Such literate activities asked students to document everyday realities, special events in a pioneer’s life or partake in writing competitions such as the *Golden Quill*. Various writing roles—the reporter, the columnist, the journalist—hoped to train pioneers to mimic real-life work and professions. Writing became a means of recording every life in Communist Romania and every day life had to be fully impregnated with socialist ideology. In this sense, the pioneers amplified and expanded the “voice” of the party
and its doctrine, even if they did so unaware. Of numerous venues where the pioneers’ voices were provided a platform—literary circles, school’s magazines, creative-writing circles, pioneer expeditions, pioneer camps—my analysis will engage with a few texts from the pioneer magazine *The Daring*. *The Daring*, as a State-approved weekly magazine, was generally distributed in schools, but its goal was to broker free time: to make socialist life fun and entertaining while also engaging the core doctrines of the Party: socialist work, the history of Romanians, and pioneer activities that promoted socialist values: social progress, courage, friendship in the socialist patria, etc.

Of various genres promoted in *The Daring*, I chose to focus on two: the pioneer report and the poem. Both genres are illustrative of the Party’s attempt to broker its ideology and image through literate activities. The report functioned as a typical textual strategy to “measure” the socialist progress in all societal domains: industry, agriculture, education, etc. While the report functions as the genre of everyday life, the poem represents the expression of celebration and festivities, the epideictic genre, brokering the image of state and its ultimate leader, Ceausescu. Both these genres use language to stir up feelings and one’s senses; as they engage with patriotic feelings such as happiness and a spirit of initiative for the country’s advancement, they regiment emotions to serve the party’s purpose. They also engage with social bodies particularly in the case of the poem, which demands a performative context or a festive event where this genre was delivered.

*Discursive Practices: The Pioneer’s Report*

The best way to understand what pioneers would write is to examine *The Daring*. In January and early February of 1980 issues of the magazine, there were several announcements
about the upcoming pioneer election. In the February 28 issue 1980, we find the following pioneer report: “No failing student at any subject. No failing student per class.” Such reports were typical, since in the fight against illiteracy in a well-governed socialist society, no one should fail; students had to find pleasure in reading and writing and in learning in general. “No failing student,” as the Daring (1980) magazine reports, points to a culture of learning where all study joyfully. Learning or learning with joy was a duty in Communist Romania, a duty that pioneers had to honor. In the Feb. 28 issue featuring pioneer elections, the profile of the pioneer is defined in terms of socialist ideals: “their squad is formed of the best pioneers in the class, hardworking, conscientious, friends and honest pioneers who, through their conduct, have earned respect and trust of the entire collective.” The socialist ideals are embodied in the socialist ethos of the pioneer. Even little citizens must always be the best, must work hard, be conscientious, and must be socially agreeable to form a collective of trust. All these are emotioned practices wherein literacy plays a central role. Working hard implies dedication and devotion. Also being the best triggers a sense of pride in one’s work. This work for the patria then engages the entire personhood, including a set of emotions established through work for the patria.

In a different section of the magazine, the profile of the pioneer becomes more visible as we are introduced to the “little notebook with blue covers,” the planner of the pioneer in command, Angela Boncea. “The little notebook” and the details of everyday life illustrate the ways in which writing documented daily activities:

In deep thoughts, Angela is perusing the little notebook with blue covers. Small letters, orderly or nonlinear rows, written in a rush have the gift of comprising an entire world. Places visited together with friends, names of distinguished people, of well known communists recently met, titles of artistic programs presented in front of spectators,
figures that concretely account for hard work and distinguished results at patriotic work—all these revive those years of pioneering that loaded their soul with joy, pride and responsibility. Filled with responsibility, yes, because Angela Boncea has been for awhile the pioneer commander of the school unit. A commander who is generally joyful, optimistic, energetic. Now, she seems seized by nostalgia. Soon she won’t be a commander anymore. She is now in 8th grade. Shortly, [she’ll be] an UTCist. For the new election of pioneer commander, she will have to present a short verbal communication (report). How can she make it short? How can she comprise so many memories from the days when…

The daily tasks of a pioneer in command mimic closely the activities of a model socialist citizen. Writing serves as a memory tool for all these activities, managing to recreate a discursive socialist citizen through the depiction of minute details of daily socialist life. The emphasis on socialization, on meeting people, particularly remarkable communists, reminds one that a Communist identity is ultimately deeply social and collective. Participating in various artistic programs represents the mark of a literate, educated person who appreciates creative forms or art, and contributes to promoting them. Finally, both patriotic work always performed in the service of the country and a sense of accountability embedded in this journaling process contribute to the profile of the little citizen. Sociability, artistic talent, hard working spirit, and accountability are thus the key features of a remarkable pioneer. The quantifiable data in the form of events, people, activities, all add up in an image of the ideal socialist citizen. In this process, writing represents the perfect tool to measure and report results such as these. Through a discursive accumulation of details, of events, people, figures, the profile of the little citizen is gradually computed into measurable bits. Apart from these computable activities, through which pioneers
broker the image of state values, this text is also infused with patriotic feelings, with a particular socialist pathos. If literacy brokers in the case of refugees operate mostly to broker emotional work through personal experience (see Chapter three), here pioneers act as brokers of feelings, of collective feelings emerging from work and duty for the motherland, the patria. These feelings of “joy, pride, and responsibility”—as the report exemplifies—permeate all patriotic activities. These emotions, in fact, have been recurrent themes, routinezied through literate practices; these practices entailed the formation of a discursive repertoire imbued with feelings for the patria. If literacy brokers in transnational contexts recover emotional work lost in the bureaucratic processes of migration, in the case of Romania, the State as the ultimate broker seeks to regiment even structures of feeling through literate practices. While writing for the party through prescribed narratives represents in itself a terrible act of discursive censorship, writing feelings—patriotic feelings of elation and glorification of the party—required more investment. Similar to Kotkin’s notion of learning to “speak Bolshevik,” students had to learn to write “the patria” and often this was accomplished through capturing feelings of happiness, peace, and prosperity. This discursive participation did not necessarily mean that the students understood the ideological implications of their writing, nor was it expected that they did. In fact, as discussed earlier, Kotkin’s observation was that participation was sufficient without the need to believe in meaning of that participation. The language and writing of these pioneer reports certainly suggests that students were expected to participate with feelings and to capture these feelings through language, in their written or oral reports.

The pioneer report further continued with details about how patriotic life should look like, smell, and feel like. If part of the written report depicts a moral, political, and social ethos of the pioneer covering all aspects of the social life, the recorded details depict a sensorial
experience of the socialist life. The pioneer writer of this report jots down a plethora of details, that make it difficult for her to select and condense all this pioneer work into a “short” report. The pioneer then sought to craft an ethos and rhetorically to perform the appropriate emotional tone. The report, like the ideologized textbooks, includes all the necessarily elements comprising the complex life of a pioneer: the nature, the construction site, and connections to broader communities such as the local administration, the mayor, or or the elderly. Angela’s list includes: *the songs of the orchestra* (a pioneer must have some skills that can be used in the service of the party) and the receiving the 1*st* prize at the country-level competition *the Song of Romania* (verifiable results);

*nature*: as Angela passes by a harvested wheat field, various patriotic memories unfold (the harvested field is an important mark of Romania’s productive agriculture);

*community involvement*: Angela and the pioneers contributed to community support by helping the elderly; there is much pride in receiving letters from the elderly thanking the pioneers for their help;

*construction site*: the pioneers also participate in the building of the socialist country (the construction site was a recurrent leitmotif, particularly as Ceausescu give directives for the building of many apartments while erasing many neighborhoods throughout the entire country).

*advocacy for pioneer concerns*: (*the Pioneer’s house*: advocating and discussing with the local authorities on the issue of a larger headquarters for the pioneers and the country’s hawks.)

All the recurrent themes and values of the socialist party are highlighted here: nature, patriotic work in the community, patriotic performance but also the national development of patria
through harvesting and the refiguring of the country’s towns and villages. Yet, this report creates mental, olfactory, and tactile images that although local, join similar experiences nation-wide. It is evident that the infrastructure of schooling—established through practices, feelings, and performances—works both in and outside the actual school boundaries. It is thus this infrastructure that aims to sustain and maintain emotional discursive practices that glorify the patria. Every writing activity, as the pioneer report shows, solidifies the structure on which the socialist ethos rests. It is a structure that prescribed ways of feeling and used literacy in the production of affinities for the patria.

For the most part, the regimentation of feelings through discourse failed to produce the socialist new citizen. Similar to the 3rd grader who crossed out Nicolae Ceausescu’s name, most Romanians removed the political layer that oppressed them and preserved aspects of literacy that allowed their own individuality to thrive. Instead of feelings for the patria, several participants in my study spoke of feelings of derision, of pity, and avoidance of the Party and its agents. Horatiu, for instance, says

> Ideological education was always considered hilarious to me and my colleagues. We avoided it as much as possible, even making jokes about it, being obviously ridiculous and non-educational.

Other participants, Florian explains that he found an escape in mathematics and computer science: “I found a niche, a domain where I felt free.” Similarly, Sever shares that the family was the space where one could speak freely, “I had to become a pioneer. I was a UTCist (member of the The Union of the Communist Youth). But within the family, evidently, everyone spoke openly. They [the parents] trusted me that I’ll keep my mouth shut, that I won’t talk. And I did. With my friends, I didn’t talk openly.” Feelings of restraint, of finding freedom elsewhere
suggest that the discursive spaces created by the Party were oppressive and far from the
proclaimed feelings of happiness and adoration of the patria. They were in sharp contrast with
the crude reality of people’s daily lives, desperate for food and deprived of basic human rights.

Dan, another participant speaks of feelings of pity and a collective distrust of ideological
education:

I felt sorry for the history teacher. I don't remember her name; she was trying to explain
how things are getting better, but ‘it's bad right now, but let's believe in communism,’
and I honestly felt bad for her because nobody in class was paying attention to her,
honestly. Those classes were like, the teachers could tell that most of us didn't really
care about what they were talking about. We kind of despise that.

Such feelings of rejection and scorn demonstrate the party’s failure to produce any worthy
emotional work. Since these participants, especially those that were enrolled in high school
before 1989, went through various stages of socialist citizenship: pioneering and UTC
membership, they became aware of the artificiality of the system and as a result, dissociated their
feelings from the party’s agenda.

The Poem and its Role in Animating Feelings for the Patria

The poem (and recitation) represents another genre that dominated the pioneer magazine,
*the Daring*. If the report captured the narrative of the socialist life and feelings for the patria, the
poem merges text with performance, thus animating feelings for the patria through the rhetoric of
the body. In *Labyrinths of Literacy*, Harvey Graff (1987) describes the typical materials used in
literacy campaigns and movements as “simplified texts” and the use of a pedagogy focused on
repetition and drilling (p. 285). With its simplified form and use of recurrent themes of the
party’s values, the poem as a genre befitted perfectly the party’s goals: praise and eulogy to the socialist system. Not just in Romania, but in other socialist countries, the poem served as one of the preferred genres in totalitarian regimes (Boym, 2010). Rhetorically, the poem functions more effectively in straitjacketing ideas, through its repeated forms, rhymes, and through the performance of the body. I view performance here, as an outer, bodily participation relatively empty of ideological content, a form of participation without necessarily believing or internalizing a particular philosophy. In its condescend form, the poem allows strings of words to strut, to repeat, even when no message is conveyed. Most importantly, I argue that the poem functions as suitable discursive genre for the state as the ultimate broker: the poem can mimic the themes of the party, just like the pioneers as little brokers can mimic the ultimate broker’s values and ideologies. I envision the poem as an expression of singular authorship, a poetic style that Bakhtin describes as “fully adequate to a single language and a single linguistic consciousness” (p. 286). The poem then, is marked by a “monologic steadfastness” since it reflects the intentions and the internal world of one single author.

*The Daring*, like many other texts from this period, abounds in poems eulogizing the party. On the front cover of the *Daring* from January 24, 1980, the poem “Comrade, Friend, Parent” dedicated to Ceausescu is placed on the left side of the cover, next to a proud pioneer dressed exemplary, with the adequate sartorial and joyful bodily expression of a young party recruit. The young girl, set against two flags in the background (the Red Communist flag and the Romanian flag) salutes with her right hand the “glorious” future of Romania and its leader. While the poem discursively illustrates the rhetoric of the socialist party through the title-slogan Comrade, Friend, Parent, the presence of the pioneer as well as the two flags augment the textual

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16 I take this position based on what my participants expressed about these practices. Mr. Doru for instance explained, “there were meetings, and you had to say something there, to kiss their ass. You didn’t have to praise the leaders and so forth. I was a party member and I participated. I can’t deny that.”
In defining an image and visual rhetoric, Cara Finnegan (2008) describes image as “both pictorial representation (i.e., a concrete image such as a photograph) as well as the broader understanding of image as mental picture, appearance, or product of the imagination” (p. 97). On the Daring’s cover then, the image of the pioneer is not just a representation of the little citizen; rather, the image of the pioneer, of a rhetorical body generates mental images of socialist ethos: happiness and anticipation of a thriving future for the young generation under the protective care of the party. In doing this, the brokering happens through text and image of a particular rhetorical
body. Using both visual images and mental images, the Party’s goal was to broker and imprint its presence in the everyday literate lives of its citizens. Through these images, the pioneers become a reflection of the Party.

As shown in the image, the written poem is arranged in left of side of the joyful pioneer. The image clearly dominates the text, such that before reading the poem, the reader can visualize the message:

We are coming with light of grains and flower,
With blue skies,
With soaring, dazzling mountains.
We are coming with history written in golden letters,
With the country’s flag fluttering majestically
All woven together in a beautiful bouquet,
That is called: country.
And we bring deep homage
To Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu,
To this man of great humanity,
Comrade, Friend, Parent.

(author: Maria Cimpean, student, from Surduc, Salaj)

Extending the visual images of the Party’s ethos, the actual text of the poem aims at creating textual images of the Party and its leader; first is the image of the country as a bouquet, complemented the visual harmony through a rhetoric of colors: blue skies, golden letters, country’s flag (most likely pointing the Romanian colors: red, yellow, blue). The image of the Party is further illustrated through a series of key concepts representing socialist values:
camaraderie, friendship, and family; comrade represents the political identity of a socialist member; friend denotes amiable relationships always thriving in various collectives and communities, and parent indicates the family as a necessary social cell—all pointing to the one who seems to hold everything together, Nicolae Ceausescu. In him, the image of the ultimate broker is crystalized, the one who actually controlled the party, various social groups and collectives, as well as families. By listing these key figures in this order: party first, collective second, and family last, it is evident that all social relations became subservient to a political identity. Thus the collective and the family are important inasmuch as they help socialize the individual into the ideology of the Party. All these relations represent forms of affinity since they point to political subjectivity (the party and collective) and the personal intimate life (the family). Whether we talk about grains, flowers, mountains, they all come together in a wonderful “bouquet” paying homage to Ceausescu. The Party becomes the metonymic image of Ceausescu, and so do all other relations depicted in this poem; Ceausescu is the friend and he is also the parent of the nation. As the ultimate broker, Ceausescu abolishes all other social forms and entities. It is an image of Ceausescu, “this man of great humanity,” that must be brokered through all discursive means: through text, image, color, and bodies. Such powerful tropes sought to the harness one’s affinity into one that would only glorify Ceausescu. In this way, this affinity becomes monologic in form and structure.

In this section, I discussed the state’s brokering in the context of children’s free time. This was accomplished through specific genres: the pioneer report and the poem. Both these genres afford a more complex process of brokering. If the readings in textbooks were helpful in establishing central themes that had to be brokered—all accentuating one’s affinity for the patria—brokering one’s free time shifts the focus onto genres suitable for brokering one’s
affection for the patria. The report captures the image of the Party and its ideology through everydayness of life and feelings associated with mundane activities. The poem, on the other hand, adds a performative dimension to brokering, seeking to engage text, image, and rhetorical bodies.

Teachers and Shifting Ideological Position

A discussion about the State’s involvement in brokering ideology would be incomplete unless teachers—those who worked with textbooks and pioneer organizations—and their role is examined as well. Besides textbooks and literacy practices, the ideological turn manifested through the forced enrollment of the teaching staff as party members (*Documents of the Romanian Communist Party*, 1972). In fact, Ceausescu specifically emphasized the role of teachers/professors in the ideological-political formation of the students. All teaching staff functioned under the guidance of the Propaganda Section of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (*Documents of the Romanian Communist Party*, p. 195). Teachers were conceived as fundamental tools in curriculum restructuring—mere channels of the Party’s ideology. However, although the Party intended to cast them as tools, teachers often held conflicting positions about their roles. In their capacity as tools of the Party, their role was reduced to transmitting the exact image of the State as the ultimate broker. In many situations, they did so. But, in many other situations, they shifted positions departing from the Party’s ideology and acting more like brokers, mediating between students and the party. They exerted agency in making decisions about which ideologies they would further perpetuated and which ideologies they sifted through their own consciousness, acting outside of the Party’s purview. Often, particularly in situations when they knew the students individually and cared for their well
being, teachers refrained from demanding that students perform affinities for the nation. Rather, they focused on the learning activity without overemphasizing the socialist layer.

Through the presence of teacher and instructors, the ultimate broker, the communist state sought to broker its ideological presence on the ground. Equally important, the presence of teachers/ instructors affords an exploration of fissures in these “iron-cast” models and of ways in which individuals reposition themselves in relation to oppressive systems. While hierarchical structures operating through local, regional, and national organizations and commissions consolidate the Party’s control and mobilize masses of all ages, the individual often intervenes to disrupt this control. In this sense, totalitarian regimes seem both indestructible and somewhat flexible, but always contingent on the individual experience, one’s history, and predispositions. In situations of flexible positioning, rather than simply implement ideological requirements, the teachers often engaged in “a process of negotiation among contested positions, ideologies and languages” (Juzwik, 2004, p. 541). Instead of reverberating the Party’s monologic rhetoric, teacher as brokers of ideologies opened spaces of dialog. Monologic discourse, according to Bakhtin has been defined as rhetoric that,

mutes dialogue and heteroglossia by denying the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities, another I with equal rights (thou)…Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other’s response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge it. (Halasek, 1992, p.2)

Rather than envision rhetoric as monologic or dialogic, as either-or relationship, I suggest that literacy brokers exemplified by teachers in this case acted on a large spectrum: from inflexible monologic positions where they themselves mirrored the exact rigid discourse of the official rhetoric, mixed mono-dialogic discourses to truly dialogic discursive positions.
Drawing on an interview with Steven Bonica, whom I introduced earlier, I explore how teachers navigated these positions from rigid brokers of ideology to agents of dialogic mediation, acting and intervening despite the Party’s ideological control.

When referring to the education experience in Romania, Stephen recalls those teachers who constantly ridiculed, physically mistreated him, or publicly pestered him with questions about his beliefs regardless of the class subject matter,

the others were persecuting me, they were told to give us a hard time. Why? Because we were neoprotestants. We were Christian evangelical. We were supposed to be persecuted. We were supposed to …by the time we finished high school we were supposed to be turned into atheists.

Steven further recounts a frustrating dialog with the biology teacher,

Once the biology teacher asked me about the theory of evolution and when we got into the conversation she immediately asked me,

“Do you believe in God?”

and I said, "Ma'am we are not here to discuss my…”

"No! Do you believe in God?"

and I said, "Ma'am, I'm not going to respond…”

She smacked me until blood came out of my nose. Then, I was angry, and I said you know what, "Yes, I believe in God.”

In this example, the biology teacher takes the position of an official inquisitor, identifying with the State’s ideology, seeking to investigate and attack a student with questions so as to position the student’s religious views as “alien,” to the official rhetoric. In a monologic rhetoric, the rhetoric of difference is reduced to one voice; alternative voices are cast as antagonistic,
threatening the harmony of nation-state and its ideological position. Adopting the fixed ideologic position of the state, this teacher censor any other form of affinity, especially one particular to a religious identity.

Another example comes from a conversation with the math teacher. If the biology teacher used the theory of evolution to position Steven’s identity and his Christian beliefs against the official atheistic ethos of the Party, the math teacher did not resort to such techniques. She openly and regularly challenged Steven and his time outside school. Free time, as discussed earlier, was to be brokered as well and brought under the purview of the party through patriotic work, supplementary readings, and pioneer activities. For this reason, the math teacher asks questions about free time and habits outside of school. Every Monday morning, she called on Steven, always by his last name: “Bonica, come up front to the blackboard.” To every Romanian student, this summoning meant a public oral examination on an arbitrary topic. For Steven, the examination started with a question about church attendance,

"Ok, so did you go to church yesterday?"

“Yeah”

“What was [happening] in church? What was new in church?”

It was all for mocking reasons. So first time I fell in the trap and answered, and second time I answered thinking: ‘okay, first time was an accident, now she was going act differently.’ No, I realized that she only wants to mock us so I refused to answer.

The teacher’s inquisitive approach about one’s daily activities reiterates the fact that school is about enforcing “taken-for-granted practices and rituals” and about creating “emotioned frameworks,” as Trainor (2008) explains (p. 85). Since Steven’s going to church fell outside of the acceptable pattern of behavior and feeling, the teacher decided to expose and ridicule the
student for such deviation. As expected, religious texts and ideology violated the Marxist-Leninist ideology but also the official nation discourse, defining the Romanian ethos through an Orthodox faith, not a Protestant religious identification. In an earlier discussion about the rhetoric of “cataloging” students into socio-economic and religious molds, I explained that these categories assigned children ideological roles as little citizens in the production of socialist Romania. As an evangelical Christian, Steven was cast against the official ideology and mocked for his beliefs. Going to church on Sunday prevented one from participating in patriotic work or other Party manifestations and as a result, it was chastened.

Religious ideology and the rhetoric of religious affiliation have been oppositional to the Communist ideology. In the case of Communist Romania, religious identity becomes even more complicated as the Eastern Orthodox faith has been gradually officialized as the only religion acceptable ideologically, although other denominations were officially allowed to function by law. The reason why the Orthodox Church’s intervention was both acceptable and desirable is justified by the fact that its purview operated within national boundaries, serving the interests of “the local Caesar” (Shafir, 1978, pp. 23-24). To be called a Christian, other than Christian Orthodox, literally meant a rejection of Romanian identity. It meant to be non-Romanian and to show affiliation with a religious thought originated in the West. This contravened not only with the Communist ideology but with the Romanian state such that non-Orthodox Christians were often classified as political enemies. In *Peasants under Siege*, Kligman and Verdery (2011) explain that that new language of the Party created categories of difference that were relatively flexible since “they could be applied instrumentally to anyone at any time, thereby making everyone vulnerable” (p. 220). While certain aspects of these categories were definitely

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17 For a more detailed discussion about the role of Orthodoxy in the formation of national identity, see Verdery 1991), Boia (2001a) but also Hitchins (2003)’s *The Identity of Romania*. 
manipulated and used arbitrarily to incriminate and deem everyone vulnerable, I suggest that these categories were malleable only when brokers intervened to strengthen or weaken them. Therefore, aspects of difference as in the case of Steven would be enhanced or diminished depending on the broker, that is teacher’s position and his or her beliefs.

Eventually, Steven was expelled from school when his parents received the official notice that formal papers for leaving the country were being processed. Steven’s case then exposes an oppressive system where teachers function as brokers of ideology, turning the learning experience into a drilling in Communist party’s ideological system. Often times, when provoked, Steven refused to answer and repositions himself rhetorically, to expose the irrationality of being examined based on his religion affiliation. More important is another rhetorical move that Steven made years later, when he established his own publishing house and one of the first Romanian newspapers in the Chicagoland. Without any religious affiliation, the Romanian Tribune initiated by Steven carries on its front page an important logo, written in Latin Nihil Sine Deo (engl. Nothing without God). This is an essential rhetorical move that while it affirms a religious identity, it speaks back to oppressive past practices that Steven and many like him had to endure.

By invoking God, through a textual logo in his newspaper, Steven attaches to his newspaper a particular affiliation informed by Judeo-Christian beliefs. It is the very ideology and identification that was penalized under the Communist regime. Hence, Steven’s Romanian newspaper becomes a space where an alternative voice emerges, where Steven can freely express his religious affiliation and beliefs.

At the other end of the spectrum were teachers who brokered students’ literacy by separating themselves from the official ideology. In their strategy positioning, they diminished the ideological force of their pedagogy opening spaces of dialogic communication for their
students. As such, Steve mentioned a second category of teachers who were particularly influential in nurturing, rather than censoring Steven’s literacy and love for books. With much excitement, Steven gave credit to his literary predisposition to his Romanian language teacher for encouraging him to pursue his passion for reading and books. He explained,

She saw that I was reading with an emphasis, acting out my reading. She gave me more poems to learn and recite. Took me to competitions.

The poems mentioned here engaged the same recurrent themes discussed earlier: praising the Party or possibly the great history of the Romanian people, the nature, etc. Again, I reference Kotkin’s astute observation, that in mobilizing people and literacy, the party was not interested in quality or truly change of one’s consciousness, as it was interested in mere participation and opportunities to report and measure quantitatively socialist work. Important to note is that the teacher influenced Steven not only in reading but in nurturing his passion for books. In this brokering process, the teacher established a relationship with the student without emphasizing his deviation from the party framework; rather, she fueled his desire to love books. Eventually, Steven contributed to the school library and due to his great investment in this process, he was appointed librarian. One significant aspect of this library comes from the mobilizing efforts of various students and of Steven’s in particular. The reason why Steven was able to contribute with many books relates to his passion for books but also to his entrepreneurial skills. In a context where books were very scarce and literature censorship was at its peak, Steven craftily used informal networks available to him. Since Steven’s mother was an extremely talented seamstress, in his search for books, Stefan appealed to his mother’s clientele, in particular to bookstore managers and clerks. These women having direct access to various books and book warehouses were key gatekeepers in these literacy transactions. As explained earlier, such informal
economies of literacy were fairly typical in the Communist regime in Romania and extensively
developed in other sectors – grocery stores, apparel, and other. Steven’s connections became the
infrastructure for attaining his literacy goals.

A similar informal path was used when Steven was approaching his departure date from
Romania and decided to ship all his books to the U.S., where he eventually set up the first
Romanian library. Before his departure, Stefan mobilized people and these people, in their turn,
mobilized more people. For instance, his uncle agreed to donate his books to Steven and then his
aunt, a postmaster arranged most shipments to the U.S. without directly breaking the law. This
strategic planning in which the aunt enlisted her whole family as shipping expeditors was
necessary to carry out the book shipments. Working in the post office, the aunt knew the rules
and how to get by the monthly limitation of one 11 lb. package per person,

she figured out the rules, and she listed all her members of the family, on one shipping at
that location, but then she talked to another postmaster, friend of hers and registered
another location. So they were working off two three locations. And they were shipping
all the books.

By recruiting people, especially family members, Steven created emotional investments and
asked others to join in. Once the books made it to the U.S., they continued to travel with Steven,
to various places: Detroit, California, Chicago. When friends and visitors visited Steven and saw
the size of his library, they requested books from him. Eventually, he was offered his own office
space in the church he was attending. Over the course of the years, the library expanded and in
2002, Steven set up the first Romanian library in the Chicagoland.
Pictures of the former Romanian library, courtesy of Steven Bonica

In 2002, the library expanded and Steven opened the first Romanian library housed at the Romanian Heritage Center, in Niles, IL. This Romanian library in Chicago started with Steven’s personal library in Romania and Steven’s personal library was motivated by his passion for books nurtured by a teacher of the Romanian language and literature. As a broker of literacy, rather than a mere tool in the service of the party, the teacher refused to regiment her students into the Party’s ideologies. Instead, she riskily adopted flexible positing relative to the Party, her students, and the curriculum. The cost of brokering literacy in this environment was high but also highly uncertain. It all depended on circumstance and the caprice of other higher authorities. Basically, each teacher had to assume the responsibility for his or her actions and the ensuing consequences, which could range from mild reprimand, no reprimand, to severe penalties such as losing one’s job. A teacher could intervene for his or her students and report selectively aspects that conflicted with the Party’s ideology or she or he could report everything that was required according to specified guidelines. Certainly the type of consequences depended on the type of information that had been concealed or altered.
Besides the teachers, there is a series of literacy brokers established through informal network who supported and brokered Steven’s books and Romanian literacy. Among these, Steven’s uncle, his aunt, and all the relatives that his aunt managed to recruit constitute socio-economic networks that nurture alternative literacies. Their powerful structure not only evades official regulations, but have capabilities to move transnationally as well. Steven’s books are able to carve a way through regimes of censorships, through laws and limitations and even if slowed down, they make it through. In doing so, literacy brokers constitute and are constituted through deep social connections and their powerful impact emerges from their potential to multiply, expand and engage additional networks. Referring back to the language of informal economies, the possibilities of “doing a hatar” (doing a favor) are quite immense. One’s social connection engages another’s and another’s and in this manner, they create the necessary socio-economic support for literacy to move and travel in its material form.

While the teacher brokers’ position is indeed strategic, it has also proved to be ambivalent particular in the presence of the ultimate broker and authoritarian structures. In Steven’s case, one teacher showed support and others personified the ultimate broker’s stance; in Dan’s experience, another participant in the study, the same teacher shifted positions:

She was very weird teacher and she sometimes praised me, “Oh Dan, you're the greatest,” and sometimes, she would make me the worst person. She's the one who gave me a 1 [the lowest score]. In school I was really good, but she made it a 10\textsuperscript{18} later [the

\textsuperscript{18} The Romanian grading system is on a scale from 1-10, with 10 representing the highest score. This is similar to the 100-scale system. In the 1-10 grading scale, 10 is an A, 9 is an A-, etc. Grades 1 or 2 were never assigned as a grade, because a grade of 4 already meant failing. A grade of 3 was occasionally given to a student to suggest a really low performance. Therefore, 1 and 2 were in reality a teacher’s tool used as a threat or as a revenge for something the student did to affect the teacher; it was the most evident sign of capricious grading.
highest score); she would make fun of me in class. In one of her threats, she said “I'm not gonna make you UTCist” and I'm thinking, who cares?

The ambivalence of the teacher is evidenced not only in how she switched praises for threats, but also in her grading: from a grade of 1—representing more than an F, a failing grade—to a grade of 10 (10 representing an A+). A better way of understanding this grading system and the value of giving a student a grade of 1, image if a teacher would assign the grade of J because it is lower than F although anything in between F and J is a failing grade. Similar to the U.S. grading system, in the Romanian educational system with grades from 1-10 with 10 being the highest score, a grade of 4 was already a failing grade. Because of this, sometimes students may have received a score a 3 or 4, both failing grades but rarely to never was there a grade of 2 or 1 assigned. These grades, more specifically the lowest possible grade of 1, were employed only as tools, to reprimand students not for their learning failures but for their behavior particular relative to the ideology that teachers had to forcefully implement; these tools then served as a leverage of power for extreme situations. Dan’s situation was extreme in that the teacher graded him capriciously and then, also unpredictably changed the grade into a 10 by adding a 0 after 1. Evidently, this is not a case of miscalculating a grade or misevaluating a student on purpose, although several participants remembered such practices as well. This teacher fluctuated because as Dan explained, in reality she valued him as student for who he was. But, as a broker of ideology and of state’s authority, she was aware that in the official socialist world, Dan was cast as “the enemy of the state.” Like Steven, Dan’s religious identification with the Protestant faith disqualified him from being a dignified socialist citizen. This is why the teacher asserted her authority over him, when she threatened that she would not “make” him an UTCist (a member of youth organization, the Union of Communist Youth, in Romanian, Uniunea Tineretului
Comunist). In this case, the teacher becomes broker of ideological identity, withholding or facilitating the UTCist identification card:

Source: Vlad Pasca’s blog, levantul.wordpress.com

http://levantul.wordpress.com/2011/04/25/carnetul-de-membru-u-t-c/

In Radu’s situation which is similar to Dan’s, the class teacher issued him a UTCist card without even asking him to participate in the official ceremony. In this case, the teachers brokered his passage into an ideological identity, he did not believe in. Thus, the teacher intervened on behalf of the student, arranged that he received a card, and informed him that he could request it if he ever needed it. She also “excused” him even from participating in the official ceremony.

The brokering of ideology is quite complex. Each situation was contingent on several variables. But, it is evident that teachers held a central role in multiplying the image of the ultimate broker or shifting their positions on behalf of the students. Dan related another situation
when the school principal “closed his eyes” to a situation when Dan and another friend could have been punished. Both Dan and another student from a different class were known as evangelical Christians. Any type of Christian literature not only that promoting the evangelical doctrine was highly censored. Yet, Dan decided to lend a Christian book, the *Burning Bush* to an evangelical student in a different class. This friend read the book in public while he was performing a school duty. Since part of his duties were ringing the school bell, checking students’ IDs, and additional administrative duties, he had plenty of time in between class periods to read. To have a book with Christian content in school was prohibited, but to read it in public while performing a school duty would demand a form of punishment. Yet, the school principal who discovered Dan’s friend reading the book decided to “close an eye” as Dan explained. Dan received only a warning for lending his book to his schoolmate and learned that breaking rules in school simply “depended on the person.” This account illustrates the principle of particularism that I explore at length in Chapter five. In a particularism framework, social relationships are established based on particulars between those involved—the affinity or lack thereof that forms between various people. This social context, of course, has implications for literacy. Since all literate practices intended to channel one’s affinity towards the patria, alternative forms—particularly faith-based readings—competed with the party’s mission; in case of faith-based texts, the affinity promoted actually contravened drastically with that of the socialist state. However, whether these texts were suspended on not, depended on the individual or the supervising teacher. Thus the monitoring of literacy and its affinity power is rather contingent on local circumstances and the teacher-broker’s decision.

In other situations, severe consequences followed when Christian books and literature surfaced in official contexts or competed with the official discourse. Reverend Popovici, pastor
at the First Baptist Church in Des Plaines, IL shared the story of his expulsion from college. In 1966, he was living with his family in Bucharest. He was a senior at the university in polytechnic studies when he decided to write a harsh review of a book that had just been translated from Russian and was directly mocking Christianity. The book titled *the Funny Bible* sought to disparage those who, in the age of progress, of sputniks and rockets, as Mr. Popovici relates, still believed in God. After writing the book review, Mr. Popovici presented it in church publicly. He remembers that his review was equally scathing measuring up to the mockery of the original book. At the end of the church service, the secret police agent who had been present along summoned the leadership of the church and asked for the written review. But, faster than the agent was Mr. Popovici’s mother who had already snatched it—and probably destroyed—right after his presentation, erasing any trace of its presence. After this audacious action, by Tuesday Mr. Popovici was expelled from school. Although Popovici’s presentation took place in a church setting, the review attacked directly and publicly the official discourse and its ideology. As a result, it demanded immediate action, with no possibility for any mediation or intervention.

While in previous section, I focused on the brokering of ideology in schools and in extracurricular activities, specifically through pioneer organizations, in this segment I examined the ways in which teachers function as brokers of ideology; on the basis of their own personal convictions, teachers decided if and when to intervene on behalf of the student. Teachers operated both in relation to ideologies curriculum and pioneer organizations. In the examples offered in this section, their role concerned a mediation of the conflicting ideologies, particularly the Protestant Christian faith in opposition to the Party’s ideology. The Christian ideology nurtured Christian literature and a religious identity that needed more mediation than other less antagonistic identity markers. Certainly there were other ideologies that challenged the official
discourse. Among these, any former political involvement with other non-Communist parties would place one in a rigid category of “enemies of the state.” Mr. Doru, an engineer and a schoolteacher, explained that he had to become a Party member even though he did not want to. Given his family’s political history involved with the National Peasants’ Party, he had no chance of assuming any respectable position of leadership.

Teachers also had to broker discursive and non-discursive identities, affiliated with various ideological positions. Facilitating or withholding the UTC-ist ID card depended on the teacher’s disposition. Similarly, participating to school events as well as participation in class activities were all contingent on the teacher’s position vis-à-vis the official ideological discourse. Finally, important to note is the presence of other brokers, the informal brokers of literacy that develop alongside as in the case of Steven’s books and library. If the ultimate broker sought to multiply its control and power through teachers, informants, and other recruiters, so did the brokers of literacy in informal networks. Although the relationship between formal and informal economies is rather complex, I do not subscribe to the view that they necessary mirror each other. They interact and influence each other, but teachers as brokers may function, for instance, in the formal economies of the state and at the same time, they may also emerge in informal systems since one does not exclude the other.

Concluding thoughts

As I conclude this chapter, I return to Lenin’s statement that: “the illiterate person stands outside politics. First it is necessary to teach the alphabet. Without it, there are only rumors, fairy tales, prejudice, but no politics” (Arnowe & Graff, 1987, p. 7). Without literacy, the creation of political subjects is quite impossible and as Lenin suggests, there is no politics. Given this claim,
then, a literacy campaign in socialist countries is ultimately a political campaign. In the case of school literacy, as well as free time, the state sought to multiply its image and presence through regulating affinity for the patria both visible in textbooks and in out of school activities such as pioneer organizations. The state functioned as the ultimate broker bridging ideological gaps in the lives of children but also bridging their institutional and non-institutional identities. Since writing, like mass reading—the main vehicle in national campaigns in the past—serves as a powerful ideological tool through the manipulation of feelings, of texts, and images, the connection between writing and political subjects needs more attention. If in the U.S., the low literacy or illiteracy is often linked to socio-economic mobility, downward or upward depending on the case, in Romania—and I would argue in many other Eastern European countries—the anxieties about literacy or low literacy are often tied up to political power. This is also explained by the fact that public intellectuals—writers, humanists, professors—have often been political involved either to safeguard their professional positions interests or simply to promote their political beliefs.

Additional implications in approaching the state as the ultimate broker relate the emergence of secondary economies. Literacy brokers, as in the case of Steven’s aunt, uncle, and the network of brokers that support the passage of his books from Romania to the U.S. engaged in second economies which are less visible but equally powerful in how they manage authoritarian rule and state regimentation. Within these economies, there is a wide spectrum of rhetorical and ideological positions held by literacy brokers—the teachers and others that operate in unofficial economies. While some reflected more closely the presence and values of the ultimate broker, others dissociate themselves from the state’s grip.
CHAPTER THREE

LITERACY BROKERS AND THE EMOTIONAL WORK OF MEDIATION IN THE LIVES OF ROMANIAN POLITICAL REFUGEES

We pleaded our case. I read a few stories. I read a few letters that I received from people in the refugee camps. And I said, ‘Look, these are stories from our people. They escaped from Communist Romania. If we do not do the papers for them to come to the United States, they’ll be sent back to Romania, and they’ll be imprisoned.’

(Eugen, an American of Romanian heritage)

Eugen, a former political refugee from Romania, now a U.S. citizen is aware of the power of writing, of writing a personal story. Eugen learned to write in a rather unexpected way—through drafting of immigration documents for other people, including their stories of oppression. With these stories, he also appealed to non-for-profit organizations advocating for the cause of many other asylum seekers stranded in refugee camps in Europe. Different than a typical writing classroom, Eugen would write in the high-stake context of U.S. immigration, where his literate actions generated life-long consequences for many immigrants. Eugen is what we might call a “literacy broker,” a go-to person in the community who helped others with immigration papers, mediating between refugees, local churches and non-governmental organizations, and Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Often taken for granted, those who facilitate, manage, and connect different agents in the communicative process remain largely invisible despite their crucial role, particularly in high-stakes situations such as immigration files and documents, court proceedings, etc. In this chapter, I explore and foreground the literacy broker’s role in assisting Romanian refugees in the 1970-1980s, the last

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\(19\) A shorter version of this chapter has been published as a journal article in the refereed open access online journal *Literacy in Composition Studies*. The article titled “Literacy brokers and the emotional work of mediation” was included in the March issue, 2014.
two decades of Communist\textsuperscript{20} rule in Romania. The emotional work of these brokers resides the use of personal experiences and empathetic language in contexts where emotions are highly censored and regulated, such as immigration documents and legal institutions.

In the context of transnationalism, which foregrounds ties and attachments to more than one state, I will explore the dynamic position and disposition of literacy brokers in relation to multiple nation-states and stakeholders, which results in what I call a “bi-institutional perspective”\textsuperscript{21}. A bi-institutional perspective presupposes not just thinking and acting from “within” institutions; rather, it also means to think and act “across” institutions. In his book, \textit{On Institutional Thinking}, Hugh Heclo defines institutional thinking as “thinking from inside its thinking, living it from the inside out” (p. 4). To say it more directly, thinking institutionally means “‘thinking within’ institutions.” Through this bi-institutional perspective, literacy brokers accumulate rich language and cultural repertoires in the process of mediating texts locally and transnationally. Assuming this position of mediation, these literacy brokers perform significant emotional work that humanizes the process of immigration. Rather than treat people like “cases,” literacy brokers use an emotional discursive repertoire—language of affinity, personal stories, and empathetic work—to recapture and partially reconstitute familiar contexts, literate practices and audiences that may be lost when people and texts travel from place to place. “The cases” of refugees is similar to the “file self” of economic immigrants discussed in Chapter four; in both situations, bureaucratic contexts seek to reduce people’s lives experiences to manageable categories and the management of personal or emotional discourses.

\textsuperscript{20} Generally, U.S. historians and social scientists call this period late socialism. I follow example of scholars in Writing Studies (e.g. Prendergast, 2008) in using as much as possible the language of the participants in the study, who with no exception, refer to this period as the Communist regime.

\textsuperscript{21} I am in debt to Dr. Kate Vieira for this term.
In the case of refugees, the personal story is central since it provides the main account based on which the motive for requesting asylum is established. While literacy brokers operated as mediators on the personal level, they also interact with larger institutions and discourses of nation-states. Most importantly, literacy brokers can further act as agents of change and some do so from their position as agents of the state when they decide to use brokered texts and stories, as the epigraph at the beginning of the essay shows, to advance the cause of other disenfranchised groups. Through a series of literacy events, literacy brokers become engines of public advocacy and change. Although the use of personal stories for advocacy of human rights may seem to reinforce the very instrumental role that I have critiqued in other studies of brokers, I argue that this use of personal stories is different. First of all there is no pay-off for the broker or for the person whose story is being “used.” The actual purpose—intended to produce a change—concerns a similar issue: the need to humanize or personalize an institutional context where decisions are made about transactions and trades with little regard to people’s lives. Rather than instrumental, the role of the broker with its emotional work is persuasive and in being persuasive, this engagement with the personal challenges dichotomies between personal/ public and emotional/ rational.

In this chapter, I draw on immigration narratives of nine Romanian refugees whose literacy histories I collected in my ethnographic work in the Romanian immigrant community in Chicago. In addition to Eugen’s experience whose work I briefly introduced through the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, I also foreground the brokering experience of three other participants—Manuela, Claudiu, and George. In the section focused on the brokers’ profiles and background, I offer more details about each one of them. I mentioned that the first key informant was Eugen. His work as a paralegal, community translator, and interpreter was
the first account wherein the notion of brokering emerged clearly and convincingly. Interviews with the other participants were conducted later in the data collection process, as informed by emergent themes in the initial sampling\textsuperscript{22}. In addition to the interview data, I examined supplemental copies of travel documents, refugee certificates, and documents pertaining to the refugee’s immigrant experience shared during our interviews. Finally, I used historical documents, particularly newspaper clippings about Romanian emigrants and Romania-U.S. relationships in the 1980s; all of these primary documents\textsuperscript{23} originated from the daily press of 1970s-1980s and Radio Free Europe news broadcasts, the main source of uncensored information for many Romanians before 1989.

Situated at the juncture of the individual and rhetorics of nation-states, the broker leverages his or her knowledge to mediate, facilitate, and even advocate a particular course of action. Acknowledging that mediation in the case of political refugees and human right rhetoric takes place in larger international contexts, I first provide the necessary context for understanding foreign relations of between Romania and the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s. I will concentrate specifically on the economic agreements between the U.S. and Romania since such treaties had a direct impact on Romanian emigration/immigration. Next, I explore the profile of four literacy brokers whose position shifted from work in the community, doing translations, to offering assistance with legal papers. I end this chapter with a rhetorical analysis of a textual brokering event.

Importing American Goods, Exporting Romanian “Political Traitors”

The Romanian emigration/immigration in the 1970s and 1980s must be understood in

\textsuperscript{22} I distinguish here between initial sampling and theoretical sampling in accordance with grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Theoretical sampling is informed by ongoing data analysis and emergent themes.

\textsuperscript{23} All the primary documents used in this chapter are part of special collection, the Gabanyi collection found at the National Archives in Bucharest, Romania. Anneli Ute Gabanyi, a Romanian of German heritage, was a radio news editor for Radio Free Europe.
terms of economic benefits and human rights; although the level of detail included in this section may seem more than sufficient to set the context of political refugees’ life experiences, I envision this background as more than setting the scene. Understanding all the intricate relations between nation-states with the negotiations and exchanges of various sorts is integral in understanding the broker. Since I envision the broker operating not only locally but transnationally, s/he must possess knowledge of the rhetorics of nation-states which may intervene in regulating the personal.

June 3, 1986, the news announcement “Romania to let 1,000 emigrate” (Gwertzman, 1986) made its way to Washington in the context of President Reagan’s deliberation concerning the extension of Romania’s trade benefits on account of the Most Favored Nation (MFN) status. The benefits emerging from this special status granted preferential trade rates, with Romania exporting goods of almost one billion dollar worth and importing about $300 million of American goods (Gwertzman, 1986). Nicolae Ceausescu was particularly enamored with this title and each year, he sought earnestly to secure it. Based on the news of the day, the MFN status turned into a simple transaction that forced Romania to release its non-desirable people rather than change its human rights policies. In different news reports, Richard Schifter, Assistant Secretary of State for human rights and humanitarian affairs spoke of the MFN’s status for Romania in terms of accumulated human benefits; although an economic transaction, it directly affected Romanian emigration since over the course of 12 years more than 170,000 Romanians were permitted to emigrate. Schifter also offered specific numbers for year 1986 when 12,000 ethnic Germans went to West Germany, about 2,000 Romanians went to United States, and 1,000 to Israel (“U.S. official says trade favor improved Romanian emigration,” 1987). In all these news announcements in the 70s and 80s, Romania’s MFN status is framed in
economic terms: “losing benefits,” being in “jeopardy to lose the MFN status,” or in danger of missing “agreements” and “contracts;” all these economic transactions effected a significant impact on Romanian emigration. In exchange for the MFN, this highly prized status, Romania agreed to release its non-desirable citizens, those of minority religions and of ethnic heritage who failed to absorb into the national Romanian identity project. While the status certainly sought to improve the human rights problem in Romania, it only succeeded to force Romania to eject those problem citizens outside of its territory.

Knowledge about such transactions, like the MFN status and economic negotiations between Romania and the U.S. affected ten thousands of lives. The MFN title determined the status of many petitions for immigration. Literacy brokers had to familiarize themselves with these transactions, specifically these languages of nation-states as Duffy (2007) calls them, because they facilitated or prevented processes of immigration, the applications for immigration, the entire narrative of the immigrant that was documented and included in the petition for naturalization, and the passage from one country to another (e.g. from refugee camps to the country of naturalization). Literacy brokers had to be attuned to these languages of nation-states, to information resources such as Radio Free Europe since there was a direct correlation between the MFN negotiation, and the passage or blockage of passport petitions in Romania, a highly textual path. But the deliberation process concerning the MFN trade status was a highly textual process as well. In the review session in the House of Representatives, on July 30, 1987, Congressman Christopher Smith presented numerous textual evidence of various human rights practices.

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24 Emil Hurezeanu (1987) a journalist and former reporter at Radio Free Europe included on one of his news report a comprehensive list of the documents one had to ensure before departing Romania. It includes approximately 20 different petitions, applications, and documents, each of these requiring an intricate process of securing them as well as additional documents.
reports, newspaper articles, and even personal testimonies as for example: July 1987 Report on Romania from *Amnesty International*, USA; “The Romania Problem,” a July 16, 1987 *Wall Street* editorial; Dr. Juliana Pilon’s testimonies from the Heritage Foundation, D.C.; Mihai Botez, a Romanian mathematician and human rights advocate, and many other (United States Congress, 1987).

In the 1980s, the problem-citizens were well monitored not only within the country, through the close surveillance within country but also through attention in international press (for instance, Radio Free Europe news reports). Radio news in particular reached Romania and thus allowed many Romanians to seek ways to petition to leave the country. Although within the country they were cast as enemies of the state, they reached out to international forums strengthening transnational ties. Given this local and transnational context, there was little suspicion concerning political asylum cases from Eastern Europe. Established as a distinct category for immigration to the U.S., an examination of the definition of “refugee” can illuminate what this category implicates and implicitly, what it omits. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) uses the classification of “refugee” based on an earlier definition provided by 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. According to section 101(a)(42) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952, a refugee is:

any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion […]
Based on this definition, a refugee is framed within the bounds of human rights rhetoric, with special attention to oppression because of one’s ethnic or national standing, political, religious affiliation, or racial identification. From the language used by a nation-state or human rights organizations to define those eligible for this category, it can be inferred what qualifications are omitted. In Chapter four, I discuss more extensively the fact that, although from an institutional perspective classifications and categories such as those used in immigration are used distinctly, in real life contexts the boundaries between, for instance, a political refugee and an economic immigrant often become rather fuzzy. For the purpose of this chapter, the official definition of a refugee represents one piece of information that the literacy broker in this context had to master since this knowledge helped connect the immigrant’s story to the larger discourses of nation-states.

In pre-1989 Romania, the largest category of those under oppression were the German and Jewish minorities, who on the basis of their identification with different ethnic heritage were inevitably potential threats to the national identity project instituted by Ceausescu’s regime. Most of these minorities, as shown in the statistics presented by Radio Free Europe, repatriated to West Germany and Israel. The second major category of Romanian refugees, those classified as such on the grounds of their religious identification were directed to seek asylum in the U.S. Most of these refugees were Christian Evangelicals, including the Pentecostal and Baptist denominations; there were other non-Evangelicals, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, whose religious activity, unlike the Evangelicals’, was decreed unlawful under Ceausescu’s regime. Both these alternative identities, framed through the lens of ethnicity and religion contravened the national Romanian model of citizenship advanced by the Communist regime in Romania, whose goal was to build the national ethos with an emphasis on common language, heritage, and a common
religion (Boia, 2001a). Under the Communist regime, this ideal national project was conveniently reinforced by the Orthodox Church, which through its hierarchical structure and national reach, surrendered to “the local Caesar” (Shafir, 1978, pp. 23-24).

In discussing the Romanian socialist state, Verdery (1996) argues that the nation or the nation-state has been framed neither in terms of citizenship nor ethnicity expressed through language, history, etc. Rather the relation between the state and its subjects, Verdery (1996) suggests, takes a different shape, that of “socialist nation” marked by “quasi-familial” (p. 63). In this familial metaphor, the Communist party and its leader Nicolae Ceausescu assume the paternal father figure infantilizing its citizens and subjecting them to a form of dependency (1996, p. 63). In Chapter two, I explained that the family, the primordial space of one’s affinity, functioned metonymically for the socialist state. Similarly, in the context of emigration, Ceausescu and Romania as a family function as means to strengthen the ties with the citizen-members of this larger family. Precisely because the state sought to resort to claims of affinity, it caused more hurdles for those who wanted or requested to leave the country. Their leaving was an act of rebellion, an act of trying to break the affinity with the fatherland. Although this imagery of the Romania as a family is a powerful trope of dominance through affinity, the Romanians could not conceive themselves as part of Ceausescu’s “socialist family.” They did, however, see their national identity expressed through attachment to a “mythical” place, the place of birth, through family affiliation, most frequently through language, culture, and strangely enough, through a certain “mentality.” Mentality defined as a way of thinking or acting in the world has been invoked by many participants with an emphasis on the Romanian mentality. Often times, this Romanian mentality was framed in relation to the past, specifically as a way of thinking that developed during the Communist regime. In essence, this mentality
connotes a relationship to the state and authority that seeks to evade the rules of the law and find alternative ways to attain personal goals.

Irrespective of the approach to Romanian identity, through the image of the quasi-family, through civic and political responsibilities or through people’s perspectives, the categories of ethnicity and religion scored high in importance in the immigration project. Their significance emerges more prominently in the way the Romanian state hierarchized the exclusion of those who ethnically or religiously did not fit in the national project: ethnicity was more profitable, while religion ranked lower, but certainly not lower than real political deserters. Although based on U.S. classification and human rights rhetoric, ethnic minorities and religious minorities were collapsed in the same category of “refugees,” their expatriation was differently monitored. Emil Hurezeanu (1987), an expatriate journalist and historian explains that German minorities were a privileged category of expatriates. On the basis of collateral agreements, West Germany negotiated with Romania the release of a certain number of German minorities every year. In this transaction, for each released person, the Romanian state would receive between 4,000 DM ($2,371) in 1978 to 9,000 DM in 1988 (Dumitrescu, 2011).

Religious refugees were a separate category for the Romanian officials. In exchange for the travel papers, the Romanian state misappropriated everything these people owned and revoked all legal rights: the right to medical health care, to employment, education, and most outrageously, it stripped them of Romanian citizenship. While this practice seems strongly punitive, one must remember that if the Romanian state functioned as a family, disobedient “children” had to be ostracized and forced to sever their affinities with the fatherland. Many participants remembered with great difficulty leaving the country without the possibility of going back. One of my participants explained the humiliation and pain experienced in the process of
leaving the country:

what was really weird about that is that all the passports were either blue or green. Blue-for people who were allowed to leave the country in good terms. Green for people who were allowed to visit. And brown [passports], were for people with non-citizenship. And there was a terminology associated with that, cacanari, you know, shitheads.

(Bonica, Personal Interview, March, 2012)

The brown passports marked these people as non-citizens, as a way to signal that their right to Romanian citizenship and identification was suspended not only in the country but outside of its boundaries as well. In exchange for a brown passport, a mark of a persona non-grata, the Romanian state tried to repossess these expatriates’ property and thus make a profit. Others who left with green or blue passports, confessed that they too renounced their Romanian citizenship in fear that the Romanian secret police would extend their reach overseas.

These various categories of leaving the country determined the path towards a new citizenship for each immigrant. Whether one followed the religious or the political path, each story of oppression was influential in the way the United Nations directed an asylum seeker towards a particular country. This, in turn, established the application procedure in that respective country and the entire narrative towards becoming a full citizen. These categories determined the type of brokering that took place and the chain of brokers that would support the mobility of the applicant. For instance, Mr. Doru, a Romanian political refugee left the country carrying abundant textual evidence: court hearings and sentences of his brother, written accounts of instances of persecution; all these documents compiled a case used to request political asylum for his family. For some, the process of brokering started in Romania, in the country of origin,
but it was highly dependent on the larger transactions between nation-states, as shown in the MFN status debate.

In this section, my goal was to show the larger context of emigration from Romania in the 1970s-1980s, and the immigrant identity situated at the nexus of national identity, ethnicity and religion. The rhetorics of nation-states in this context also points to regimes of power, to economic agreements, and contracts that might justify a significant need for brokering. Since the religious refugees were directed towards seeking the U.S. protection, many ethnic churches in collaboration with human rights and religious organizations mediated and sponsored—in the U.S. immigration sense—many asylum seekers for Romania. As explained in this section, knowledge of transactions between countries as well as knowledge of the immigration system’s categories of emigration and immigration constitute important literacy resources in the brokering process and passage of these immigrants. Thus, literacy brokers in this study served beyond local contexts; they were deeply involved understand in the rhetorics of nation-states and finding textual paths to connect individual experience to larger political and socio-economic dialogs.

Literacy Brokers: Background and Profiles

In the Romanian community, particularly among Romanian refugees, literacy brokers have been mostly engaged with immigration texts such as legal documents, applications, and stories of immigration that were modified into legal accounts; for refugees, this story was essential as it constituted the basis for requesting asylum. Generally, refugees needed assistance with finding a sponsor—a non-governmental organization that together with local ethnic churches offered to officially petition for legal status. In refugee camps, the most valuable information concerned not only knowledge of sponsoring agencies—the World Council of Churches, Interfaith, and other organizations—but also connecting with the right people, those
brokers that could facilitate access to information outside the refugee camps in Austria or Italy. Once the papers were processed, the Romanian refugees in my study would often needed help with starting anew in the U.S., including airport pickup, finding an apartment, furniture, assistance with job searching, and various similar needs. Often this assistance was offered by a “go-in-between” person, generally a church representative delegated to help with the adaption of the newly arrived immigrants. Other than daily provision, there was another component in this brokering process: textual and language assistance. This activity falls under the purview of those who I call literacy brokers who would offer guidance and advice concerning legal documents, obtaining a social security card, driver’s license, and additional paperwork.

The centrality of literacy brokers in an immigrant community is not marked by quantity, but rather by their reputation and the large number of immigrants who call on these brokers’ services. Occasionally, I rely more on one of the four brokers, Eugen, whose story I highlighted at the beginning of this chapter. As someone who has occupied various brokering positions from volunteering in the community to becoming a church representative in legal affairs and working as paralegal, Eugen offered the most details about literacy brokering relative to legal papers. Given that his brokering role of legal documents had ended, he was the most open to relate practices and events as he remembered them. The other brokers’ experiences complemented details that Eugen either missed or did not recall during our interview. Although George, another broker, agreed to participate in the study, he seemed unexpectedly hermetic in his answers. For this reason, I reference him the least. To protect the privacy of these participants, I use pseudonyms. Also to ensure anonymity, in the far right column of Table 1, I list arbitrarily various roles these brokers held in the community, rather than associate particular roles with particular people.
Table 1: Literacy Brokers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy Brokers</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Education &amp; Training</th>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Multiple Roles in Literacy Brokering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eugen</td>
<td>High school degree (Romania)</td>
<td>Volunteer, Training on the Job</td>
<td>Romanian, English, Italian</td>
<td>Former green card applicant, Volunteer, Legal representative, Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associate Degree (U.S.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuela</td>
<td>High School degree (Romania)</td>
<td>Trained on the job; feedback from supervisor</td>
<td>Romanian, English</td>
<td>Legal representative, Consultant, Legal representative, Translator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudiu</td>
<td>College Degree (RO) Certificates (U.S.)</td>
<td>Certificates, Training, Translation conferences; Training on the Job</td>
<td>Romanian, English, French, Hungarian</td>
<td>Official Interpreter, Unofficial reporter, Paralegal, Legal Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>College Degree (RO) College Degree (U.S.)</td>
<td>Training in School, and as a community member.</td>
<td>Romanian English (information about knowledge of additional languages was not provided)</td>
<td>Community interpreter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I supplement interview data with copies of travel documents, refugee certificates, and documents pertaining to the refugees' immigrant experience shared during our interviews. Additionally, I use historical documents, particularly newspaper clippings about Romanian immigrants and Romania-U.S. relationships in the 1980s; all of these primary documents originate from the daily news in the 1970s-1980s and Radio Free Europe news broadcasts, the main source of uncensored information for many Romanians before 1989.

The immigration experience as the participants in this study attest is marked by
numerous forms—certificates, identity cards, affidavits, letters of invitation, and many other documents specific for each category of immigration: humanitarian, family reunification, or employment. Although I had limited access to some of these documents, they were often referenced during the interviews, either by the brokers or by the immigrants who needed the brokers’ services. Table 2 includes a selection of these documents and various activities that entailed some form of literacy brokering.

Table 2: Types of Brokering Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Documents</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forms</td>
<td>Filling out: Green Card Applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Citizenship Application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biographical Forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Documents</td>
<td>Filling out or writing: affidavits, declarations documenting and/or writing personal stories of persecution (asylum seekers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>researching and writing briefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>Applicants: giving legal advice; giving advice concerning particular forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other entities: consulting senators and other government officials in regards to an immigration issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>researching and writing briefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy &amp; Research</td>
<td>Interviewing people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recording and collecting stories of oppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compiling reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparing briefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*The Immigration File</td>
<td>Compiling and organizing various forms into a coherent “file self:” applications, certificates of birth, marriage, divorce papers, etc.; evidence of mailing addresses of applicants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The immigration file includes a series of documents and immigration forms that can be considered individually but also as an independent unit. Individual files need a particular rhetorical arrangement to make up the immigration file as single unit.

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25 “File self” is Julie Chu’s (2010) term in reference to immigration documents that Chinese applicants compiled to build their case at the U.S. Consulate (p. 132).
The language that surrounds the mediation process in the case of Romanian refugees includes words such as “helped sponsor,” “helped these people come to the U.S.,” “helped them bring their families,” “church representative, legal representative,” “doing translations,” “[doing] all kinds of legal paperwork,” “advice on immigration,” “we pleaded our case.” These activities denote the broker as an assistant, consultant, advocate, translator, which affords flexibility of roles and perspectives. Building on these multiple identities, the literacy broker emerges as a malleable construct permitting the creation of new meanings based on context and roles. Acknowledging this flexibility of positions and contexts, I draw attention to the dynamic nature of literacy brokering.

Bi-Institutional Perspectives: Transferable Knowledge and Points of Affinity in Literacy Brokering

Accumulating Knowledge, Accumulating Roles

A closer examination of the literacy broker, in more than one context and with more than one role, reveals the complexity of knowledge gathered from multiple social contexts where s/he operates. In 1987, three years after his arrival in the U.S. as a political refugee, Eugen became a broker for several other political refugees from Romania. As a broker or more precisely as “the go-to” person—the actual term Eugen used to refer to his brokering activity in the Romanian immigrant community—he negotiated and mediated the mobility of religiously persecuted Evangelical Romanians in various capacities. He started as a volunteer for the World Council of Churches and for Interchurch Refugee and Immigration Ministries. His role became more official as he was appointed the church representative for immigration affairs; in this capacity, he...
functioned as the church’s legal representative to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Eventually, Eugen started working as a paralegal for various immigration attorneys.

This shift of positions—from a volunteer at a non-profit organization, to being a church legal representative, and then a paralegal—marks, on the one hand, the process of institutionalization of the broker’s profile. On the other hand, it signals a shift in the roles of mediation. In previous studies of language brokering, the broker seems to be situated between institutions (Orellana et al., 2002; Perry, 2009) but the relation between the broker and other constituents particularly institutions was somewhat unclear. While sometimes brokers are viewed as having specialized knowledge and representing an institutional perspective, they are often perceived as informally offering assistance (Perry, 2009). From my analysis of the broker’s work, the broker almost always assumes work in collaboration with or operates under the patronage of some type of institutional authority: as a volunteer working with human rights organizations, a legal representative working with local churches, and as a paralegal functioning within legal institutions such as immigration law firms. Certainly, some of these institutions are more or less hierarchical or structured, yet even when brokering takes place in rather flexible contexts, a logic of power and representation is still in place, even in such settings as an immigrant community. Since religious or ethnic persecution was the main reason invoked by these refugees in leaving Romania and requesting asylum, various leaders in the immigrant community—Steven Bonica, the owner of the Romanian newspaper; Octavian Cojan, founding member of the Illinois Romanian-American Community organization; and Reverend Valentin Popovici, pastor at a Romanian Baptist Church—offered multiple examples of ways in which churches were actively involved in supporting immigrants, including airport pick-up, help with finding an apartment or job, or help with enrolling children in school. Whenever brokers work
with institutions, they receive additional support that endorses the broker’s authority to fulfill his or her purpose of mediation. This collaboration of the broker with other institutions—humanitarian organizations and churches—points to good models of civic and public engagement. This means that brokering takes place through collaboration and joined actions. As Kalman writes, writing practices that are situated locally and culturally often point to larger spaces of communication and knowledge. As brokers partner with others, they create webs of support often based on commonality of experience and quite frequently on ethnic ties. In their position of mediation, brokers harness various types of affiliations—civic, ethnic, local, or global—and channel them to accomplish goals for those individuals who need their assistance.

When Eugen and his family left Romania, his citizenship was revoked; prior to departure, he had been expelled from school and all family possessions seized by the Romanian state. Yet through these changes and shifts of identity, Eugen learned new roles and perspectives. His success in accumulating knowledge, adapting his literate skills, and establishing partnerships came from personal interactions with bureaucratic structures. His knowledge started small. It started with his personal experience and knowledge of the institutions familiar to him, which at the beginning included his family, the local ethnic community, and the church; and all of these tied together the Romanian state that controlled all these social groups before his departure. But from being an expatriate, Eugen became a middleman. In the refugee camp in Italy, Eugen started to translate for his family and for other Romanians refugees. After his arrival in the U.S., despite limited English, Eugen had gradually accumulated useful knowledge and brokered partnerships with multiple stakeholders for other asylum seekers. People would ask for his advice on immigration issues at church and then inquire about his business office—which he did not have at the time—to further solicit his assistance.
In “Accumulating Literacy,” Brandt (1995) explains that with changes of literacy expectations and conditions, past literate practices may resurface in current sites of literacy learning (pp. 659-660). Although Brandt’s analysis refers to transformations and changes in literacy between generations, Eugen’s case shows an ability to adapt his past literacy to new contexts. In addition to accumulating various literacies, such as learning of new languages—Italian in a refugee camp in Rome or English in the U.S.—Eugen also acquired knowledge about the languages of nation-states, about governing state powers, and about mediation. This accumulated knowledge from various roles as a literacy broker enabled Eugen to assist others with writing their own story of persecution, to help people with documents, and to work with various organizations on behalf of the refugees themselves:

I would sit with clients just like you're sitting with me now and I would ask, I had a form, and I would ask all the questions pertaining to their situations and . . . then I would translate it in English. . . . I've become an expert in writing umm . . . writing people’s stories and writing . . . umm affidavits, declarations, statements, whatever you wanna call it.

Because of his own personal experience and interactions with larger socio-political structures, Eugen has gained credibility in the Romanian community. People entrusted him with their personal stories in hope of obtaining legal papers, just like Eugen did. His accumulated knowledge built his credentials, but it also connected him to people, to their stories of oppression. Through this accumulation of experiences, webs of knowledge were shared and used in the service of others.
Shifting Roles and Increased Institutional Constraints

As the context of the interaction between brokers and institutions changes, so does the nature of interactions. This shift is more noticeable when the same literacy broker conducts similar text-related practices—translating/interpreting, filling out forms, researching information, interviewing people, documenting stories—in different contexts, for instance the immigrant community (less structured, less bureaucratic) and highly controlled settings such as court settings or immigration agencies (highly controlled). From the beginning of my interview with Claudiu, he explained that a community interpreter is very different from an official translator/interpreter. Claudiu, a Romanian-American citizen, owns his own translation and interpretation business but he also serves regularly as an official translator/interpreter in court settings and as an informal community translator/interpreter. In a nutshell, he said that the official jobs “pay the bills” but the other one in the community is “the most rewarding.” The payoff comes, as Claudiu explained, from the ability to help. In a case implicating a community response to elderly abuse, Claudiu volunteered his service as a language interpreter because he too wanted to support this initiative as a member of the community: “I went in voluntarily and in the end, all the way at the very end, I was offered money and I had a hard time accepting it but I did. But that was one of those cases, when I went in voluntarily and I went in helping other people help people.”

Claudiu’s example shows the malleability in his mediating role. The broker’s ability to help is highly contingent on the flexibility of the context where he operates.

By emphasizing the constraints of the official job, that is translating and interpreting in court settings, Claudiu also managed to capture the shifting role from working in the community and working in the confinements of an institution. In reference to his work in institutional settings, he repeatedly described his role as a “tool” and as an “instrument.” While Claudiu fully
accepted his role as a “tool,” this role seemed deprived of any personal or emotional dimension. The person is there to fulfill one clearly established function—in the case of interpreting in a court setting, to transmit the message exactly as is from one interlocutor to another. Based on Claudiu’s account, the position of a translator or interpreter is limited to the mere rendition of the interaction, “to the best of his abilities.” Claudiu explained that “helping” the defendant in official interactions such as court proceedings is neither possible nor his “job.” Since the broker has been framed as the one who assists, who mediates partnerships, in the case of a language translation, the “help” offered by the translator/interpreter is constrained when situated in a regulated setting such as a court, particularly in immigration cases. Conceiving the literacy broker as an instrument or tool, at first glance shifts agency from the broker to a model of agency embedded in systemic structures. Yet, given the multi-positionality that a broker can assume, I argue that if agency is limited in one context, it can be potentially exerted in other settings. For instance, even if Claudiu cannot “help” someone in the context of a court setting, his knowledge of this institutional discourse can be easily transferred to his role as a community translator. Such an understanding of brokering has not been possible in the case of the children of immigrants, since they were studied only in the language mediation between their parents and school officials, parents and bank representatives, etc. In these studies attention has been placed on the type of interaction or type of brokering occurring, rather than on a possible transfer of accumulated knowledge from one setting to another. While speaking multiple languages, as in the case of the interpreter/translator is crucial in such cross-cultural interactions, the bi-institutional perspective is equally or even more important. Earlier in this chapter, I explained that a bi-institutional perspective entails both an emic perspective of institutional thinking and language but also a portable perspective, moving “across” institutions. Learning and knowing the
discourse of institutions—with its procedures, specialized languages and practices—contributes to an agentic literacy broker who can manage not only multiple languages but also specialized discourses of bureaucratic structures. And since this learning and knowing includes more than one institution, the literacy broker gains multiple perspectives visible not only in actual texts, but implicit in practices and ways of thinking across institutions. In the example mentioned earlier when Claudiu participated as a community member in the elderly abuse case, he shifted his role to that of an interpreter and translator. He says, “I was there as both [community member and interpreter]. That's another very unique about the work that I do, that I can I can have multiple hats depending on the circumstances.”

Taking on “multiple hats” allows the broker to adopt multiple roles even though they may involved unequal responsibility or degree of flexibility. Within the institution, procedures take priority over individual actions. Institutional constraint is built in these procedures, operating on multiple levels. First of all, the translator/interpreter must take an oath. The oath in itself is a formal verbal circumscription of one's identity into the institutional context where s/he operates. To ensure that translation/interpretation is accurate, a security measure is in place when the court especially in immigration cases provides a second remote translator selected only from approved language service providers. In such situations, the dynamics between various parties is evidently different. The hierarchy of control is well established and the interaction is scripted. Claudiu likened this scripted procedure to “a train, once it starts, it goes at a certain pace and unless something major happens, the train keeps rolling.” This analogy with train tracks is quite potent, especially since it is language and linguistic procedures that keep the “train” going. Set on their “tracks,” institutions shape language and discourses especially as their role is to “keep going”
and to stop only at established points of destination. Inevitably, these prescribed discursive practices constrain individual choices and actions.

In the case of the paralegal who works in an immigration office, institutional constraints are similar. At the beginning of my interview with Manuela, she described her jobs in terms of dos and don’ts, what is allowed and what is not:

A paralegal cannot give legal advice; you are allowed to fill out papers, but you cannot give legal advice … [A paralegal] can write letters to immigration, can call to ask about cases that are represented by the attorney. Basically preparing many legal documents, but not any document.

When I asked whether there is flexibility in certain cases or multiple approaches, Manuela answered, “the law is the law.” As a literacy broker dealing with scripted texts, in particular working with documents and official applications for immigration, Manuela confirms that the process of filling out papers is a highly regulated practice. In dealing with institutional constraints, both Claudiu and Manuela adopt the perspective of the institution that they represent. To be more specific, they adopt an institutional voice—a concept that Brandt (2005) identified in her study of workplace writers. The institutional voice is not reflected solely in the production of a document, but also in how these brokers speak about their jobs. Manuela is clearly emphasizing that “the law is the law” and that there is little or no room for changes or additions. Claudiu apparently functions as a tool, as one piece in the larger machinery that follows established moves and structures. However, despite the brokers’ assumed institutional identity within the institution, they act as more than tools and their mediation is more than instrumental.

*Language of Affinity and Empathetic Work*
In both situations, that of a translator/interpreter and of a paralegal, the issue lies with, as Claudiu well explained, who hires you and under whose authority you work. Institutional control particularly in the case of immigration leaves little to no room for mediation as help, as was the case with the translator/interpreter in the community discussed in Chapter two. However, even in these cases of rigid or prescriptive mediation, the emotional work of mediation comes to surface. After Claudiu explained the constraints that were part of this job as a legal translator and that “help” and “assistance” had to be within the legal limits, he elaborated further:

Sometimes, you feel bad for someone… and it's actually not my job [to help]. And sometimes, I see people, they spend two hours building a case and then they say something in like 3 seconds, and they…tsss ruin everything. But it's not my job to censor anything. I'm there actually as an instrument.

Besides the fact that Claudiu seems himself as a mere instrument who solely reports on the language exchange in a court setting, his follow-up comment—“Sometimes you feel bad” (emphasis mine)—reveals his affective involvement. I see this as a moment of interruption; it is not marked by an external gesture or an actual intervention of help, yet it represents a significant point of institution critique. Generally, and most of the times there is no room for “help” in a court proceeding. But sometimes there are moments of empathy similar to Claudiu feeling for or with his clients. While these moments do not dismantle the institutional structure, they offer points of critique. They also profess that brokers are more than instruments even in an institutional context that regiment people’s discursive practices into patterns of communication.

Similar to Claudiu’s empathetic regret, Manuela shared a moment of empathetic joy based on commonality of experience. In response to my question about reasons for liking her job, she replied:
Every case is specific … very individualized, and you see the result right away. And when we receive the approval for a green card, I feel as I did when I received my own green card. Seriously. That’s how I feel.

One can only assume that the moment when she got her own green card was an exhilarating experience, and thus she relives that joy through the experience of her clients. Even George, the literacy broker who offered the least details about his interaction with his clients, used language of affinity during the interview. In reference to his clients and immigration procedures, George repeatedly used the phrase “our Romanian” (italics mine). When discussing immigration categories based on profession, George explained that “our Romanian” can apply for this or that type of visa only if there are no U.S. citizens or residents qualified for this position. If Manuela’s moment of affinity is based on personal experience, George’s affective language our Romanian indexes an affinity based on ethnic and community connectedness. This affective discursive marker—our Romanian—differs from Ceausescu’s attempt to regulate affinity by creating a national ethos. In this case, George has a choice to identify himself or not with an ethnic group and he chooses to do so. Instead of referring to his clients as applicants, as immigrants or even simply by country of origin, George adds the possessive “our” to denote shared ethnic ties with his clients. Although a possessive adjectival phrase could be used with a neutral connotation or with sarcasm or derision, in this case the context and the experience of the utterance indicate the affective underlining layer. George is after all an immigrant himself, mingling with community members while also working formally as an attorney of immigration. It is precisely in this context of immigration discourse that he uses a language of identification and empathy with his fellow Romanians. In performing this language of affinity, literacy brokers re-institute a lost sense of affiliation in the process of immigration. They perform emotional work
that matters even if it is not always highly perceptible.

These moments of identification established on the basis of personal experience, community ties, or simply on the basis of human understanding shape the profile of a broker as someone who has knowledge and experience both within systems and across institutional structures. As brokers, even those working within state or bureaucratic institutions, show affinity with the disadvantaged, with those outside of the system, they manage to humanize and soften rigid boundary for those whose interests they represent. I argue that although unexpressed in particular actions, these affinities count as interruptions of the system. Bureaucratic systems of control are not oppressive only to the extent that they manifest in action. They are also oppressive in the way they regiment structures of feeling as well as ways of thinking. One may suggest that by choosing to work in these institutions, these individuals are in reality doing the feeling work—even if it is repressed emotions—for the oppressive structures. I argue that while they do this work from “within institutions,” following institutional rules of practices, their ability to think and act across institutions unlocks them from one particular role. If structures of feelings are regimented in one context, they are distributed in other contexts, institutional or non-institutional. For instance, even if Claudiu cannot help in one particular case in a court setting, when he is privately hired by a community member he can use his experience and feelings of affiliation to engender a better outcome for that person.

One relevant example about regimented structures of feeling comes from another participant in my study, Horea as he witnessed lack of mediation, of literacy brokering. As Horea interacted with the U.S. bank clerks, he shared his frustrations. He explained that he was not upset that his application for opening a bank account was denied. Rather, he was outraged that several bank clerks could not understand or conceive that a man in his mid-thirties like him
had not owned a bank account before. This inability to envision a different alternative to the rules or regulations that operate in one system marks rigid thinking and rigid structures that suppress identification of any sort. It creates a gap between those in the system and those outside of the system or coming from a different system, reinforcing the fact that those marginalized must be kept outside. Brokers often intervene and bridge these gaps. Depending on setting, they can make a crossover in action or they can build bridges of understanding that unlock perceptions of rigid social structures. Points of affinity are constructed through an accumulation of knowledge from multiple viewpoints, including those of institutional communication and interactions.

These points of affinity, which I conceive as brief moments of identification, afford an understanding of language brokering as more than just action. Language and literacy, if conceptualized as socio-cultural constructs deeply imbricated in the lives of people, must engage the entire personhood, not just discrete elements. This means that people participate in language and literacy interactions not just with knowledge or particular languages but bring with them feelings, attitudes, thoughts, and often preconceptions. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke (1950) explains the formative effect rhetoric can have on one’s attitude in situations when one’s action is conscribed. Burke gives the example of a criminal who might be moved into repentance by a priest’s sermon (rhetoric) even if he cannot take any particular action (p. 50). Making this fine distinction between action and attitude, wherein attitude is defined as “an incipient act, a leaning” or predisposition, illuminates more cogently the role of attitudes, feelings, and predispositions in literacy events. Even if action may be limited or constrained by various social structures or bureaucratic formations as seen with Claudiu’s train analogy, literacy brokers can effect change through attitudes of empathy and identification, albeit momentarily. While this
change may not translate in action, often what these immigrants needs is for someone who can communicate or understand them. Empathy has the ability to communicate care, trust, and understanding, which are precisely emotions removed in the context of bureaucratic practices.

In this section I tried to show that developing a bi-institutional perspective entails mobility through various social spaces, which present themselves as somewhat rights structures. As literacy brokers shift through various roles as volunteer or member of the community as Eugen’s examples shows, they take on more institutionally-controlled roles, they accumulate experiences, languages, cultures along the way. But they also gain different perspectives depending on the context of their work. For example, Claudiu as a language broker and certified translator in an immigration court accumulates particular knowledge, such as familiarity with the legal system, glossary of legal terms, and procedures. Since Claudiu is also a member of the Romanian ethnic community, people from the community sometimes ask for language assistance with papers and claiming certain benefits. And, importantly he also has experience as an immigrant himself, having gone through the naturalization process. All these multiple roles enable Claudiu to position himself as a powerful agent of mediation between multiple stakeholders. Literacy brokers also learn to sift through these perspectives, to select rhetorically useful literacy practices and recontextualize them in new contexts for themselves or for others going through similar circumstances. Through this mobility across contexts, literacy brokers develop a bi-institutional perspective that involves ways of thinking across institutions and ways of feeling across institutions. Yet a bi-institutional perspective allows one to detach from a particular institution and to adopt a critical stance. In doing so, literacy brokers not only learn various institutional discourses and ways of thinking; they can offer an institutional critique. Although this critique is not explicit, I argue that it becomes visible in the emotional work that
these brokers provide in addition to their typical mediation tasks—assistance with papers, legal advice, consulting. Through moments of affinity and language of empathy, brokers intervene between the individual and larger bureaucratic structures, precisely because they have adopted bi-institutional perspectives.

Literacy Brokering and Personal Stories as Advocacy

The work of literacy brokers expands beyond local or transnational communities and institutions to occasions for advocacy. From being the “go-to” person in the context of the immigrant community, Eugen often moved on to being “go-between.” In his interactions with INS and human rights organizations such as World Council of Churches and International Rescue Committee, Eugen was the voice of the larger immigrant community and even of those who were still in refugee camps. In this middle position, Eugen became an advocate for the cause of refugees, pleading with non-profit organization to extend their sponsorship to other soliciting asylum seekers. After signing for the 50th person, Eugen remembers being called for a special interview with the leadership of the non-profit organizations who acted as official sponsors. “You already have fifty people. You gotta stop,” was their message. But Eugen did not give up. As exemplified at the beginning of the chapter, Eugen took action and advocated for more sponsorship with the help of written stories and letters from the refugees themselves:

And, we pleaded our case. And I read a few stories, I read a few letters that I received from people in the refugee camps. And I said, “Look, these are the stories from our people from the refugee camps. They escaped from Communist Romania. If we do not do the papers for them to come to the United States, they’ll be sent back to Romania, and they’ll be imprisoned.
In this situation, literacy brokers like Eugen employ personal stories to evoke emotions for the cause of the marginalized, asylees in this case. Although not in a courtroom, Eugen takes on the task of “pleading a case,” and in doing so, he identifies with those for whom he advocates; in Eugen’s appeal, asylees become “our people” and their plight in turn becomes “our case.” In the Romanian language, the word for attorney, avocat, has the same root as the English word, advocate. The Latin root for both Romanian and English terms is advocatus (Latin), “one called to aid” (“Advocate”). In his position as an advocate, Eugen indeed was aiding other organizations understand the cause of Romanian asylum seekers he was representing.

In another situation, as a liaison with the INS, Eugen took on the advocate’s role again, but this time it involved documenting and doing research abroad. His task was to document ongoing religious persecution in Romania in 1992, after the official fall of the Communist regime in 1989. Eugen’s research and documentation took the shape of a report for the U.S. Department of Justice as a way to provide evidence as to whether certain political asylum requests on the roll were still valid cases for asylum. The legitimacy of these cases was established based on evidence of religious oppression that was still taking place in Romania, even after the official socialist regime was overthrown. In preparation for this report, Eugen went back to Romania and talked to people. Concealing the real purpose of his visit, Eugen interacted with people in the streets, videotaping and audiotaping their stories:

I documented everything, all my stories and even while walking in the streets, we were videotaping and we were audiotaping and all the stories were documented, and then, when I came home, I wrote each individual story... and I published a booklet about 160 pages... [of] stories of persecution that went on in Romania even in ‘92.
Such a document is similar to various other texts that were presented in the House of Representatives when the Most Favored Nation26 (MFN) trade status was frequently negotiated or under review. As in Eugen’s report for the INS, several House representatives made use of personal stories to demonstrate Romania’s need for the MFN status, which was directly tied to emigration from Romania (United States Congress). It was not just in discourse of human rights organizations but also in governmental branches that the emotional work of personal stories represented an intervention with significant economic and political implications. While the MFN affected trade benefits between Romania and the U.S., it also put pressure on the Romanian government to release hundreds of religious and ethnic minorities. This interconnected relationship between personal stories of persecution of these immigrants and larger governmental agencies demonstrates the need for and the centrality of literacy brokers in bridging communication between individuals and larger structures. It also shows that emotional work and the personal can be intimately tied to issues of economics and politics.

The latter example of Eugen’s work of advocacy marks a change in scale and audience. It involved a larger process of documentation including audio and video evidence to support the case for Romanian families seeking asylum in the U.S.. With Eugen not having any particular training either in writing or in research practices, one may ask what is the motivational tool for this kind of work. There is no apparent gain unless we speak of emotional benefits. At first glance, this rhetoric of “help” inside and outside of the community through advocacy seemingly contradicts the economic frame of a broker. Help, particularly in ethnic communities, is rarely conceived in financial terms and often means doing a service, giving a ride, assisting with documents and papers, or aiding someone in finding a job, etc. Yet, “help” is not necessarily

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26 Archival documents from Radio Free Europe attest the United States often pressured Romania to release a number of Jewish people, German minorities, and religiously-persecuted groups, in exchange for a renewal of “Most Favored Nation” (MFN) status (Gwertzman, 1986).
without pay-offs. Indeed, if the broker is perceived in a reciprocal relationship with different parties at the same time, the payoff is invisible. However, if this brokering activity comes in exchange for having been helped, for having experienced it, then the exchange happens diachronically. In doing so, the broker can certainly mediate current transactions, but often the motivation comes from identification with his or her past experiences.

In many ways, the broker embodies a Bakhtinian discursive identity, oriented both towards future actions and past experiences, and always carrying traces of the sociohistorical contexts s/he has inhabited. Eugen has certainly oriented his role towards future actions, brokering not only the local immigrants’ legal papers, but advocating for future engagement concerning unresolved cases of refugees. In discussing the social knowledge that surrounds the texts drafted by scribes on the plaza, Kalman shows that these texts are connected to knowledge about future consequences of these texts and their circulation to various audiences. Similarly, Eugen is aware of the power of brokered texts. These texts serve multiple functions as stories of persecution of asylum seekers whose immediate purpose was to obtain legal passage into the U.S., but also address a larger purpose—to bring awareness about the refugee situations and the human rights violation in Romania.

To be engaged in such actions of advocacy requires more than knowledge of macrodiscourses, that is languages of countries and institutions; it requires intimate knowledge of those whom the literacy broker represents. The broker then holds a strategic position combining knowledge of small, particular details with larger discourses and structures. In this position, brokers can potentially leverage their experience, their emotional investments, and sometimes their official roles to compensate for unequal power relations particularly in transnational settings. A literacy broker in the context of immigration must have knowledge of
larger discourses, those of religious institutions and political ideologies exercised by nation-states, and must learn to use this knowledge strategically. Such accumulated knowledge implicates the personal, the national, and the transnational. Micciche (2002) suggests that “the political turn in composition … has been slow to address the emotional contexts of teaching and learning” (p. 435). The literacy broker’s role in advocacy but also in work with immigration forms and immigration agencies breaks down dichotomies between emotional and rational, between emotional and political, and other forms of emotional exclusion for the practice of everyday lives.

Textual Brokering: the Document Event

In this final section, I focus on a specific textual brokering situation, that of the personal story. The inclusion of a personal narrative in the bureaucratic writing context especially immigration papers is rather rare. Only in the case of asylum seekers does the application form permit a discursive insertion that is personalized and flexible in format. All other forms are inherently formulaic and prescriptive, with this notable exception of the narrative of asylum seeking applicants. It is this supplementary form that I would like to discuss further since it creates space for the individual story to unfold. Clarifications, disclosures, details, and descriptions included in this narrative, all built a case that qualifies or disqualifies one for asylum. Based on Eugen’s account, the story of persecution or oppression was central in the brokering activity in the Romanian immigrants’ experience.

Conceptually, the document event has been defined as interaction between two or more interlocutors participating in the drafting of a written document (Kalman, 1999). Besides various rhetorical decisions about the audience (the addressee), content (what to include), Kalman (1999) explains that a document event engages a series of other activities: “dictating, note taking,
copying or consulting ancillary texts” (p. 35). In examining Eugen’s assistance with a document event, I will follow similar conceptual guidelines, although decisions concerning audience for instance are unnecessary. The audience in the context of immigration papers is implicit: immigration agencies and respectively, immigration officers.

The document event, as explained by Eugen, serves as a pattern for his interaction with community members. Rather than focus on a particular story, Eugen’s account provided a window into his activity as a broker and the process of learning to write for legal purposes:

I would sit with clients just like you're sitting with me now, and I would ask, I had a form, and I would ask all the questions pertaining to their situations, and I would record it on tape, and then I would take their statement and type it, then I make it literate. I would make it so that it sounds like a nice story, and it's cursive, right. I mean it flows. (…). Then, I would read it back to them, or have them read it, and acknowledge that nothing has been twisted or changed, (…) then I would translate it in English. So basically I've become an expert in writing, umm …writing people’s stories, and writing…umm affidavits, declarations, statements, whatever you wanna call it.

(Personal Interview, February 2012)

First, it is essential to note a linguistic shift from a neutral interaction between community members to an exchange controlled and structured by a state document and its bureaucratic language: community members become “clients,” a personal story turns into a typed “literate” statement. The moment the community member becomes a client, his or her story matters only inasmuch as it fits the discursive space permitted by the institutional form. In this process, the personal story gets translated into the language of the state: it is typed, revised for its context and coherence, it is “acknowledged” or approved as a truthful statement, and eventually it is
translated into English. All these steps make the personal more manageable, a project that turns individuals into legible citizens (Scott, 1998).

From Eugen’s description, the concept of making the story “literate” demanded further inquiry. References to “flow” or “cursive” reveal that some of these stories might have been quite difficult to share. These were, after all, stories of persecution and people may have exposed a fragmented experience, not always in a chronological or coherent narrative, with possible gaps and contradictions. In my conversation with Eugen, I solicited additional details about the refugee narrative, for instance I asked whether the story had to advance an argument:

L: I assume it’s a story that has to put forth an argument, a case right?
E: not…yeah. It has to bring the, it has to bring the …the problem, in such a view as to show it is a problem, that it occurred more than once, that it occurred to a very very few number of people, not to a lot, that you were signaled out for whatever reason, that it caused persecution, or that it was part of mistreatment and harassment.

(Personal Interview, February 2012)

Before analyzing Eugen’s response, I should explain that I asked the question about whether the story had to make an argument because writing argument is at the core of writing instruction in the U.S. higher education. My question then stems from investigating whether argument-focused writing permeates other rhetorical contexts. I raised the same issue in my conversation with the paralegal who explained that with documents and document files, it is all about qualifications27 rather than arguments: “You never have to convince the State. Just show them

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27 I understand the use of qualifications similar to Sally Engle Merry’s (2011) discussion of indicators in human rights rhetoric. Engle describes indicators as mechanisms of control where the governance is shifted from the nation-state to the individual. Similarly, qualifications are taken as “the rule of law” and rarely is there an investigation about the process involved into producing such categories and their intended goals.
you qualify. You see in immigration the rules are very clear; nothing is with an under-meaning\textsuperscript{28} or tricky. You qualify or you don’t; it’s black on white” (Personal Interview, November, 2012). Whether rules are as clear as Manuela suggests is debatable. The phrase “it’s black \textit{on} white”—a word-by-word translation of a Romanian expression—does not mean as in English a clear cut distinction between choice A and choice B. Rather, it means that a message is so clear and visible, as black ink is on a white paper. The expression means that once something is written, it becomes visible and permanent, like black ink on a white sheet of paper. The technology of writing gives stability to the meaning through the very act of inscribing a message on a paper; a similar operation works in legal accounts. The rule of law, the written law is associated with permanence. The qualifications for citizenship, as Manuela suggests, seem immovable because they are written law.

Returning back to Eugen’s explanation about the political asylum story, the argument in this case is reflected in a list of specific criteria that create a credible asylum story: the story had to identify the problem, establish a unique situation, and demonstrate its repetitive occurrence. Ultimately, this process of writing for political asylum cases was more than “just a nice, flowing story.” The story had to be a rhetorically sophisticated narrative that involved a skillful transformation of a personal experience into a compelling legal account.

As such, the most significant actions in brokering a refugee story concerns the use of rhetorical strategies to point to and describe what constitutes a problem. Generally, exigence is often framed in local or national contexts. However, showing that a “problem” is still exigent in transnational contexts, especially in relation to two or more nation-states requires more refined rhetorical knowledge. In a news report from Free Europe Radio from 1983, Tamara Jones

\textsuperscript{28} The Romanian word is “subinteles,” which basically means a meaning that is hidden underneath. It is not the same with double meaning. In the “underneath” meaning, there is that sense of covert, hidden meaning which is not captured by “double meaning.”
explains the distressful situation of several Romanians who against all odds were released passports, gave up Romanian citizenship, and were awaiting to approval from the U.S. immigration. In response to this situation, a Western diplomat explained that these Romanians did not understand the necessarily qualifications imposed by U.S. immigration. These Romanians apparently mistakenly thought that “freedom to emigration should also mean freedom to immigrate” (Jones, 1983). A year later in 1984, a similar problem—that of catching people in between the Romanian emigration restrictions and the U.S. immigration rules—occurred when Romanians with a “non-citizenship” status were rejected entrance in the U.S. because their cases exceeded the U.S. immigration quota of 1,000 (“U.S. Praised and Warned on Human Rights Policy in Romania,” 1984). This illustrates the challenge to pose a problem rhetorically in the context of transnationalism. While for Romanians under Communism, freedom to leave was exigent and was often obtained at high costs symbolizing an act of defiance and refusal to endorse a repressive political regime, for the American counterpart this freedom meant a form of trespassing or at least a presumptuous act showing lack of knowledge of the U.S. immigration system.

A problem framed rhetorically at the national and transnational levels is indeed challenging. Freedom to travel, for instance, is regulated and differentiated across nation-states. For Romanians, before and after Communism, freedom to move, to work, or pursue an education continued to be restricted through visa requirements in many Western countries. These restrictions imposed on people and texts limiting mobility and knowledge unmask structures of inequality based on national origin, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background. This is another facet of globalization and knowledge economy, where only certain knowledge can be exchanged and the value of that knowledge is often determined based on national identification. In Chapter
four, I discuss in more depth how visa regulations operate as forms of control being generally imposed on those states that have already been socio-economically or politically marginalized.

Familiarity with the languages of countries and institutions confirms once again the strategic role of brokers. Brokers can leverage their knowledge and sometimes, their official roles to compensate for unequal power relations particularly in transnational settings. A textual broker in the context of immigration must know larger discourses, the languages of religious institutions and political ideologies exercised by nation-states. Such knowledge relates both to local contexts, but also to how it circulates and interacts with discourses from other nation-states. An example of this language of the states is the debate over the MFN status and the Romanian emigration discussed earlier.

Several participants in my study had knowledge about various special agreements between the U.S. and Romania. They consistently referenced Radio Free Europe as a main source of information, serving in many ways as a broker of knowledge between these nations. Lucia for instance who immigrated to the U.S. in 1983 with her entire extended family of thirteen (her husband and one baby, parents-in-law and their six children, brother-in-law and his wife) remembered that her father-in-law learned about Jimmy Carter’s agreement with Romania in exchange for money to release Romanian religious minorities. Lucia explained that in 1978, they heard on Radio Free Europe radio about the agreement and even if the U.S. administration had changed while they were waiting for papers, in 1983 they were able to leave Romania on the basis of that agreement (Personal Interview, February, 2012).

In the document event, the literacy broker must ensure that the story is well documented, and that it rhetorically meets all criteria required for the story to qualify for asylum. Besides establishing “a problem” that is conceived transnationally, the broker also had to show that the
refugee’s story of persecution happened to only a few people. This was particularly difficult because under Ceausescu’s oppressive regime, the entire Romanian population suffered—with a few exceptions—of basic human rights deprivation. The challenge in crafting the written legal account for immigration purposes was to frame the narrative within the context of oppression that was internationally well known, yet at the same time to particularize each case and to demonstrate an immediate need for intervention. One can only imagine the irony of having to demonstrate particularism of a refugee’s story, when such an individual was part of generation taught and indoctrinated to live as a member of a social class. The mismatch between two country’s political projects and their impact on the individual merged into the literacy brokers’ mediating experience. Only knowledge of both systems could lead to adequate literacy brokering that transformed a personal story of oppression into a unique narrative befitting the immigration project. The brokering of asylum stories reveals that the literacy broker’s knowledge must be situated dialogically incorporating past histories into new contexts.

Final Implications

In this chapter, I argued that understanding literacy brokers’ emotional work emerges more visibly when these brokers adopt flexible perspectives and accumulated literacy practices across contexts. This aspect of mobility and transferability of literacy is particularly relevant for studies of transnationalism. Lorimer Leonard (2013) has argued that although language and literacy repertoires do move, their deployment in new contexts does not always yield more social mobility or economic power. Yet, this analysis of literacy brokers shows that they accumulate literacy knowledge from the contexts where they operate and are able take on “multiple hats” as Claudiu explained. In this process of moving across contexts, the bi-institutional perspective acquired reveals the work of emotion performed by these brokers. While many assume their role
as instruments when they work for or within an institution, these brokers’ language of affinity—the personal stories, the emphatic language, and the partnerships they establish—changes the social context of literacy. Although this emotion work is less visible in the final product of a literacy event, it is present all throughout the process of writing. This presence of brokers and the connections they establish with people’s personal experiences creates an infrastructure for discourses that are lost or impeded in the process of mobility. The brokers’ emotional work acknowledges the person in its full complexity with its rational and emotional life, with personal stories and formal accounts, with coherent narrative and inconsistencies in life.

The brokers’ work of affinity also brings to attention that the personal is not and should not necessarily be separated from the public or the political. As scholarship on emotions demonstrates (Micciche, 2007; Trainor, 2008), traditionally persuasive arguments overemphasized the rationale to the detriment of emotional. Yet, emotions have powerful persuasive force in the way they contribute to the formation of discourses through routinized practices (Trainor, 2008). Examining literacy brokers in the lives of political refugees shows the complex ways in which the personal intersects political, social, and economic spheres. Keeping all these segments separate casts literacy genres into dichotomous categories that only serve limited pedagogical ends. In real situations, the personal is rhetorical situated, whether that is reflected a literacy narrative, an autobiography or in a political debate over economic trade benefits.

As I showed in this chapter, a personal story constitutes the grounds for obtaining asylum protection, at the same time it serves to advance the cause of other political refugees. But personal stories of the brokers themselves have less impact on visible outcomes as they help the brokers develop a language of empathy and understanding. Manuela’s account shows how her
personal story served no particular ends; rather it helped her understand the process undertaken by her clients in obtaining a green card. She learned to “feel” with them when their case was successfully approved.

I started this chapter with Eugen’s story and his role in brokering the passage to citizenship of other refugees. But rather than discuss directly the individual profiles of various brokers, I devoted a full section on the political context of emigration/immigration in Romania in the 1970s and 1980s. My intention was to frame the entire chapter and implicitly the refugees’ experience in the larger discourses of nation-states that regulated these people’s movement. As I reiterated numerous times in this chapter, the brokers’ knowledge of the rhetorics of nation-states confirms their strategic position from where they can bridge gaps between individuals and larger power structures. In highlighting this type of knowledge, the brokers reaccentuate personal literacy histories, compensating for gaps created by language and cultural differences. In this process, these histories reconfigure a Romanian community that is quite different from the patria envisioned by Ceausescu. It is a community built through shared stories of oppression, through a reconfigured religious identity, and through language negotiations where literacy brokers hold a central position.
CHAPTER FOUR

ILlicit Brokers and the Legible “File Self”

In 2003-2004, there were approximately 3,000 or more Romanian college-level young adults in the Chicago who had come to the U.S. with a Work & Travel program and remained here indefinitely. As Sorin, a key participant in my study explains, having overstayed their visa, these young Romanians turned to taxi driving (the men) or babysitting (the women). Sorin left Romania in 2002 with a Work & Travel program and like him, many college students in Romania, took on this adventure. The Work & Travel program offered numerous Romanians a path to come for summer work in the U.S.; this program targeted legitimate college students, enrolled at their respective educational institutions in Romania. The program offered these students legal entry in the U.S. and a work visa, which in turn facilitated access to a social security card and identification papers in the respective states. To safeguard against potential deserters, this program also set up a $2,000 agreement plus additional security procedures. Yet, many Romanians, eager to work abroad and some to stay abroad, disregarded such restrictions. They found themselves “free” to travel, to work, and explore the world. The fact that this is category of migrants can form a Work & Travel cohort is essential here because these young Romanians formed a collective, supporting each other in the process of obtaining U.S. citizenship. In other words, they brokered their way through specialized knowledge, legal papers, and procedures creating a path to legal status that was lost when they overstayed their entry visa. I call this process of collaboration co-brokering—a process wherein the members of an ethnic and socio-economic group join their knowledge and affinities to textually frame their subjectivity into a citizenship of choice.
The Work & Travel program, a special initiative of the Council of International Educational Exchange (CIEE) in collaboration with the Department of State, as well as the formation of a social bond among these young Romanians with overstayed status set up the conditions for these Romanians to broker their way towards obtaining legal papers. This program proved successful for many Romanian college students insofar that some even enrolled for college only to benefit from such an opportunity. For these college students, legitimate or not, coming to work in the U.S. opened up a great opportunity to work and travel. This category of young, global-minded adults would otherwise have much difficulty obtaining a U.S. tourist visa. Single young adults with no substantial property or strong connections to their country constitute the largest category for tourist visa refusal in Romania. The U.S. consulate considers this group as too mobile, and hence top candidates for visa denial. In an interview with Radio Romania News (Radio Romania Actualitati), U.S. ambassador James Gray explained that the reason for a 26% visa denials for 2009 fiscal year for Romanians is explained by failure to “demonstrate significant social, familial, economic and other ties to their home country” (U.S. Department of State, 2009). Also, starting with the presumption that any applicant for a non-immigrant visa is a potential immigrant in the U.S., the requirements for non-immigrant visas are intentionally restrictive. Despite such limitations, it is precisely this group of tourist visa rejects that found or more accurately created another path towards citizenship through another non-immigrant visa—the work visa. Under these conditions, The Work & Travel program offered a remarkable package. In addition to the opportunity to work in the U.S. and be paid at least 7 or 8 times more than in Romania even in low paying jobs, it also included certain benefits briefly mentioned earlier: legal entry and the possibility to obtain a social security card and state ID; these benefits constitute the building blocks towards legality: a green card and citizenship papers.
In this chapter, I seek to explore the alliances that these immigrants create among themselves and with other ethnic groups in order to obtain legal papers. I call these alliances co-brokering and argue that co-brokering emerges from affinity established between similar socio-economic and ethnic groups; together, they co-construct hidden transcripts in response to the nation-state’s economic, political, and social impositions. I start by introducing briefly some key concepts that I will develop throughout the chapter—co-brokering, cumulative agency, and the brokered “file self.” Then, I follow with two sections: one focused on the general anti-immigrant rhetoric and the other on problematic categories of immigration (economic and political). While the first relates to the main argument in that the anti-immigrant sentiments are fueled by economic anxieties, the latter shows how rigid categories of immigration (political and economic) immigration constitute in fact a motive for co-brokering. In the second half of the chapter, I offer a detailed analysis of co-brokering and its stages: one section focuses on how immigrants create their own “system” of papers; in next two sections, I discuss the brokering of the “file self” and politics of alliances. Finally, I end the chapter with an analysis of the limits of illicit brokering. Despite the development of ethnic partnerships, these collaborations reveal unequal power relations and a process of marginalizing ethnically marked bodies.

Immigration forms constitute a significant textual location where the individual and the state meet, and this meeting point necessitates a form of brokering (e.g., Cintron, 1997; Chu, 2010; Vieira, 2011). Forms, applications, and various textual encounters with the state have been theorized in multiple ways: official texts producing generalizations of local or individual knowledge (Olson as cited in Smith & Schryer, 2008); texts as objectifications of reality (Goody, 1986); or documents as “signs of distance” between individuals and institutions (Cintron, 1997, p. 55). Political scientist James Scott (1998) casts this relationship under term, the state’s
“project of legibility” through the use of written facts or documents (p. 80), a project wherein the state uses strategies to control and simplify knowledge and by extension reality. Of these descriptors of individual-state relation, I draw on Scott’s legibility project to show how immigration forms reduce the information about individuals to certain categories that transform the one’s experience into a *legible* and *manageable* form of citizenry. The “file self” discussed later in the chapter is in fact a by-product of this process of managing citizens; the self has to be transformed into one that fits a nation-state’s agenda, thereby demanding that the “file self” be a *legible* “file self.” I argue that through illicit brokering, these citizens reclaim their position relative to the state and employ collective knowledge and alliances with folks from various ethnic groups. Through co-brokering—a set of strategies using language and rhetorical knowledge within and outside one’s ethnic group—these migrants form cumulative agency, which is further exercised in the form of play and performance. Rather than feeling constrained by categories for immigration for which they do not qualify, these immigrants together with others learn to speak the language of the state, practice their learning, and then perform it as if they were legitimate, law-abiding citizens.

Bureaucratic state practices and the state rhetoric of legal papers have certainly been contested in multiple ways. At first glance, immigrants seem to manipulate and mimic (Cintron, 1997) the rhetorics of the state, and ultimately to trespass the boundaries of legality. For instance, Cintron (1997) aptly elaborates on ways in which immigrants reclaim power through fabrication of passports, green cards, and driver’s licenses (p. 52). In Vieira (2010)’s study, we witness the formation of new alliances between Brazilian and Azorean immigrants to support access to citizenship. While Cintron (1997) claims that immigrants reclaim power through the act of forgery, my observations suggest something else. I argue that encounters with the nation-state
rhetorics, everyday tactics are not necessarily aimed at disrupting state hegemony. Rather, they are often motivated by personal agency and individualized goals. From the immigrant’s perspective, state structures such as the immigration agency are broken down into manageable bits and negotiated through language and rhetorical practices through daily encounters.

These manageable bits are also the ones that—like pieces of a puzzle—immigrants collectively cull to exert what I call *cumulative* agency. Cumulative agency comes from the ways in which individuals as well as formed alliances broker one’s way in the pursuit of citizenship papers. Immigrants learn to pull together various experiences with the papers and legal procedures or immigration interviews, and they share them as a collective. This approach, through manageable bits represents a brokering technique through which one can make sense of the state and its requirements, but also can recover one’s agency and respond back to the state’s control through legal documents and applications. I distinguish between co-brokering and cumulative agency in that the latter—cumulative agency is a result of co-brokering. In the process of gathering information and co-brokering each other’s experience, the outcome is the formation of a collaborative force that exerts cumulative agency and has potential to affect socio-economic and political structures. This brokering technique through manageable bits can work to dismantle the control of the state and it is accomplished one person and one experience at a time. These individual experiences in turn become resources to share in various communities, physical, or virtual; the immigrant retools these bits of information into new networks of knowledge, deciphering the bureaucratic language and institutional thinking deployed in these immigration forms. Through co-brokering—sharing of information about immigration forms, exchanging personal experiences with immigration agents and procedures, and learning to “build texts” and perform citizenship practices—immigrants create communities of affinity. Through
co-brokering, they invite other subjects who have been “othered” by the state as illegal or precluded from becoming part of the nation of immigrants, to co-create feelings of solidarity, of trust, and empathy. Co-brokering in this case is constituted by and large through affinities of the disadvantaged, of those who are marginalized on the basis of socio-economic status or ethnic and racial identity.

Change of Rhetoric about Immigrants: Protection and Compliance

The rhetoric surrounding current immigrants engages images of trespassing, unlawfulness, sometimes even terrorism. Massey and Sanchez (2010) contend that anti-immigrants attitudes thrive in times of economic instability; when the American people find themselves in political or religious turmoil, they become increasingly less tolerant of immigrants. The restructuring and reinforcement of federal departments is concerned mainly with the protection of the U.S. territory and U.S. citizens. In invoking the term “global turn,” Wendy Hesford (2006) suggests not a shift to postnational rhetoric, rather the use of a “new national discourse” which circulates and attributes new meaning to terms such as “empire, terrorism, and homeland” (p. 787). Such a shift is exemplified in the manner in which concerns pertaining to immigrants have evolved from labor, work, and employment to immigrant threat and issues of legitimacy and right to citizenship. Thus, the two main departments that have taken immigrant concerns are: United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) located in the Department of Homeland Security and Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) situated in the Department of Justice. These structural changes show that the immigrant and the process to becoming a citizen must function either within the bounds of homeland state or her

29 As role of EOIR is to “adjudicate immigration cases in a careful and timely manner, including cases involving detained aliens, criminal aliens, and aliens seeking asylum as a form of relief from removal […]” (United States, Dept. of Justice, “About the Office).
trespassing must be investigated according to the U.S. law and justice. Both “homeland security” and U.S. justice bring forth associative images of trespassing, of law enforcement, and punishment. In fact, several of the new immigrants in my study recalled their arrival experience on the U.S. territory as a more frightening than the older immigrants. For instance, Sorin who arrived in the U.S. in the early 2000 explains,

And I was keeping a journal then and I entered that room, and there was a guy there who was handcuffed to a bench. I was not tied. I looked around and there was that sign from the Department of State, the eagle…it created memories, and all the agents there: Perez, Rodriguez, Alonzo, Jose. No American name.

The association or mental memories, as Sorin suggests, between the eagle, the mark of the Department of State, handcuffs, and agents of Mexican origin reinforce the rhetoric of the homeland security. On the one hand, we have handcuffs and an eagle exemplifying the merging of various state agencies: the USCIS’s placement and implicitly the immigrant problem under the Department of Homeland Security. On the second level, we witness a dilemma for an Eastern European immigrant: the enforcement of U.S. law by security agents whose last names bear traces of a cultural or national identity different than the expected Anglo-Saxon names. The Mexican names of these agents in themselves point to changes in the immigration system, when former immigrants guard the borders of the nation-state against potential trespassers. This ambiguity of last names in relation to cultural, state identity and law enforcement complicates the discourse of nation-states. It disrupts the image of the U.S. as a monolithic presence; at the same time, it reveals the internal conflict of a homeland national discourse, where U.S. security officers of Mexican descent function as the guardians of U.S. territory against immigrant trespassers, most of whom are of Mexican origin. This juxtaposition shows a state’s power to
distinguish between the lawful, manageable citizens and the unlawful despite other affinities developed through common language, ethnicity, or culture. In doing so, the state manipulates certain affinities against other: affinity defined by the lawful citizenship against affinities defined by language or ethnicity.

It is in this context of USCIS\textsuperscript{30} that I locate a discursive market for legal papers, entangling individuals and state powers in complex ways. This market of legal papers regulated through forms, applications, and affidavits allows little room for the individual to negotiate his or her interaction with the state. Standardized legal documents often erase any trace of individual voice or presence since the goal is to ensure an efficient processing of immigration cases. One method to ensure expediency has been through allocation of a number to each individual entering the U.S. territory with an immigrant visa. Generally called an Alien number or the A number, it serves as identification throughout the entire process towards citizenship: first in the application for the green card or residence card and then in the next step, the application for naturalization.

The market for legal papers and writing in legal contexts in general is a high-stake enterprise. Inadequate writing, minor mistakes in filling out forms, inadequate evidence or inconsistencies in immigration cases can entail severe consequences, possible deportation. Since people’s mobility almost always functions under the jurisdiction of state laws and regulations between states, legal papers have power to do more than identify an individual by name, address, or physical features. The language of legal papers creates categories such as “immigrant,” “alien,” “illegal” or “legal,” “documented” or “undocumented” and the terms that define such categories. Most importantly, these categories manage the relationship between the individual and the state and unfortunately, between individuals and other individuals; such regulatory power produces far-reaching consequences. As Karolina S. Follis (2012) explains, immigrants

\textsuperscript{30} See footnote 2.
with unclear status can often become victims of organized crime or abuse as they can rarely claim any official form of protection from state agencies (p. 74). While these categories delineate who belongs where and thus control the lives and dynamics of family members, individuals learn to test and manipulate the boundaries of these categories even if this entails risks of deportation or other penalties.

The most compelling explanation of the high-stakes in immigration has been provided by one of my participants, Sorin—an immigrant whose story will be further analyzed in this chapter:

In immigration it’s different; in immigration…the officer who sits in front of you has the power to decide, “No, here, the deportation order. Tomorrow you must leave.”

(Personal Interview, July 2012)

Indeed, the context of immigration is different as one immigration officer as a state representative has the power to decide who stays and who leaves. Such decisions can be made in a short time span. But, Sorin’s case as an undocumented migrant is compelling in the way in which he describes the critical position of the migrant: in immigration there is no room for error, there is no time for making mistakes:

with immigration, it’s different. It’s not like with a trial, when they can drag a case for years even in the case of murderers (…) There’s no trial, and you know, error. There’s not trial, or a jury to decide. It’s decided by one person, very easy, very fast. If you didn’t, if you didn’t convince the guy, that’s it.

(Personal Interview, July, 2012)

In comparing a murder trial with the case of an undocumented migrant, Sorin basically claims that the first, a murderer always has higher chances to be acquitted than an undocumented
immigrant. The murderer, even if punished by the state system, functions within a legal structure rather than outside of it. The undocumented migrant, on the other hand, is almost always in dispossession; the undocumented migrant has no right because most rights function under the umbrella of state powers. The relationship between undocumented migrants and the state is further captured by the former’s perception of state authority. As Sorin’s account shows, the migrant experiences the “state” as “one guy” because that one person, the immigration officer is the one intersecting his experience of migration. In this reductive image of the state to “one guy,” the immigration process and the state power are broken into manageable bits as I suggested earlier. To some extent, since immigrant’s fate is dependent on one person, the process is expedient but not always favorable.

These forms of illicit brokering of legal papers inadvertently produce reactions from the state in the form of heightened control and restrictions. IMAGE (the ICE Mutual Agreement between Government and Employers), a program encouraging U.S. employers to enroll voluntarily in a special program verifying the workers’ legal status, attests to the pervasiveness of the undocumented and the apparent threat they pose to the U.S. economy. The IMAGE program upholds a “a culture of compliance” with the law, but at the same time it is packaged as a way to protect a company’s “good name.” Implied in the promotional video of IMAGE is the message that undocumented immigrants are “bad business” creating a “bad name.”

Against this rhetoric of the state, I counterpoise what my participants say about their illegal status. Interestingly, my participants never used the word undocumented and in doing so, they resisted adopting the language of the state similar to the 3rd grader’s rejection of Ceausescu’s domineering presence in a school textbook. These immigrants typically used a

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31 More information about IMAGE can be found on the Department of State, ICE’s websites: http://www.ice.gov/image/
phrasing that clearly emphasized their agentic intentions: “I overstayed my visa,” “I came to stay. And I stayed” or “I decided to stay.” The change from “stay” to “overstay” is often conflicting, although for some it is clearly a choice made from the moment they left the country of origin, Romania. I interpret their language overstaying as an attempt not to undo the control of the state over one’s mobility, but rather to extend their own agency and affirm their right to make decisions about staying, leaving, or moving. As mentioned earlier, the Work & Travel program offered an attractive package for young Romanians who traditionally undergo much scrutiny for obtaining a tourist visa for the U.S. Particularly for Eastern Europeans, there has been a direct correlation between the opening of the borders from the inside at the end of Cold War and increased regulated access from the outside, which took place through the Western countries’ visa protocols imposed on Eastern Europeans. In Western Europe and in the U.S., visa impositions and restrictions functioned as a “remote control” system, to use Aristide Zolberg (1999)’s phrase suggesting that a visa system regulates mobility and access to a country from afar. Before these immigrants approach their desired destination, they are subject to numerous checks, verifications, and close scrutiny. Visas represent a particular kind of control over the time and space of immigrants, and they are generally imposed on third world citizens, rarely extending to those from the first world (Follis, 2012). Yet, the immigrants’ overstay is indicative of an attempt to reclaim their agency and right to control their own mobility.

Although U.S. citizens have little knowledge about such impositions of the U.S. outside of its borders, they maintain negative attitudes towards those who made their way in the U.S. In the context of immigration reform in the U.S., a Chicago Council Midwest Immigration survey (Smeltz & Kafura, 2012) shows that 40% of Americans view immigration as “a critical threat,” 46% think that undocumented immigrants should be forced to leave their jobs and the U.S., 14%
think that they should be allowed to stay with work permit but not be allowed to apply for citizenship, and only 31% agree that these immigrants should be permitted to keep their jobs and eventually follow the path towards citizenship. Forty six percent of Americans, according to this survey, even if they do not feel threatened by immigration per se, feel threatened by job insecurity, by economic distress and the potential of immigrants to take over U.S. jobs. In such distressful economic times, it is easy to use images of immigrants as enemies of the state, as threats to the security and the prosperity of legitimate citizens. Language and particular immigration discourse contributes to creating affective images where U.S. citizens forming one body are assaulted by the unwelcoming presence of immigrants. Such language, Ahmed suggests (2004), turns emotions into “attributes of collectives,” of a nation of legitimate citizens pitted against the illegal, undesirable foreigners. Similar to Ceausescu’s patria, but using a rhetoric of “compliance” and legitimation, the nation in the discourse of immigration is that of a legal, hard-working nation. It is such collective emotions of groups or nations that must receive more attention since they are powerful in the way they stereotype or reduce experiences and individuals to certain features. In this case, immigrants are reduced to a legal or illegal subjectivity, to having or not having papers.

**Brokering Categories of Immigration: Economic Immigrants**

Given the climate of immigration and the rhetoric against immigrants, particularly against those that can pose a job threat, a discussion of categories of immigration is necessary. While in the language of CIS the term “economic immigrant” does not exist, the conditions and motivations of Romanian young adults’ immigrant experience discussed in this chapter are intricately tied in economies of personal goals, family difficulties, or obtaining jobs and legal papers through socio-economic alliances. Understanding the categories of U.S. immigration
illuminates the conditions under which illicit brokering emerges as a way to bridge the gaps between these seemingly separate categories. Illicit brokering becomes a strategic way to interpret and manipulate these categories. In this section, I will retrace the shift I made in identifying the Work & Travel cohort as “economic immigrant,” although my initial choice was “economic refugee.” While the participants discussed in chapter three were easily classified as political refugees, the new immigrants, those who immigrated to the U.S. after the borders opened, left Romania mostly for economic pursuits: they were concerned with making money in the U.S. and invoked as grounds for leaving either a corrupt system, injustice, and unfavorable conditions to “make it” in Romania.

Sorin left Romania because there were, as he put it, “unnatural distances” between the haves and have nots; he also described his economic shortcomings as a life with no future: “This is not a life. You can’t, you can’t dream of anything, you can’t accumulate” (Personal Interview, July, 2012). Sorin did not perceive such social distances here in the U.S. or at least, he perceived them as less visible in the U.S. than in Romania. Another participant, Cristina mentioned that although she considered herself part of the middle-class in Romania, when she arrived in the U.S. to pursue a college degree, the newly ascribed social status was quite different: “When I came here I was [pauses and puffs] ... (laughing) in the lowest bracket … “The lowest bracket” is a socio-economic category where Cristina located herself as she acknowledged the visible economic distance between her status and that of her peers whose “parents pay for everything.”

As an international student, highly dependent on scholarships and with immediate family residing in Romania, Cristina had a different status. The socio-economic differences became

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32 In the introduction, footnote 6, I mention the USCIS’s formal categories of immigration: humanitarian, family, and employment (http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis). The fourth category, which includes multiple options including adoption, is not discussed in this study because none of the informants mentioned those legal paths in their literacy histories.
more evident for her at the private college where she was studying, where students’ parents were visibly rich “wearing the pearls and everything,” as Cristina relates. Thus, Cristina’s perception of her own status differs from Sorin’s as it is shaped by the context where each of them lives. Cristina interacted with students from wealthy families and acknowledged her “lowly” status, while Sorin interacted on a daily basis mostly with Romanian immigrants, who shared a similar socio-economic status.

Sorin’s motive for emigrating and in fact, the motive of this entire Work & Travel cohort, relates to economic injustice experienced in Romania. While the refugees’ situation, those who were persecuted for religious or political motives, was clearly reflected in a defined category of immigration, but also in the larger public discourse of human rights rhetoric, the category of “economic refugee” in the immigration discourse does not exist. While one can petition for a green card and eventually U.S. citizenship on economic grounds, this path only applies to those applicants who can make a remarkable investment in the U.S. economy or bring special skills; it certainly does not apply to those who are trying the escape economic difficulties in their own country. In the initial stages of this work, I encountered much negative reaction to using the term “economic refugee.” In the fall of 2012, when I presented an early draft of this work at the Watson Conference, I suggested the term “economic refugee” to name those immigrants who left their country on grounds of economic inequality and in reaction to a corrupted society. At least one scholar in the audience expressed overt disagreement with my choice. The disagreement ultimately produced a fruitful dialogue, and it also prompted further research on my part with respect to these categories of immigration and how they are used in the public discourse, immigration, and scholarship on immigration. This attempt to select a particular language that defines a certain category of movement suggests that changes of already established discourses
can produce discomfort; it can also engage new ways of thinking about words or categories that are rarely interrogated. Such categories have been established in the past through negotiation, yet over time, they become fixed classifications that control movement and people’s lives. In a conversation with an immigration attorney, he too explained that the “economic refugee” category simply “doesn’t exist.” As an expert of the immigration law aware of distinct immigration categories, the attorney’s answer was unsurprising. In both situations—at Watson conference and the interview with the attorney—the category of “economic refugee” was dismissed.

Following up on this language of categories, I extended my research and surveyed a body of scholarly work about refugees and immigrants, with specific attention to these categories. I found that both terms: “economic refugee” and “economic immigrant” were in use, yet with slightly different connotations. In discussing the language and situation of asylum seekers, Jan Blommaert (2001) and Diana Eades (2005) identify the category of “economic refugee” to identity those who illicitly claim asylum; they have also been called “bogus” refugees (Eades, 2005). Blommaert (2001) challenges the economic and political distinction of these categories, critiquing the fact that political almost always suggests legitimate while the economic points to illicit refugees. A similar situation has been identified by Gomez Diez (2011) also in the case of asylum seekers in Belgium. In this case, Gomez Diez (2011) describes the applicants who hide under the refugee status as “bogus refugees” or “economic immigrants who come to the hearings with “rehearsed narratives,” that is fake narratives provided by human traffickers in order to help them pass off as refugees” (p. 555). Therefore, these applicants claim refugee status although they are not legitimate refugees. This equivalence of “bogus refugee” to “economic immigrants” illustrates that in the immigration discourse, economic motives for mobility are often
criminalized and set in opposition to political motives. While in Gomez Diez’s study, these asylum seekers are indeed fake since they hide their real motivation under the cover of a refugee, immigration triggered by economic needs is a real phenomenon, and it is in the economic sector where most of the controversy lies with deciding who should get what job and under what conditions. These narratives like other illicit commodities are means of brokering one’s way through the powerful language of the state that exert control over one’s movement.

Having two distinct categories in the immigration system—one politically motivated (refugees), and the other economic (business and trade-related migration)—serves as powerful control mechanisms even if in reality, these two categories are more fluid. Follis (2012) argues that the “blurring” between the political and the economic classification is more and more evident, as there are increasingly more refugees due to natural calamities, poverty, or on-going war zones. Since the term economic migrant or immigrant has traditionally been used by scholars to name those who “voluntarily [migrate] in pursuit of better earnings” (Eades, 2005; Sassen, 1999), I decided to abandon the initial term “economic refugees” and use instead “economic immigrants” to name those immigrants who become transnationally mobile for economic reasons. My choice has been motivated by Follis (2005) and Sassen (1999) but also by a desire to avoid naming these economic immigrants “bogus” asylum seekers. Important to note is that delineations between these two categories are fading in real life situations. In my research, even in the case of political refugees discussed on Chapter three, I found that many claimed economic reasons and the right to self-determinacy more than they referenced terrible persecutions, although officially they were classified as political refugees. Their account is certainly based on imperfect memories, and there were many of those who recalled terrifying living conditions in Communist Romania. Although they arrived in the U.S. as political refugees, many acknowledged and
remembered most the economic hardships they endured. Similarly, the new immigrants, the actual “economic immigrants” recalled injustice systems, corrupt politicians, as well as illicit ways of making money as strong incentives for leaving the country. For instance, Diana explained that she wanted to write a “manifest of her generation,” in the name of all those who had to leave the country. Her manifesto titled “A Refusal to Live in Romania” is intended to speak against the Romanian “system.” She came here looking for “another way of life,” a place where “there isn’t such evident corruption” and where one’s success should not be measured solely by one’s connections (Personal Interview, March, 2012). Diana’s comment challenges the framework of affinity when that set up works against her especially when she finds herself outside the bounds of the affinity group. Her frustration, resulting from not having received solid advice about the consequences of overstaying her visa, shows that affinities between groups are in themselves contingent and changing.

Sorin’s motives for leaving Romania in 2000, as mentioned earlier, were financially driven. The family situation was difficult since Sorin’s mother was the only provider for him and his sisters. He certainly tried to work various jobs, “wherever there was some money” to earn. But, “the money was so little,” he explains, “and I felt that this is not, this life is not worth living as such” (Personal Interview, July, 2012). From his own financial difficulty, Sorin moved on to evaluate the larger economic context in Romania and endemic illegal job market:

I felt that, during that time, in those years, that I… I don’t know if there was anything left to steal in Romania. People, everyone, I don’t know, was trying all sort of illegal ways to make [money]. I wanted to see how I can make money with honest work, not to steal from France, or from the phone company. We had some acquaintances from our area, Ardeal, that
area close to the border, you know, [with] street scalpers, exchange brokers, people doing trades with phones, with T-shirts, with foreign currency, with clothes...[these guys] were always on the streets.

As this excerpt shows, Sorin, as an economic immigrant is clearly knowledgeable of the illicit trade. What Sorin identifies is a particular culture of illegality, rather than just economic hardships or street small trade. He is aware of a market that operates at the margins of legality\textsuperscript{33}, yet he does not want to be one of street dealers. As explained in Chapter two, this economic practice described by Verdery (1996) as informal economies emerged during the Communist period when the state dominated all financial markets. After the fall of Communism, this street trade—a practice that involved mostly men doing nothing else but making profit from exchanging foreign currency at street corners—has become customary especially in the border areas. Corruption is the real culprit, as Sorin relates. In a country where stealing, cheating, and informal economies are the norm not the exception and where people wonder, as Sorin explains, whether there is anything left to steal, making a decent living is hard to attain.

Another participant, Adina explains her decision to leave Romania not by emphasizing injustice in the Romanian system but in global organizations. Adina’s case reveals the unjust treatment of Romanians that are hired to stay in their country or at least in their Eastern European region. Adina, a highly motivated Romanian professional, with a degree in Law and competent knowledge of English, used to work for a world-wide non-profit organization in Romania. Although it allowed her to connect with many people, and she made lots of friends

\textsuperscript{33} One question relative to this illegal problem is why Sorin’s moral code is not accepting injustice and illegality in Romania, yet in the U.S. he ends up manipulating rules of the law in order to attain his purpose—legal papers. One possible way to explain this is through Viviana Zelizer (2011)’s ethic codes. Only at the very end of last chapter, Zelizer mentions the possibility of competing ethical codes. I believe that in Sorin’s case, this was the case. While in his own moral code, he rejects injustice, falsity, and evading the state, he makes a decision—to overstayed his visa—that temporarily puts him at odds with the state. The temporal, limited aspect is key here. The alternative of lifestyle in Romania where injustice is pervasive does not provide a way out; the time for living injustice is perceived as indefinite.
from the U.S., the policy of the organization stipulated that they would only hire people as consultants, not as full time employees with benefits. Financially and culturally, this position proved advantageous except that Adina had more global pursuits incongruent with the organization’s policy for their Eastern European employees. Despite its global focus, the organization was not willing to set up a local office; by hiring only consultants with no benefits, it evaded paying certain taxes. It also managed to keep the local people local. Adina explains, “they kept saying…local people are good where they are at. So I was like: fuck off” (Personal Interview, July 2012). The only place abroad where she had been appointed was Ukraine located on the northern border of Romania. Local people creating local knowledge are indeed assets to many worldwide or globally oriented organizations. But local people and local knowledge can be emplaced, immobilized through strategies that serve only one end in global partnerships, the partner which has financial mobility and a national identity that leverages its flexible global positioning and mobility.

As these accounts show, there is a strong correlation between injustice, corrupt systems, and illicit brokering. Sometimes corrupt systems are located in the country of origins, and sometimes, long histories of exclusion through visa systems are in place for Eastern Europeans and other marginalized groups, even under the banner of globalization. These systems of exclusion regulate people’s mobility and with it, their bureaucratic literacy. Injustice is also a product of destructive political systems such as the former Communist regime in Romania. Second or “informal” economies, as Verdery (1996) writes, developed under Communism yet “spanned a wide range from the quasi-legal to the definitely illegal” (p. 27). One such example is carpentry, Verdery explains, which was not against the law when done at home for extra cash except that people would illicitly use tools from the workplace. Similarly, Romanian “economic
immigrants” discussed in his chapter use categories of immigration and brokering practices not entirely outside of the rules of law. Rather, they manipulate its boundaries to serve their purposes. Occasionally, injustice emerges from global organizations themselves who preferentially hire and manage the mobility of their employees. In such circumstances, as in the case of immigration categories, these are already established social, political, and cultural norms about certain countries and nationalities that have been in place for years. As Verdery explains, with secondary economies there is a “range” of practices, rather than a clear-cut distinction between legal and illegal, documented or undocumented. Similarly, it would be difficult to set a clear boundary between legitimate and illicit brokering. For instance, many of the participants in my study, if not all, had legal entry into the U.S. This is essential in the pursuit of legal papers, even if one overstays the visa. Illegal entry, as a legal consultant explained, is virtually irredeemable unless a special immigration amnesty or a new Immigration and Reform Act are issued.

Several aspects that I have outlined in this section provide a frame for understanding illicit brokering. First, although immigration procedures attempt to regulate people’s mobility and classify people into separate categories, such as political or economic, the complexities of life reveal fuzzy relationships between such distinctions. It is precisely this in-betweeness that creates spaces for brokering. When people are excluded from one category, they find paths to rhetorically inscribe themselves under classifications that allow them to pursue their goals. Rather than take categories of exclusion for granted, they challenge, modify, and adapt them. Often, as in the case of Romanian immigrants discussed in this chapter, they do this with others. Co-brokering seems to operate optimally when people collaborate as members of the same class—Eastern Europeans, or immigrants in the U.S., or the Work & Travel cohort comprised of
Romanians with college education, mobile, generally single, and conversant at least in one foreign language. These categories based on ethnicity, socio-economic class, citizenship status create affinities that people use to co-broker divides in their personal, everyday lives.

Your Papers, Your System, “Your bread and butter”

Each category of immigration has its own set of papers associated with it. For Romanians, legal papers are important. Particularly for this group of Romanians who came with a work visa, papers and work permits were essential. Although at some point but at different times, an entire cohort overstayed their visa, they continued to look for ways to obtain legal papers. Vieira (2011) draws attention to textual borders and the central role of papers in the life of transnational migrants. Papers are a central focus particularly for those who desperately need them, particularly when, as one of Vieira’s participants explains, “everything you want to do, you depend on a document you don’t have” (2011, p. 437). In my study, obtaining documents seemed to be a matter of volition and intention. Adina explained that, while you can get by without papers for many years, you should strive to “get your ducks in a row.” For Adina and many others, “getting the ducks in a row” meant obtaining the papers first, then going back to school, and possibly accumulating more work experience. Without papers, having work experience or advanced degrees proves pointless since one can only be hired legally with legal papers. If for Adina, papers are a top priority critical for the following steps, for Sorin papers are a survival kit; they are nourishment or a staple: “[papers] are your bread and butter, [they are] your system. Creating “your system,” a bureaucratic system composed of legal papers, following the jurisdiction of a formal system, is key in the case of immigrants. While some immigrants may easily get by without papers, for most Romanians papers are essential. In regards to the controversy over voter ID, Sorin commented:
How can you not have an ID? For me it’s abstract. I think for Europeans is a bit abstract to pretend to have, that you are someone and not to be able to prove it. It’s not required to have an ID. Maybe you don’t have the means.

Sorin understands that not everyone can afford to have an ID. For him and for other Europeans, however, papers are a means to “prove” one’s identity; they are textual anchors of identity. For this reason, one of the first things that these immigrants do is to procure “their bread & butter,” their textual “system” through alliances and collective brokering practices.

In the initial stage, immigrants try to create their “own system.” These first steps often involve walking in someone else’s footsteps, someone who already knows the routine:

The friend of my friend, with whom I came in contact, he knew the routine before hand, from… just like that. Again, where exactly he knew it from? I don’t know, but he knew the steps: that you have to have an address, to have your name on the mailbox, and you self-address an envelope. At that time, a utility bill was not required (…). It was a letter or a postcard written by to yourself, to pass through the mail stream; basically, it arrived, it meant that you have an address. You take it with you, you’re good. You’re valid. Once you have that, they can send you [stuff].

These steps seem rather simple: one follows in the footsteps of someone else, generally a friend or acquaintance. The process is somewhat well defined starting with setting up a valid address at first. The validation process involves writing a self-addressed letter/postcard and then mailing it; this stage is part of creating a system of one’s own through role-playing. The immigrant is the sender and at the same of time, the addressee. It is perfectly fine to “play” both roles because the procedure is part of building the system. James Scott (1990) writes about public and hidden transcripts where a hidden transcript “takes place “offstage,” beyond direct observation by
powerholders” (p. 4). In many ways, the hidden transcript mimics the public transcript. As in Sorin’s situation, his mailing of a postcard or letter to himself simulates the bureaucratic process of validating an address. Since there is no message that is transmitted through the sending of this postcard/letter, the entire communication process is subordinate to a higher order purpose: address verification. In doing so, Sorin performs the expected behaviors of the dominant powers yet he infuses them with his own purposes.

In the next dialog, Sorin relates subsequent steps in the process of creating a system. It is a question and answer procedure that Sorin reproduces during our interview. If in the initial stage, Sorin created his “own system” through brokering of a friend’s directions, a friend who had already paved the way, at this stage the path through textual labyrinths is brokered through enacted dialog. Through this dialog performed during our interview, Sorin reveals how an obscure system is unlocked. It is a process of making the strange familiar:

I think I found out from a person the weekend when I was in Detroit, that I need to go to what is called social security administration. “What is that?”

“Well, you go there with your passport, you show you have a visa, they make a copy, you fill out a form, and then you wait.”

“How long?”

“About 3 weeks.”

“And what does this do?”

“Well, that…it gives you the right to get an ID.”

“And driver’s license.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”
“Very good, I need this for sure.”

The brokering that happens here involves a step-by-step question-and-answer routine. In this predictable script, one can ask questions that involve information request: “What is social security?” or questions about purpose of documents and forms: “What does this do?” or questions about external matters such as waiting time: “How long?” It also involves information about what forms to use and what to expect: “You go there with your passport, you show you have a visa, they make a copy, you fill out a form, and then you wait.” While most of this information is easily found on a website, clarifications and information questions are generally part of the hidden transcript. By asking questions like “What is social security?” or “What does this do?” one may easily self-disclose as an outlier. Having this information beforehand, through the brokering of a friend, the applicant becomes equipped to perform her part and ready to anticipate other people’s roles. Ability to predict what the interlocutor might say protects one from being caught off guard. One’s performance evolves and depends on the other’s one role. As the transcript shows, in this performative exchange of a hidden transcript “offstage,” the roles are clearly established. Sorin explains that you go there with your passport, you show you have a visa, you wait; they make a copy. Each role is delineated clearly through language and interaction: there’s a you and they that alternate and exchange information through dialog.

However, in the example provided, Sorin is enacting the dialog at both ends, which means that his learning of the roles functions as an anticipation strategy of the verbal exchange. As an outsider to this system, the above dialog performed before the actual interaction allows him to create familiarity and a space of comfort by learning each part of the interaction. This dialog is a hidden transcript created and enacted prior to the actual public performance.
In the process of creating one’s system—preparing the textual means of identification and survival, one’s bureaucratic system—involves an interplay of roles, scripts, and documents. In many ways, this is a dialogic move similar to the 3rd grader’s response to her Romanian textbook. The difference, perhaps, is that in creating one’s system there are multiple moves, a back-and-forth of information exchange following the scripted path of legal citizenship. A friend or family member brokers an immigrant’s access to basic papers of identification and documents in unofficial settings, probably personal homes away from the public eye. Such alliances are eased by a common ethnic identity and by the intermediation of a friend or a friend of a friend. In this process, they co-create the immigrant’s system so that she can function in a new bureaucracy, which at first is legible only to the inner group. In discussing the process of managing and organizing both space and citizens, Scott (1998) writes that in the early days, cities were “perfectly legible” by the locals, while for the foreigner, their spatial organization was obscure like a “unintelligible dialect” (p. 54). Similar to a traveler or trader who needed a local guide (Scott, 1998), these Romanian economic immigrants were guided and brokered through the knowledge of friends and acquaintances. Learning about having a mailing address, obtaining a social security card and its purpose as well as obtaining a driver’s license are all highly brokered activities through face-to-face exchanges and specialized websites for immigrants. They make up a system for the immigrant that recreates a sense of belonging and connection to a new environment.

A few observations are necessary here about literacy and bureaucracy. In situations when literacy is defined as a staple, as one’s “bread and butter,” one could easily fall into defining literacy as basic skills, as simply being functional in the world (see for instance Sylvia Scribner’s (1984) literacy as adaptation metaphor). To some extent, literacy is basic in this context of
paperwork and procedures to obtain a driver’s license, a social security card, or address validation. But it entails a lot more than basic knowledge. By creating “one’s own system,” applicants are aware of the existence of larger socio-economic and political structures that govern people’s lives. Establishing an individual system is a strategic move, which does not conceive literacy as basic but envisions it as a flexible construct; it is a process of making a system one’s own. In this sense, literacy is not longer just a set of steps and procedures; rather, literacy is performative necessitating an understanding of roles, of what one writes, to whom, and within what time frame. The presence of affinity is woven throughout this entire process. Those who assist immigrants with figuring out the system and decoding the unwritten rules of documents create systems of support for those without papers. These people, then, must learn to perform the affinities of a legitimate citizen, by constructing their files selves and projecting a desire to become respectable citizens.

Making a Case: Brokering the “File Self”

Once papers are obtained, the immigrant can learn ways to use them within or across categories of immigration. In an earlier discussion of economic and political immigrants, I have concluded that although the political classification in immigration always receives higher recognition than the economic order, these categories are more intertwined and complex in real life. Within the economic category, it is not the economic disadvantaged but those who can contribute to the U.S. economy with marketable or exceptional skills that have a potential path to citizenship. Like many other Romanians, Sorin knows for which categories he qualifies and for which he cannot make a case. Although he has a solid literacy capital, consisting of excellent writing skills (a two year college training in Journalism) and mastery of foreign languages
(English, French and German), he cannot make a case for his skills and obtain a job in the U.S. that would sponsor his status:

  to find someone to offer you a job, you know how hard it is to get it, to show that you are somehow more special than a million other Americans, who probably do similar work. Someone must want you badly. (Personal Interview, July 2012)

As Sorin explains, in order to obtain a work visa, it must be demonstrated that the potential employee is remarkable and unique in the skills s/he brings, and that a U.S. citizen is not available or does not possess similar skills. Of 14 new immigrant participants, only two (Cristina and Gelu) were sponsored by their U.S. employers. Cristina was sponsored as a high skilled professional, while Gelu was sponsored for a specialized occupation in carpentry. Finding the appropriate category for which to qualify is in itself a rhetorical task. Applying for a particular category defines all documents to be compiled into the “file self” (Chu, 2010)—a collection of documents an applicant must submit at various stages in pursuit of U.S. citizenship.

Of the three main categories for immigration, if the political and economic categories are too exclusive, the third category: marriage or family affiliation opens an alternative path to citizenship. I focus here on these “circumstantial” marriages to a U.S. citizen, as they reflect a different type of alliance. To some extent, alliance through marriage seems similar to Viera (2011)’s study of Brazilian immigrants partnering with Azorean immigrants to obtain U.S. papers. But, the two situations diverge in the sense that, even if many Romanians made marriage alliances with other minorities, in particular with Puerto Ricans, the Romanians remained in charge of documenting the “paper trail” process. Also, as I will show later, these alliances are economically and racially structured complicating the brokering of bureaucratic literacy.
In the case of economic immigrants, textual brokers and information networks are also highly rhetorical and necessary to make an argument for this “file self.” As it turns out the “file self” is a highly brokered self, built through various sources from the internet, neighbors, apartment mates, co-workers, and members of the immigrant community. From Sorin, I learned about this cohort of “economic immigrants,” former college students in Romania, who are now working as taxi drivers or in constructions in various U.S. urban areas, while their girl friends work as babysitters or nannies. With great detail, Sorin explains how these undocumented migrants obtain their information and manage to find a niche and build their own cases:

There is a sort of collective consciousness [this is the exact phrase Sorin used in English], a sort of collective information flow that streams away. I don’t know where from. But it comes from the congregations or get-togethers that take place ad-hoc, most of the times with people who see each other for the first time. (Personal Interview, July, 2012)

Certainly, this exchange of information concerns details related to paperwork and specifics about interviews with immigration officers. Here is a more detailed description of how this collective consciousness operates in action:

The stereotype [with taxi drivers] is that they all have earphones; that is great medium. It was. There, cases were dissected, were being discussed. While picking up clients, “Hi, how are you?” and whatever. “Do you mind if I use the phone?”

“No I don’t mind.”

And you started in Romanian, not loud, discreetly. But there [cases] were dissected. That guy did so and so, another one had the interview as such. I call a guy, this guy calls another guy, I connect to him, and it was a branching out, like a conference call, of almost 8 participants sometimes. […] and all those were discussing.
In this sharing of information, the co-brokering operates through relationships that bind a socio-economic group together and it is co-constructed through individual participation. In the process of co-brokering, participants’ exchange of information becomes central rather than who owns what knowledge or where it comes from; this brokering emphasizes the relation of alliance in order to dismantle an obtrusive system of information and literacy. In this brokering of texts, applications, and documented evidence, the power resides in the pieces of information that each individual brings to the conversation. As participants analyze various cases, there is a moment-by-moment engagement with the information received, and ownership of a particular type of information dissolves in the interaction. Taking a step further, even if each individual’s interaction with social structures is unique and singular, and even if literacy mediators are particularized, I draw attention to collective actions that form to disrupt sedimented bureaucratic practices. In The Struggle and the Tools, Cushman (1998) argues that critical consciousness does not necessarily need to implicate collective action; rather, the individual and the day-to-day interactions with power structures can significantly alter the perception of social structures and their impact on the individual (p. xx). While I agree that critical awareness does not necessarily concretize in “collective action,” nor “unified class struggle,” I argue that impact in writing comes from *cumulative agency*. This cumulative agency is established through connected affinities. In the case study of the work and travel immigrants, the cumulative agency took the form of alliances or co-brokering formed within this group of immigrants in pursuit of legal papers and U.S. citizenship. Cumulative agency, I argue, would not be possible, had it not emerged among this group of immigrants who share similar socio-economic and ethnic background, similar experiences with immigration, and similar restrictions.
Similarly, in the case of Sorin and his fellow Romanian taxi drivers, attempts to destabilize state structures in the legal papers market manifest through using information from a collective rather than from official sources. Sorin’s account also illustrates the nation-state’s blind spots, its inability to identify how individual and localized actions interrupt forms of control, such as immigration categories. For instance, the state did not predict that a certain number of applicants for U.S. citizenship excluded from one immigration category would manipulate another category, that of family reunification. Explaining the increased number of “circumstantial” marriages, especially between Romanians and Puerto Ricans, Sorin further comments that “at the beginning, the system was unprepared here, and they didn’t see this. So, some people passed easily; it gave courage to others” (Personal Interview, 2012). But when each week a Romanian and a Puerto Rican were about to get married, certainly the “system” reassessed its blind spots and demanded more proof. In response, couples prepared more and more evidence to support their claims. While the system seems “blind” and “unprepared” for both individual and collective action that subvert its control, the system also changes and responds to attempts to break its control. Rather than view hegemonic forces as simply oppressive and the marginalized as completely overtaken by power structures, we notice a more dialogic interaction between the two. The system changes in response to situations when collective action against the system becomes more noticeable. Although some changes are gradual and slow, state agencies and individuals or collectives shape each other’s actions. Bureaucratic literacy, thus, although seemingly immobile, is subject to scrutiny. By interacting with the powerless, bureaucratic literacy becomes more flexible especially as we see the role of brokers and co-brokers acting towards movement and change.
The “collective information flow” is then taken up in individual cases as each individual builds his or her own “file self” (Chu, 2010) for the interview with the immigration officer. Generally, a “file self” contains information about the couple, in the case of marriage, particularly financial statements that bind the two together: bank statements for joined accounts, apartment lease, proof about car loans, maybe mortgage, and of course other “soft” evidence: pictures from family events, emails between partners, testimonies from friends and family confirming the relationship and contexts where they met the couple, etc. All this evidence, compiled in a “the file self”—a collaborative work of both created and real affinities—must also be well organized and if possible, color coded or marked in such a way that evidence pertaining to a particular episode of the couple’s life should be easily found. Any type of documentation about the couple—letters or emails, pictures, friends’ testimonials that assert the couple’s legitimacy—is extremely useful. But, bills, bank statements, showing shared financial responsibility override all the other. Although in the category of marriage as a path towards citizenship, the economic dimension is not fundamental, financial documents nevertheless undergird the legitimacy of a marriage. They have the accreditation of state legitimation or bear the endorsement of financial institutions. In a sense then, the immigration agency as a state agency legitimizes evidence that carries its own seal or the mark of powerful institutions such as banks. To this end, in this “file self,” while much information is about the individual or the couple in the case of marriage, ultimately documents offer stronger evidence of legitimacy. The “file self”—created through collaboration with many others—represents negotiated discursive image of the individual and the state/ institutions. Resulting from this, the “file self” functioning as an alter ego of the state or institutions, is ultimately a highly brokered self. Since this self is also reflective of what the state wants to see in a person or in a couple, the result of the brokering
is a legible citizen. As various individuals interact with state powers, they collect and transform the “file self” into a brokered image of mediators, and state-powers. The co-brokering produces legible “file selves,” and has power to bridge ethnic groups. One possible explanation for why Romanians and Puerto-Ricans, for instance, are able to pull their affinities together is justified by a notable affinity that Romanians have for Spanish and in fact, for romance languages. Several participants in my study expressed their appreciation for the Spanish language, and some even said that in work place situations, they used Spanish to communicate with their co-workers. Since Romanian and Spanish have Latin roots, it is easier to establish a basic level of communication, even for someone who has never studied Spanish. Another possible explanation for the co-brokering across ethnic groups is a shared socio-economic condition that facilitates these partnerships. In the following section, I expand more on these partnerships and the inequality that permeates them.

“Building Texts:” The Politics of Co-brokering and Alliance Making

If creating one’s own system of paper and documents and putting together the “brokered file self” are actions accomplished through alliances generally within an ethnic group, the process of maneuvering categories of immigration involves alliances with other ethnic groups. One such alliance as mentioned earlier are marriages between Romanians, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, etc. Yet, these alliances contain hierarchies based on some assumed compatibility between ethnicities. For instance, marriages between a Romanian citizen and a U.S. citizen of Romanian origin are ranked at a higher price than between a Romanian citizen and a U.S. citizen of Puerto-Rican or Mexican descent. This discrepancy of cost seems justifiable by a need to demonstrate physical compatibility, that is to select bodies that are matching other bodies in order to build credible marriages. Ethnic bodies that display similarities, whether in height,

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34 By mentioning price, I actually refer to an actual monetary transaction.
weight or other visible features constitute a better case for marriage and compatibility in forming an alliance than those physically distinct. As in the case of the “file self” that must project the image of the state, here the couple must project a “compatible” image, an image of an ideal family that displays similar features. This compatible image must be reflected in pictures as evidence of the couple’s affinities for each other as well as in documents, through textual evidence.

While Sorin speaks of the body in terms of physical compatibility, which seems to suggest physical features not necessarily racialized or ethnically marked bodies, I suggest that in this alliance, white bodies are positioned more advantageously than the non-white ones. In an interview with another Romanian taxi driver, we talked about the Romanian taxi drivers in Chicago and their apparent “invisibility.” Cristian, my informant said “We [Romanian taxi-drivers] are extremely numerous. We have an advantage of the skin, until you open your mouth, they won’t know you are from outside the U.S.” While the “skin advantage,” as Cristian says, works well for taxi drivers, allowing them to blend in rather than be identified as foreigners, the same advantage is at play in the case of alliances for marriage between white Romanian bodies and ethnically or racially marked bodies.

The alliance is never an equal-party exchange as in the case of co-brokering within the ethnic group. With astute observation, Sorin explains: “For them, it’s about money. And then you ask yourself: who does this for money? And when you ask: not the best persons, not the nicest” [words in italics are Sorin’s exact phrasing in English, not my own translation]. Sorin’s comment points to a socio-economic discrepancy in this alliance, that implicates the rhetorical body as a display of ethnicity, but also one’s identity as marked by a marginalized socio-economic status. Sorin continues to explain, “These are people that are desperate to pay a loan
that’s hanging over the head, or maybe a drug addition. Or maybe they have 7 kids at home or a so called divorced husband.” Loans, drug addiction, or a large family, these are all aspects that propel the other side of the alliance—an alliance wherein one’s body, a U.S. citizen’s body and the accompanying papers are transacted in exchange for money. In Vieira (2010)’s study, the connection between assimilation and literacy is established as two immigrant groups, the Azoreans and the Brazilians, use language resources and legal status to facilitate access to legal papers of the undocumented; although occasionally they foster unequal relationships, they manage to assimilate partially to each other’s groups. In my study, the language describing immigrant partnership between different ethnic groups evades notions of assimilation. It is a transactional language, an economic exchange that involves bodies, papers, agreements, all contracted temporarily. Each party seeks to accomplish his or her purpose and leaves the partnership, once their planned goals have been attained. Although I report here only from one perspective of the transaction, of the person with the money but without papers, it seems that those with economic power guide the transaction more than those with papers and no socio-economic leverage. The transaction between immigrant groups is not a simple equation: those with money are more powerful than those with papers. The cohort I refer to here, these Romanians with money are a particular group that worked hard for every penny. They are after all economic immigrants. Although they arrived poor, they find jobs, work hard but they also possess a rich social and cultural capital. It is then this combination of socio-cultural and multilingual assets coupled with economic power that gives them a stronger leverage. Although they start at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder with blue-collar jobs, their higher status due to their knowledge of English and some college education is acknowledged even by their employers. Thus they advance faster on the socio-economic ladder. When Sorin first met his
future employer at a coffee shop, the latter was surprised to hear Sorin use English effortlessly when he asked a barista for a pen and paper to jot down the employer’s phone number. “You speak English? What are you doing here?” asked the employer and then followed apologetically: “I still have to put you to work.” The implicit assumption is that physical hard work—such as in constructions where Sorin and many Romanians work—is designated for those with limited or no English literacy knowledge. This work is also meant for those without papers as Sorin’s example illustrates.

The importance of a socio-cultural and multiliterate capital has been emphasized by another participant. Although Adina acknowledged the role of financial power in the pursuit of legal papers, she underscored that such transactions require a lot more: being smart, being street-smart. At my prompting to explain what “being street smart” meant, Adina listed the following: 1) “very good command of English” 2) “seeking legal advice” whenever that is necessary 3) “conversation with successful people.” In other words, all these “extras” are connected to aspects of language and literacy. First, knowing English is a necessity, or it is perceived as such in this group of young Romanian immigrants. In fact, those who do not master English stand out.

Cristian related a conversation he had with a teacher at the taxi driving school about Romanian taxi drivers. Based on the teacher’s observation, the “good” stereotype was that Romanian taxi drivers speak very good English. While Cristian confirmed this stereotype, he also added jokingly that Romanians do speak English except for one, one guy a friend of his who was apparently picked on for his limited English proficiency. There is certainly more than one Romanian taxi driver who does not speak English well, yet the general expectation of Romanians for Romanians is that they should speak English well and those who do not are stigmatized. This in-group affinity defines the types of literacies that are valued. Speaking English well is one such
literacy. Having a multilingual ability affords flexibility of communication that positions the individual at an advantage in various professional and non-professional interactions. The second aspect concerns specialized knowledge from a particular field and accessing it through the mediation of experts; in this case, if an immigrant seeks legal papers, it is important to request legal advice from someone who has knowledge of immigrant institutions and discourses. Finally, accessing brokered information and developing one’s social capital ensures a more powerful leverage in establishing partnerships. Ultimately, even as minority ethnic groups broker each other’s way through legal papers, information, and even their own bodies, these are power-structured partnerships. They are uneven in their distribution of knowledge but most importantly, they are governed by images of compatibility of rhetorical, ethnically-marked bodies, by economic power, and certainly by knowledge of languages and specialized discourses. These images or suggestions for what is compatible and what is not, confirm that the “file self” must be legible and credible in the “eyes” of the nation-state.

The filing of documents, the selection and organization of evidence, and the oral testimonies of the partners must all support each other. His story and her story must match their story, which in turns must match the narrative of the documents already submitted. In preparing their stories, the couple must learn to portray the correct emotions. Those emotions, of course, must have been first documented through written evidence and then performed in person. To achieve coherence between the two stories, Sorin explains that the couple must “build texts” together and then practice. As each person involved “build[s] texts,” they create a hidden transcript that should meet the expectations of those in power. In the oral interaction, the couple must put forth a marriage performance unfolding through role-play. We have a husband and a wife and they must play their parts; they learn about each other, what they like, what they don’t
like, where was their first date, and they act out their script. Emotions are scripted and must be performed to perfection to avoid raising any doubts. Practicing and acting out the emotioned script ultimately means learning the language of a nation-state, with its hidden ideologies:

There’s an application you give them, and another draft that you use to practice with her. (…) You practice. You give papers with information about you. You ask her and you memorize like in biology. Like for an exam. You memorize important dates, names of the parents, names of aunts if they show up somehow. You must consult…how did we meet, why did we take each other. When is our anniversary? Where was …the first kiss. It’s like a game. Where is the first dinner? What is your favorite food? What is your favorite food?

These “texts” about the personal selves are built in such a way to prove to the immigration officer that they are a bona fide couple. Thus, they must demonstrate knowledge of anniversaries, favorite foods, and other personal details. “It’s like a game,” says Sorin but ultimately it is about putting on a role and acting it out for an audience that has laid out the guidelines for these roles. The game involves memorization, learning, and acting out a particular part. It is a performance of a scripted identity, a scripted citizen that must follow a screenplay. This performance and the process of “building texts together” are highly brokered through in-group alliances but also through partnerships with other ethnic groups.

This study substantiates similar findings articulated in Vieira (2010)’s study of undocumented Brazilians making alliances with Azorean Americans. As Vieira (2010) suggests marriage alliances produce a more certain path to citizenship than education. Nevertheless, my

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35 Different than emotional, I use emotioned as defined by Jennifer Trainor (2008) to point to the “related dynamics of lived affective experiences, emotional regulation taking place through institutional and cultural practices, and language” (p. 85).
analysis of illicit brokering in this chapter shows a scripted path of emotional performance through texts but also through actual maneuvering of bodies in the pursuit of legal papers. These affinities, however, are uneven since they only converge when triggered by individual motives—desire of legal papers, on the one hand and need of money, on the other hand. A better descriptor of these partnerships is to imagine them through points of affinity, temporal and limited. Of course, other forms of affinity have longer temporal value and such qualifications might be important as we consider literacy as affinity. If we only consider points of affinity in the classroom, the impact of those literacies is limited unless we envisions them as enduring, patterned emotioned discourses developed through everyday practices.

“Seeing like an Immigrant:” Illicit Brokering and its Limits

Approaching the participants in this study through the perspective of illicit brokering and their pursuit of documents is important, because at certain points in life, documents determine the course of every aspect of their lives: their jobs, their relationships, education, etc. As I followed the documentary path of this cohort—starting with the Work & Travel program, creating “their system of papers” to making alliances so as to obtain legal papers—I drew on information shared with me by several participants. My goal was to show these immigrants’ perspectives and the strategies employed to understand state powers and state rhetorics. However, by focusing on their documentary/ non-documentary status, I also aimed to depict what “seeing like a state” or “seeing like a guard” means. This “seeing” is a narrow vision. It approaches the individual only through established categories or selective features that matter in the bureaucratic system of various institutions. In Seeing like a State, Scott (1998) documents the gradual imposition of state control through spatial organization but also through the use of
documents and last names as tools to manage the population. In “Seeing like a border guard,” an analysis of rebordering Eastern borders in Europe, Follis (2012) relates that one of the most essential equipment of border guards is their eyes. Their enhanced vision through the aid of thermal cameras and other surveillance devices complement what the naked eye cannot perceive. It is also their “sense,” albeit subjective, of something suspicious that shapes the vision of a border guard. But there are many aspects that these visions and languages of nation-states cannot capture. Although I sought to give voice to these economic immigrants, I had several conversations with my informants when any reference to legal status was avoided altogether. Some simply said, “It was hard. And it was expensive. That’s all I want to say;” others expressed regret about their condition but refused to offer further details. The literate experience of these immigrants should be conceived in all its complexity. The fact that all these economic immigrants shared a wealth of other literate practices—besides illicit brokering of documents and papers—is worth further attention.

If in the case of political refugees discussed in chapter three, I introduced brokers as advocates, in the case of economic immigrants, the image of brokers as ambassadors emerges. Beyond the process of obtaining documents, when their selves are brokered through alliances—partnerships based on selected affinities within and outside their ethnic group—these young immigrants also become brokers of language, of education, and of culture; brokers as ambassadors carry an image and a message, as they are situated strategically among multiple stakeholders. Ambassador is an emic term used in the training of taxi drivers, as I will show later. A general definition of the word ambassador suggests that she is the representative of a foreign government. Less formal definitions of ambassadors circulate quite frequently, from goodwill ambassadors (UNICEF, the UN) to everyday ambassadors of various causes: fair trade,
bicycling, new technologies, etc. Similarly, the economic immigrant is also an ambassador of a particular cause in various situations.

One compelling example of ambassadorship is that of taxi drivers. In the training course for taxi drivers, in addition to aspects about the geography and history of the city, names of streets and intersections, the taxi school also emphasizes the role of taxi drivers as ambassadors of the city. To this end, they are trained not only in knowing the traditions and key aspects about the city, but also how they are the image of the city. While some aspects concern work ethics, such as “to be honest, to be precise, to [take] the shortest, most efficient route,” drivers are taught that they communicate a message with their bodies, through the cleanliness of their car, the music they listen, and even the smell of their car. These taxi drivers broker an image of the city, of a cosmopolitan city that engages cultures, languages, and peoples of different nations. As Sorin explains, he used to be asked at least 20 times of 25 encounters with people where he was from. With his accent like many other Romanians, he constituted the cosmopolitan image of the city. Interestingly as mentioned earlier, the U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) initiated an e-verify program called IMAGE (the ICE Mutual Agreement between Government and Employers). Through this IMAGE campaign, ICE encourages U.S. employers to enroll voluntarily in a special program verifying the workers’ legal status. While the IMAGE program is concerned with undocumented immigrants, in their marketing video, they target the bad image and bad reputation that undocumented workers create for a business. According to ICE’s rhetoric, undocumented workers are bad ambassadors. Returning back to the taxi drivers as ambassadors, a good number of them are in fact undocumented. Taxi driving is one site of employment where waves and waves of immigrants circulate. From my participants, I learned about the Romanian wave but also of different trends in ethnic groups such as Uzbek,
Mongoians, and Albanians. While taxi drivers are ambassadors of the city, brokering an image and a cosmopolitan culture, they are also the image of immigrant America, including undocumented immigrants. I contend that they are caught between the boundaries of the cosmopolitan image of a city and the limitations of work permits and documents; they represent a bad image of America. The first image, the cosmopolitan image, many Romanians managed to impersonate well. Most Romanians speak at least two languages in addition to their native language, Romanian. They shared with humor their success with clients, and numerous job offers received from established businessmen. They also shared the limitations:

Let me give you a job, an opportunity. And many times, you regret, because if I say that I don’t have the right to work that I can’t, that you can’t help me. But, you probably won’t be able to help, and even if you do. I’m afraid to reveal my identity, not that you will betray me, but I feel safer not to, no to tell you. These were very serious offers. (…) They called me and asked for my number.

As this example shows, taxi-drivers show the contradictions of immigration. On the one kind they project the cosmopolitan image of a Mid-Western city, the hub of many immigrants and the on other, they are the real image of “discrepant cosmopolitanism” (Clifford, 1997)—one that is marked by documents, visa restrictions, and immigrant acts and regulations. This image of the immigrant who comes to the U.S. just to get a job is sometimes at odds with the image of the legible citizen, the one who has to uphold the U.S. as a nation of immigrants.

Implications and Contradictions

One aspect of brokering relates to the mediational status, a bridge between rigid rules or categories and individual approaches to these regulations. Illicit brokering, in particular, engages with informal economies whose primarily location is the street. The street functions as a space
filled with insecurity, indeterminacy, and some flexibility. Textual brokering, by extension, presents these qualities and builds on practices that are changeable and adaptable. Yet, in the context of immigration, the brokering follows a scripted path and socio-economic alliances that mimic and disrupt bureaucratic control. These alliances, formed through affinities within one’s ethnic group but also through socio-economic solidarity, reveal multiple layers of marginalization and racialization. Since the rhetoric of bodies, whether ethnically marked or shaped by socio-economically forces, is implicated in the notion of co-brokering, alliances also reveal systems of injustice that operate among individuals. The brokering of legal papers, thus, involves unequal partnerships wherein each party seeks to maximize her gain and offset discrepancies encountered in other contexts.

Another aspect of co-brokering relevant to this chapter is the beneficial aspect of co-brokering since its goal is to facilitate literacy practices and to bridge gaps of knowledge concerning texts or documents. Since the information in a co-brokering exchange comes from a “flow” whose source is often unclear, this increases the probability of unreliable data in this exchange. There are at least two aspects to consider here. First, because co-brokering involves sharing of personal experiences, it reduces substantially the risk of exchanging untrustworthy information. Personal experience is also in itself variable and contingent, and those involved in such co-brokering practices are aware of this. Also, since these partnerships are built among those have developed relationships through other encounters, those who are unreliable sources of information will eventually be exposed. News about their unreliability will circulate fast. Although in my study, I have not encountered such examples, I had participants share about unreliable attorneys—those who were somewhat outside of this co-brokering process but who at some point, may have participated in the preparing a client’s immigration file. Nevertheless, co-
brokering or solely relying on the co-brokering has its own risks but it generally functions on established trust, mutual help, and history of relations developed over time.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE RESEARCHER AS A BROKER IN TRANSNATIONAL LITERACY RESEARCH

In this chapter, I examine how brokering operates in literacy research in transnational contexts. Literacy research implicates a significant number of agents, methods, materials, and contexts. Rarely is the process a smooth progression of steps. Rather, literacy research necessitates access to informants, access to various texts—official, personal, or specialized on a particular topic—a flexible research plan, and an ability to reorient, reassess, and reimagine the research process in the event that certain paths do not yield anticipated outcomes. I focus on the researcher as a broker as well as his and her reliance on a series of brokers—community members, librarians, colleagues, and other brokers of information. In transnational research of literacy, the brokers’ work of affinity manifests in an eclectic mix of professional, personal, ethnic, or national affiliations. At any point in the research process, brokers can intervene through letters of introduction, through a phone call, or simply through facilitating a conversation that may propel or impede the research process to the next step.

I organize this chapter into two sections: the first half is focused on my own positionality as a researcher, as a broker of knowledge and the process of gaining access to my informants in the Romanian immigrant community in Chicago; the second section engages with a series of brokers such as librarians, colleagues, and other scholars who use their position of mediation to intervene, limit, or obstruct access to texts. The brokering in this latter context took place at libraries and archives in Romania. Embedded in the first section is an introduction of two key terms: particularism and universalism as belief systems characteristic of Eastern European societies and respectively, Western countries (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2005). Understanding these belief systems will offer a more compelling rationale for why professional or institutional affiliations,
as well as ethnic and national networks impact access to materials as well as methods of analysis in the context of literacy research. I then show how these affiliations operate within the Romanian immigrant community: people form clusters—specific groups based on various variables such as business interests, church affiliation, geographical identification—and in doing so, particularize access to the community that is much more heterogeneous than it first appears. The researcher as a broker, thus, must be understood through a series of affinities—religious, professional, national, ethnic, and so on—that all contribute and shape the way literacy is being researched. Moving on to the archival research in Romanian libraries, I examine how particularism as a form of affinity controls various types of connections that impact literacy research in transnational contexts.

Before I proceed further, it is necessary to offer a brief overview of two concepts: particularism and universalism as belief systems that structure the type of affinities and affiliations one can establish. In a comparative analysis of modernization and attitudes towards rules of the law in Eastern European countries and Western states, particularly members of the European Union, Alina Mungiu-Pippidi (2005) suggests a contrastive perspective in which Eastern European states are characterized by particularism as opposed to the universalism of Western states. Particularism manifests itself as a mentality formed on the premises that rules and regulations are governed by relationships established through an individual’s degree of proximity and affinity to groups of power. Universalism, as Mungiu-Pippidi (2005) defines it, is generally pervasive in individualistic societies where the general rule is to promote “equal treatment” for all (p. 50). Certainly this does not mean that everyone is in fact treated equally; it only suggests the theoretical principles advocated in these societies as well as the institutions that uphold and maintain them. Although scholars’ opinions on the relationship between formal and
informal institutions diverge, some suggest that informal institutions emerge precisely because the formal structures—those that advocate universalism—failed to accomplish their purpose (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2005). Particularism as “mentality,” a way of thinking based on local knowledge is certainly a mark of second economies that emerged under Communism as I have highlighted in Chapter two. Societies where individual rights or access to public resources is thwarted or limited create a market where people resort to informal institutions and social capital, that is relations and networks that can create informal paths through bureaucratic stoppages. I introduce Mungiu-Pippidi’s (2005) model with one caveat. Rather than consider particularism and universalism at opposite ends, I envision a range of positions combining elements from both worldviews.

The Researcher’s Positionality as an Information Broker:

Where You Are From and Whose You Are

In this section, I focus on the researcher who, as Karen Lunsford (2012) suggests, functions as an information broker. I structure my analysis of the researcher’s positionality guided by two central questions that often emerge in transnational research: Where you are from and whose you are. If the first question denotes a geographical location that shapes one’s research perspective, the second question complicates one’s positionality by suggesting a particular affiliation whether ethnical, institutional, national, or epistemological. In answering these questions, I contend that rhetorical spaces (where we are from) and rhetorical affiliations (whose we are) influence the interactions, the access, and the materials that a researcher can obtain in transnational contexts; all of these affiliations also build one’s credentials. These qualifications become a transactional capital crucial in the research process.
The Researcher’s Positionality in the Immigrant Community

In the Romanian immigrant community, my ethnic identity shaped at large my own positionality as a researcher. Nationality and institutional affiliation were slightly more significant in the case archival research in Romania. Certainly, my affiliation with the University of Illinois was remarked and highly valued. It certainly brokered a passage towards a more legitimate position, but it did not impact significant the interactions with my participants, nor the materials I collected. My ethnic Romanian identity facilitated my access to participants and to research materials in a rather smooth manner. Ethnic identity implicates notions of language, of culture, but also of religious affiliation, which as explained in Chapter three has been much contested for the Romanian people. Although my ethnic identity expressed through language has been the most relevant in this study of literacy and in my communication with my participants, my religious identity was occasionally implicated in access to participants and the rapport I established with my participants. As an evangelical Christian, my initial access was facilitated by those participants whom I met through church connections. As I recruited my participants, I purposefully sought to connect with participants who were outside of my own networks, while also acknowledging my own positionality as a Romanian ethnic, academic, and a person of faith.

When considering my ethnic identity reflected through language and specifically, bilinguality, it allowed me to adapt to my participants’ language of preference: to speak in English when the participants preferred using English or use Romanian when this language was the first choice of my interlocutors. Most importantly, as a bilingual researcher I was able to switch between the two languages in various occasions when my participants resorted to the strategy of “shuttling between languages” (Canagarajah, 2006). The multilingual quality of my work as well as its transnational dimension could have been significantly impeded, had I not
spoken both languages. Particularly in moving from one language to another, it was helpful to follow the conversation or even switch languages during the conversation according to my participants’ lead. Similarly, when participants used Romanian and then would insert English words, such as for instance in retelling someone else’s words or comments to them, I was able to grasp better the role of such insertions. One participant used this type of insertion when he was relating a conversation at the driver’s facility. One of the test supervisors told John, “You don’t come here to buy the CDL;” this phrase as John related it to me during our interview created a strong impact on him arousing much anger, as he felt he was being falsely accused of trying to pass a test for which he had studied. As I transcribed and analyzed the interview, it was difficult at first to understand what the participant was saying because he switched from Romanian to English and his accent made it difficult to understand the message clearly. I have encountered this problem with other participants, who were pronouncing English words but in fact reading them as if they were in Romanian. I expressed this difficulty in conversation with one of my participants who is familiar both with Eastern European accent and less distinguishable foreign accents, and she modeled the pronunciation a few words as spoken by the Romanians whose accents I did not understand. In this way, she unlocked the mystery of some words and thus, brokered my own understanding of some more difficult accents. In both contexts—work at libraries and archives in Romania and in the Romanian immigrant community—access through language and one’s ethnicity proved extremely valuable. Knowledge of the Romanian language and culture facilitated the interaction I had with people and the type of narratives I was able to collect because of my background.

Another aspect about my positionality concerns socio-economic status. As I was attending community events and through my interaction with community members, I gained a visual and
material image of the “rhetoric of success” advanced in the community. Often this awareness started in the parking lot, when I would park my old 1990 Toyota by an impressive exhibit of expensive cars. In her ethnography of post-communist Slovakia, Prendergast (2008) also notes the bothersome image of an expensive car as a motivator for the arrogant attitude of its owner. The make and year of a car carries a powerful source of status, of socio-economic status, particularly for Eastern Europeans, and certainly for the Romanians in this immigrant community. Thus, both my own socio-economic awareness as well as the status of my participants shaped my understanding of the community and its pursuit of an image of success.

Finally, an important dimension of my research positionality relates to how I rhetorically manipulated my presence and authority as a researcher. My strategy was to take on flexible roles so as to adapt to my participants’ expectations—sometimes I performed the role of learner, a young community member eager to know about immigration in the early years; other times, I positioned myself as knowledgeable of immigration but in need of knowing more particular cases. Although initially, I adopted the notion of decentralizing my own subjectivity allowing participants to take ownership over our interactions, there were situations when my own authority as a researcher was not only expected but necessary. One of my participants, Dr. Savici kindly suggested that I should have a business card and carry a folder. In his view, my rugged research notebook—that otherwise held most precious data—was unimpressive and probably lacked a sense of business-professional allure. At Dr. Savici’s suggestion, I gave more attention to the image of the researcher that certain members of the community expected to see. The researcher’s persona could in fact impact the communication exchange about literacy and thus I had to resort to various sources of legitimation in interacting with various participants. Given my appearance as a fairly young and approachable woman, I had to evaluate and plan strategically
each interaction and decide whether to reinforce or downplay my credentials. Also, as a female researcher, although I selected public spaces for interviews and wore formal attire, I was conscious of my status as a female researcher. Generally, my gender worked favorably in that male participants were open or at least curious to chat with me about their immigration experience; it positioned them as heroes in their own narrative of immigration. For female participants, I served as a potential confidant that would listen to their story. For others, gender did not matter. They were content that someone asked about their story.

Establishing Access Through Personal Connections: the Romanian Immigrant Community

Finding participants through the snowball method—from person to person—rather than formal announcements confirms the particularism mentality suggested by Mungiu-Pippidi (2005). Participants volunteered to be interviewed only when someone else introduced me through someone they already knew. As I mentioned in the introduction, after I met a key person in the community such as Steven Bonica, I got connected automatically to ten other potential participants. Also, having an interview with one participant automatically connected me with at least two or three other potential informants. Attending community events especially smaller events opened the possibility to meet prospective informants. Formal announcements, however, did not yield any results; this reveals a deep sense of affinity constructed through personal connections that governs such ethnic groups. Generally, the difficulties that I encountered during the recruitment stage and access to the community concerned selection criteria given the large pool of potential participants. Other aspects relate to issues of representation of a rather heterogeneous community, and decisions about data collection termination especially as more interesting research threads surfaced.
The issue of access to informants is intricately connected to the social structure of the Romanian immigrant community and the two immigrant generations mentioned in Chapter one: pre and post 1980 waves. While the term *community* or the Romanian community best describes the pre-1989 generation of immigrants, the younger generation arriving post-1989 would be best described in terms of *networks*. Community is an emic term used by my participants and network comes as my own designator based on ethnographic observations of those informants who connected with other Romanians occasionally but did not see themselves as part of the community. Although denoting different groups, the terms community and network are not mutually exclusive, nor will young immigrants be found only in a network but not in the community. These terms are solely useful to reflect patterns rather than strict social organizations. In reality, both terms: community and networks are flexible constructs. When discussed on the context of immigration, which in itself implicates mobility, the shape and the dynamics of an immigrant community and immigrant networks change intersecting multiple other social and transnational networks.

The use of community for the older Romanian immigrants indeed refers to a rather unified group, to clusters of people and families generally connected through spatial proximity or institutions. I am aware that the term community comes with a baggage of promises and limitations. In discussing the problems with the term community, Joseph Harris (1997) makes two observations: 1) that community seems to denote perfectly inclusive groups, utopias void of any conflicts or tensions; 2) that community can become a “empty, sentimental word” (p. 99). The community of Romanian immigrants is neither utopian nor “empty” although it might be slightly sentimental, given that its formation is based on a common language, common ethnic background, and some common goals—in particular the desire to live the American dream.
However, I choose the word community because the members of this Romanian community see themselves as participating in the making of the community *despite* their different viewpoints. These differences contribute to a heterogeneous community, which at times may be disperse and hierarchical but nevertheless a community. Given that in the Romanian immigrant community, whether this means a church setting, family, or work place such shared businesses (e.g. in the proximity of the Romanian Heritage Center, there are numerous clusters of Romanian businesses), everybody knows everybody and access to one member of these communities, almost always facilitates access to many other micro communities. Although access to these communities is easily brokered, it should not necessarily mean that communities are flattened out and no power structures are in place. On the contrary, the community is also highly hierarchized as I will explain later when I introduce the term: *connections* and differentiate its use relative to community and network.

Network refers to those Romanian groups that are linked to other Romanians, without necessarily relying on official organizations or institutions to support these networks. Such networks are generally preserved through cultural attachments, and also through previously held connections developed prior to the immigrants’ arrival in the U.S. In selecting participants for this study, I too joined certain networks but was not really an integral part of the Romanian community. For instance, although I was introduced to Steve Bonica, the director and owner of the Romanian newspaper and to several other members of the community—Mr. Doru, a mechanic or Dr. Savici both very well-known by community members—I participated only in some events and activities. We connected every time when we had a shared interest but did not necessarily maintain the connection through various personal gatherings. Every event I attended offered the possibility to meet new participants. Every interview I had opened up the door to
meet new informants. As explained earlier, each participant became a potential broker in opening new connections to new people. About the same time when I met Steven in January/February of 2012, on a Saturday afternoon I scheduled an interview with Florian, one of my first participants. I had known Florian for several years, through a common friend. On my way to Florian’s house, I received several phone calls from his wife who informed me that they had unexpected guests and wanted to make sure their visit would not interfere with the interview. When I reached Florian’s house, I realized I knew both couples who were visiting that evening. Although these friends did not live in the Romanian community, they were connected through common interests such as hiking, biking, etc. During our conversations that night, Daniel, one of the guests, offered to participate in the study and he also brokered my access to a cluster of immigrants that was not yet represented in my study: immigrants with limited English proficiency.

The most important aspect of both the community and networks is the notion of connections. Connections denote acquaintances: a friend of a friend, a former school colleague, the friend of a school colleague, and so on. However, connections or having connections in a Romanian context, specific to old and new immigrants alike, has greater roots in the Romanian society at large both in Romania and the Romanian diaspora. Connections represent an important social and cultural capital functioning as a legacy of the Communist rule. Connections designate relations with certain people, who on the virtue of their position or some form of power or status, can exert an influence or affect the result of an action, generally the request for a favor. Under the Communist rule, citizens did not have rights. Their relationship to the state was always framed in terms of responsibilities. For this reason, if a person sought to obtain a right, such as

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36 In Chapter two, I discussed in more depth how economic and political relations in Romania shaped social relations. I explained that the notions of hatar and bacsis mark the presence of informal economies. Connections or having connections is also part of informal economies developed as a strategic compensation for other economic scarcities.
the right to obtain a passport and travel abroad, she had to create an alternative route, which was generally achieved through *connections*. Such alternative routes extended beyond reclaiming a right. It became a practice to use one’s connections for serious interventions or for mundane tasks such as getting food beyond the monthly ratio or purchasing a car through the intervention of an acquaintance rather than waiting years on the official list. In the introduction, I referenced Hawisher et al. (2006)’s discussion of *guanxi*, a concept similar to connections emphasizing relationality and its centrality in the lives of transnational literate Chinese. In the case of Romanians, most frequently connections operate in situations of institutional control or restraint; through connections, one can gain more power or access to attain a particular goal. Although connections point to power structures and access through social capital, they help people particularize a context, an institution, or a situation. In a recent blog titled “Understanding Romanians: 7 paradoxes to handle with care,” the author Andra Milcu exemplifies particularism quite eloquently as well as how connections operate:

We don’t go to the doctor. We go to doctor X because the aunt of our husband recommended him/her to us. We don’t go to the mechanic. We go to a certain Gigi. We don’t get a certificate from the town hall, we get it from mayor “Z”. We don’t go to an Institution. We go to a person. We go to Mrs. Y because usually she is in a good mood and she will take us faster. Anyway she has to because our cousin helped her last time when she needed a school “intervention” for her glass breaking son.

The implications for literacy, language, and learning are multiple. Since literacy and language are intricately connected to institutions, most Romanians know one needs connections to be accepted at a renowned university in Romania. In the competition between one who is fully equipped for a job and another one with connections, most likely the one with connections, if
possible political connections, will obtain the job. The level of success often does not measure by one’s accomplishment but by one’s connections. Certainly, there is a slight resemblance to the U.S. model, where access to a prestige schools and education is determined by family health and by extension, access to test preparation resources, counseling for good college selection, etc. (Delbanco, 2012). Connections then represent the infrastructure that can sustain individual action. Connections are in this sense powerful in creating affinities between individuals in educational and non-educational settings.

Since these social formations community and network organize the social life of Romanian immigrants and connections permeate both, it is important to consider how a researcher can gain access not only to the people but to various literacy practices in these communities and networks. The immigrant community is generally structured by institutions and geographical proximity. Such institutions include the Romanian Heritage Center (the headquarters of the Romanian Tribune), Romanian-American Network Inc. (a non-profit organization), churches, schools, and businesses. In these contexts, access to all these institutions was fairly smooth. The networks, on the other hand, are spread out; they intersect the Romanian community but they also connect with other professional networks formed on the basis of common interests rather than ethnicity alone. If the community has a festival, a newspaper, or church brochures and bulletins, the network is structured by cosmopolitan events and media communication. Literacy then is less structured by contingencies of physical space as it spreads through digital media. Rather than describe literacy as a practice in the Romanian networks, it is more accurate to refer to literacy events. In the network, I was more confronted with individual literacy practices, rather than literate practices particularly to various members of the network. Although the new immigrant informants shared certain commonalities—excellent English skills,
having with at least a college degree, a focus on professional skill and global competiveness—
their activities were differently mediated than in the case of old immigrants. The Internet and
new technologies shape the literacies of those in networks while in the immigrant community
both new technologies and activities in various concrete geographical settings are characteristic
of this group.

Issues of Representation: Hierarchical Community and

Community Clusters

When each member of the community can potentially become a broker of access but also a
broker of culture, one who mediates, advocates, or represents a particular ethnic identity, the
issue of representation becomes a rather complex issue. Given that in this immigrant community
a rhetoric of success is quite pervasive, the issue of representation is even more pressing, because
one is not only a broker of culture, but a broker of a culture of success. If I had followed solely
the rhetoric of success, as the community understands it, through successful businesses and
financial security, I would have selected my participants very differently. Instead, my goal was
to keep a balance between my approach: collecting immigration stories of ordinary people and
the community’s concern with projecting an image of success. From the beginning of my
research, I was directed to talk to people who really “made it.” This meant billionaires,
successful businessmen, etc. In one of my interviews with Steven Bonica, his recommendation
for future participants included “success stories,” remarkable or well-established people in the
Romanian community. Informed by an ethnographic approach, I on the other hand sought to
represent people’s perspectives or more accurately, ordinary perspectives. While it was my
decision to select participants, I was also dependent on people’s recommendations and following
the relations and connections within the community. Interestingly, only the leaders of the
community were concerned with representation, while ordinary folk oriented their attention to their own immigration narrative.

The issue of representation surfaced in two of my interviews with two central members of the Romanian community: Steven Bonica and Octavian Cojan. In the first situation, Steven corrected me when I referred to him as the representative of the Romanian community. He explained his work in and for the Romanian community as something he chose to do and had passion for. He clarified that a representative has to be elected by others and he was not. Rather, he voluntarily chose to do activities for and with Romanians. On the other hand, the concern with representation emerged prominently, leading into a long discussion in an interview with an important leader of the Romanian community, Mr. Octavian Cojan. Mr. Cojan has been involved not only with cultural events like Steven but also with assisting community members in administrative and political matters. He assumed his role as a community representative and showed concern with how the community was and is (mis)represented. Before the establishment of a Romanian consulate in Chicago, Mr. Cojan’s office space, currently a travel agency, was used to discuss and resolve issues pertaining to certificates, pensions, and other administrative concerns of Romanian citizens living in the diaspora. This was done both informally and officially when a Romanian consul from the Romanian embassy in Washington D.C. was brought to Chicago to resolve pressing matters. Given Mr. Cojan’s role in the community, he has an invested interest in how the community is represented, by whom, and in what terms.

This concern with representation was further motivated by incidents of misrepresentation and misinformation. There were many. In one instance of misrepresentation, the community was presented through the lens of a certain ordinary person. As Mr. Cojan provided more details, it seems that the person he was referring was not necessarily ordinary. He is a well-known, wealthy
businessman who also organized the festival, *The Taste of Romania* in Chicago. He had enough connections to sponsor famous people from Romania to join *The Taste of Romania* event. However, he was unprepared to provide information about the community in an interview with the Romanian television. Based on that interview, the Romanian community in Chicago was portrayed as a group of “painters and blue collar construction workers (…) electricians, plumbers” without saying anything about the “structure of the community” as Mr. Cojan explains, nothing about the professors, doctors, professionals, or artists. Surprisingly, a strong reaction to this misrepresentation of the immigrant community in the Romanian media came from Romania. Mr. Cojan was contacted and asked: “How can you allow such individuals to talk about the community?” To fix the problem, the Romanian media was invited back to Chicago and the reporters were connected with the right people, resulting in a series titled “The World and Us.” This was a success since it represented the community as it wished to be represented with “valuables, not just cheap stuff,” as Mr. Cojan relates. The issue of misrepresentation is also connected to media bias not only to individual bias. After the NATO summit and the reception for the Romanian delegation, the Romanian press included in the delegation reported back home that the Romanian community is formed of “cheerleaders” for President Basescu, and that their formulaic questions were most likely provided by the Romanian Department of State’s Secret Service. It is not surprising then that the issue of representation gained much attention.

Such situations of misrepresentation, both local but transnational and in Romania, show that the issue of representation can be problematic. The first question that Mr. Cojan asked me, as a careful protector of the community, was with whom I had already talked to in my study. Initially, his question took me by surprise but as our conversation unfolded, I gained further understanding of Mr. Cojan’s underlining concern. Based on my ethnographic work in the
community, I note that representation is problematic because one particularity of the Romanian community is heterogeneity. This is manifested in the presence of clusters. In the Romanian language, there is another term for cluster *biserica*, a diminutive and derivative from the word church: *biserica* (church) - *biserica* (cluster/ group carrying some affective connotation). I find this both ironic and fascinating in the sense that the church is in fact an important part of the Romanian social structure in this immigrant community, yet what characterizes the community are these *bisericute*, the so-called little churches or clusters within the community. Some clusters are in fact formed around or within churches: Romanian Pentecostal Church in Niles and the Romanian Baptist Church and Logos Christian School are, for instance, both located on the stretch of a mile in the same suburb, Niles, IL. Other clusters are formed based on “local patriotism,” as Mr. Cojan explains, which is in fact affiliation based on geographical regions in Romania. Just as the U.S. has the Southerners, the Yankees with all the cultural affiliations, Romania and particularly the Romanian immigrant community has its regional identities based on regions or cities: Clujenii (natives from the city of Cluj), Bucurestenii (residents from the city of Bucharest), Banatenii (people originally from the region of Banat), etc. As expected, all of these carry a cultural baggage and implicit sense of superiority or uniqueness compared to other regions. There are also clusters formed around key, remarkable people in the Romanian immigrant community. These clusters operate on a restricted principle organizing “by invitation only” events. Such a variety of clusters create real difficulties in the area of representation. As a researcher, this heterogeneity and clustering of the community posed problems not only of access, but representation in regards to literacy, language use, and rhetorical practices. I resolved this dilemma by continuing with more data collection than initially planned and by complementing interviews with additional materials collected in the community: books,
brochures, event programs, etc. Since each member of the community can technically function as a broker of culture and language, I sought to select participants that were close to my own networks and those who were far outside of my own connections. When members of the community recommended someone, I constantly checked that the community is represented equitably as I collected more data. I had to focus data collection on the topic of brokers—that emerged as a central point of inquiry, leaving additional threads of inquiry for future projects.

The Researcher’s Positionality in Transnational Contexts: Libraries and National Archives in Romania

If in the Romanian community, the researcher’s positionality has been shaped by ethnicity and identification with the culture and language of the immigrant group, this changes when the researcher must operate across transnational contexts. Ethnicity remains an important mark of affiliation but nation-states and various institutions such as libraries and archives exert their power over the types of interactions involved in literacy research. In the introduction and in various instances throughout this study, nation-states become essential in understanding the ways in which states can monitor and regulate mobility of people, through official papers and documents and frequently, through particular relations between particular nations. Since transnational becomes a key trope here—transnational contexts, transnational research, transnational researchers—a brief reminder of how transnational has been defined should bring more clarity in how I use it in this section. While some scholars conceptualize transnationalism through multiple relations forged by migrants across national borders (Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Levitt & Waters, 2002; Morawska, 2008), others accentuate the critical roles of nation-states in regulating borders and control over people, economies, and cultures (Kearney, 1995; Briggs,
McCormick & Way, 2008). As Kearney (1995) suggests, transnationalism involves the work of
the state as “guardian of national borders” (p. 548) and of institutionalizing identities while
simultaneously extending across the boundaries of nation-states. Thus, the role and power of
nation-states is essential in understanding the unequal relations between states and their authority
in regulating mobility (Sassen, 2010). In the context of transnationalism, nation-states exert their
power to categorize people based on national identity (where we are from) as well as institutional
affiliations (whose we are).

I also showed how these ways of thinking about institutions and rules are complicated in
the context of transnational mobility when one’s local knowledge can be transferred
transnationally to a completely different research setting. I would like to further illustrate this
interplay between various affiliations that shape the researcher’s positionality and his or her
ability to broker knowledge for others. I will introduce two examples of research conducted in
Romania. The first example comes from the fieldwork of Katherine Verdery, one of the few
scholars to have conducted fieldwork in Romania during the Cold War period between 1973 and
1989 (1996, p. 7). The second example comes from my own personal experience as a researcher
in Romania in the Summer of 2011. I will reference that experience when I discuss the role of
librarians as brokers but in this section, I am interested in the researcher’s positionality. In the
introduction of her book What was socialism and what comes next? Verdery (1996) offers details
about her fieldwork in Romania in the 1970s and 1980s when Romania was under Communist
rule. She explains the process of choosing a research site, her interdisciplinary approach to
fieldwork at the intersection of anthropology and political science, as well as her evolving
relation to Marxist theory. Such affiliations, she admits, were received with some reluctance by
local Romanians, especially when Verdery expressed her views about the treatment of the Roma.
In further discussing the relationship between the Cold War and her own identity as a researcher, Verdery (1996) clearly speaks of the limitations imposed on her, the increased surveillance in the 1984-1985 which eventually precluded her fieldwork in the rural area where she had been located. This imposition on her work in Romania redirected her research towards urban intellectuals.

Witnessing everyday attempts to fight a system’s efforts to control its citizens, Verdery (1996) confesses a particular pleasure in little daily subversions experienced with her friends, having spent an exhilarating day with some Romanian friends getting around the endless obstacles of the regime places in everyone’s way, I realized that despite the cold apartments and unavailable food and constant Securitate surveillance, I was having a good time, and it had to do with the satisfaction of defeating Absolute Authority. I realized all of a sudden that the Party’s claims to total power over Romanian society were subverted every day by thoroughgoing anarchy and somehow I found such an environment very invigorating. (p. 8)

While Verdery perceptively observes the daily little victories over the system encroaching on one’s life, her presence in a country behind the Iron Curtain remains largely uncomplicated. Even if the purpose of her book was not aimed at self-reflexivity, one cannot but notice that despite all strict surveillance of borders and mobility, Verdery is a U.S. scholar who has flexibility of movement afforded by her U.S. national identity in a relatively closed country.

It is in this transnational context that national identity and institutional affiliation shape one’s positionality more prominently than when situated in a familiar context. Verdery, as U.S. scholar can travel and cut through restrictions and barriers imposed on national territories on the basis of her U.S. citizenship. Thus, one must acknowledge that the positionality and access of
researchers is often marked by the positionality of the nation-states we represent or identify with through our passports, place of birth, or citizenships status. In *Globalization: The human consequences*, Zygmund Bauman (1998) discusses the differentiated travel and access through a comparison between the tourist and the vagabond, “the tourist travel because they want to; vagabonds because they have to” (p. 93). While Bauman (1998) places the intellectual in the list of those who can afford to travel along with the businessman, from my account it is evident that there are different types of intellectuals and different levels of mobility. Rather than a polarized tourist-vagabond perspective, I suggest a more nuanced look at the vagabond’s metaphor who can clearly capture the boundedness of certain international scholars because of their national affiliation. The vagabond scholar experiences the limitations and contingences of physical and methodological immobility, which Bauman calls “enforced localization” (p. 93).

In transnational research, much more attention needs to go to ways in which nations and national status shape the researcher as a broker of knowledge. Conceptualizing globalization as flow of knowledge and people obscures regulations imposed by nation-states. Negotiating barriers is an intense process of reexamining the researcher’s positionality even when it may be limiting the purpose of the research. It may prompt a redefinition of collaborative practices, not as equal exchanges but as qualitative contributions. Collaborative practices in research have been discussed in the context of unequal relations established between the researcher and the researched (Horner, 2002) but collaborative practices between researchers from various national backgrounds need further inquiry. Understanding these relations from a cultural material perspective is indeed necessary as Horner (2002) suggests but even more significant is attention to unequal relations between scholars who might assume a similar position. Acknowledging that national identity or citizenship status often determines one’s level of mobility, of access, and the
type of collaboration is also a step towards understanding the need for brokering in certain instances. This means identifying situations of unequal power relations and using one’s own positionality to broker access for others. In Verdery’s case, her U.S. citizenship status served as a powerful tool allowing her to conduct research in a country whose citizens were restricted from travelling. Similarly, Lunsford (2012)’s discussion of the international writing researcher as information broker needs further consideration in terms of national status. When she writes that information brokers can establish professional research networks across national borders, it is somewhat assumed that these brokers can move across national borders or share a status that permits mobility. In claiming that the U.S. status can facilitate smoother mobility and a more flexible positionality than other international researchers, I do not wish to essentialize the U.S. researcher’s ethos or to cast a Western researcher identity against a Non-western, most frequently a less mobile subjectivity. Numerous examples of adjunct faculty in the U.S. counteract this viewpoint. Also, simply because some non-Westerners are rendered immobile by their national status does not mean that they cannot find alternative ways to broker their access to knowledge making. They may employ different research tools, possibly extended networks of brokers (see Lillis & Curry’s study of literacy brokers and the publishing practices of multilingual scholars mostly from Central and Eastern Europe) through which they broker their access to materials, to publication venues in order to become legitimate knowledge makers.

Another example about the interplay of national and institutional identification comes from my own research visit to Romania in the summer of 2011. As a doctoral student and researcher at a U.S. institution, I claimed affiliation with a rather prestigious school, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, while I simultaneously identified myself as a Romanian national, on the basis of language and formal citizenship. Although I spoke Romanian
and could easily pass as a Romanian researcher, I lacked local knowledge in navigating the boundaries of old-fashioned catalogs, in approaching a research process attuned to an alphabetic arrangement of materials, and even in negotiating with the personalities and regulations of libraries and institutions. Although I displayed a multi-layered identity through my U.S. student card and Romanian national ID, I carried the research tools of a U.S. scholar. In this toolbox, I include a flexible approach to the research process, research questions, and methods emergent from research practices developed at a U.S. research institution. Through my institutional affiliation, I was well prepared to do research by navigating multiple online databases and collections using key terms. I also held the belief that if there was a source I needed, I should be able to access it through multiple research paths: interlibrary loan or WorldCat. Some practices, such as for instance navigating multiple online databases, proved useless when I found myself surrounded by hundreds of little drawers, organized thematically or alphabetically. In that context, U.S. research practices were technically untransferable, yet as a Romanian national, I used my U.S. student status to claim legitimacy to an identity broader than the Romanian national context. In doing so, I built my identity as an international researcher irrespective of national identity or ethnic background because I believed that that identity productively compensated my lack of knowledge in certain areas. Also, as a U.S. researcher, I carried in my toolbox a different attitude and belief system than most Romanian researchers. I came with the attitude that my student status at a legitimate U.S. institution provided sufficient justification to be granted access to research materials. I adopted a Western attitude and a belief system in the universality of rules and regulations, just as Mungiu-Pippidi explains. I was not prepared nor did I plan to operate on the particularism principle, accessing certain networks of power or affiliation other than letters of introduction from my advisor, Dr. Prendergast and Dr. Hitchens, which
were, in my opinion, legitimate grounds for requesting access. The letters served only in the official world, following the same principle of universality but were limited in accessing particular networks of power.

In both Verdery’s example and my own situation, I note that brokering operates not only in research practices but also at the level of values and belief systems. Transnational research challenges simplistic views of transplanting scholars into a different nation-state context and unfolding a well-designed research plan. Changing the research plans, as Verdery did from her focus on rural area to urban intellectuals and my adjustment to new research methods are common practices. However, the deeper changes in doing transnational research or transplanting ourselves as international researchers into new contexts operate at the level of values systems and the philosophies underlining our research practices. Certainly, institutions and disciplinary practices shape these values. Referring to brokering of departmental boundaries, Julie Thompson Klein reminds us that “departmental bureaucracies promotion and tenure tend to reward scholars for adhering to a relatively narrow range of assumptions about which research questions ought to be asked and what research methods should be employed” (as cited in Lunsford, 2012, p. 223). The assumptions that we have, the type of questions that we ask, and the beliefs we hold about who we are, and what we do are significant variables in transnational research. Thus, the values and beliefs we have influence the type of affiliations that we establish. For instance, it is more likely for Western scholars to identify with or resort to Marxist theories than for scholars from Eastern Europe. Intellectual histories, institutional affiliations, but also national histories impact how a theory becomes a point of affiliation.

Referring to this dual position concerning theories and intellectual affiliation, my subjectivity as a researcher has developed a dual perspective before starting the actual fieldwork.
When I was preparing for the special fields examination, it was my first time to read about Romanian history and to gain a perspective different than the official narrative I acquired while I was studying in Romania. My reading list included numerous Western scholars writing about Romanian history. While I was reading about the Communist regime in Romania through the Western lens, it was often a difficult process since almost every detail of the “Romanian situation” indexed my situation. References to the cult of personality of the Nicolae Ceausescu were simultaneously familiar and strange. As a Romanian, I was familiar with a stronger and more incriminating language to define Ceausescu than Western scholars employed. For me as Romanian, Ceausescu was a dictator or as Norman Manea (1992) writes the “clown” organizing the country’s circus (p. 39). Ceausescu’s “cult of personality” was an unfamiliar term, perhaps because a cult entails some type of devout followers, and Ceausescu’s personality had nothing to admire, nothing to desire unless imposed by force. The Romanian experience cast into Western language and theoretical frames was often bizarre and I could sense in these readings, the objective gaze of the researcher, detached and unaffected. In time, my emotional reaction to the Western language and perspective softened, as I learned to adopt a new language in speaking and writing about my own country. However, I made deliberate choices, when that was possible to use for instance the term communist or communism rather than socialist or socialism, not because the first one denoted accurately the respective political ideology. Rather, I chose to use the term communist because it reflected people’s language and how they referred to their experience. In doing so, I followed the example of Catherine Prendergast (2008) whose ethnography on post-communist Slovakia, captured people’s perspective in their own language. Prendergast notes that her informants used the term communist and post-communist period. From my own experience, the researcher’s positionality must change not just geographically and methodologically but also
ideologically. Often such changes are reflected in the language and theories we choose as representative and those we discard as insignificant.

Returning to the researcher’s positionality, national and institutional affiliations can influence the degree to which a researcher becomes a broker of knowledge but also the extent to which the researcher-broker succeeds to recruit other brokers and co-broker his or her research path. This model is slightly different than constructing a research subjectivity following the center-periphery dichotomy (see Canagarajah, 2002). When the researcher positions himself/herself as a broker, there are additional linguistic and cultural affinities that also contribute in the research process. As the translingual approach continues to draw increasing attention in writing and composition scholarship, the role of mastering multiple languages in research needs to be further investigated. As a speaker of Romanian and English, I was able to fruitfully explore research infrastructures as well as discursive possibilities that a monolingual researcher might have overlooked. Speaking Romanian facilitated my access to a plethora of materials found in Romanian libraries and the National Archives. Without primary and secondary sources such as school curricula including specific reading lists approved in the Communist Party’s meetings in the 1980s, working papers and minutes of the Ideological Commission, minutes and speeches from congresses of political and cultural socialist education, etc., it would have been difficult to retrace the official literacy education content and context in the 1980s. Similarly, scholarship in rhetoric & composition can be enriched through research beyond U.S. and English-only contexts by what Horner et al. (2011) call multilingual or translingual scholarship. Openness to other languages, composition practices, social and institution contexts can function as a reflective lens to reexamine our own theories and practices. It can also open wide gateways into new areas of research.
Librarians and Scholars as Brokers of Information in Literacy Research

“After you are granted permission, you pay this fee at the accountant’s office and then, you can take digital photos. You can pay for 2-3 digital copies and then we *close an eye.*”

- A Romanian Librarian

This epigraph is extracted from a conversation I had with a Romanian librarian who was instructing me in the process of understanding and manipulating institutional rules and regulations. Earlier I referenced the researcher’s positionality during my research visit in 2011, but in this section I wish to unpack the complex connections established with librarians and archivists as well as the institutional context’s role in accessing information. As a reminder, the purpose of my visit was to conduct archival research and work at libraries in Romania in order to document the official literacy education before 1989. This was my first time to conduct research in the Romanian system of education; prior to this visit, I had used the Romanian library system during my undergraduate degree but it was mostly to check out books that had already been required for specific courses. My entire training in research methods and methodologies has unfolded in the U.S. educational system. For this reason, the instruction provided by the librarian upon my research visit in 2011 had to include what to do, how to do it, and especially how to get around, and circumvent some rules that were officially required. I was counseled on the procedures of obtaining digital copies of documents, a process that included writing a formal request letter to the director of the library, obtaining a signature that the request has been approved, and returning the proof of formal approval to the librarian. The soft rules, however—
not recorded in print, but shared with me verbally as the epigraph shows—allowed a space of negotiation for the numbers of copies I declared I would make and the number of copies I made in reality. I call this entire process of interaction with the library a process of brokering boundaries, institutional access to information, and negotiating roles in doing literacy research. The level of brokering is established by the type of affinity established with librarians and archivists. The closer the interaction, the higher the chance of a successful research visit. In this section, I examine the roles of librarians/ archivists as brokers in the research process relative to the institutions that shape research practices and interactions. To understand more profoundly the role of librarians/ archivists as brokers of knowledge crucial in the research of literacy, one must also gain a deeper perspective on the culture of censorship and the hierarchical access to information. These are all unfortunate legacies of the Communist regime.

The Presidential Commission Report (2006) is one of the first official attempts to denounce the Communist regime in Romania, particularly access to information. The report unearthed sources and information about the Communist regime about important political figures and institutions that helped maintain the totalitarian regime. Among others, it used numerous sources from the Romanian National Archives that had been open to the public. Since the report was published online as an open access resource, it caused much commotion because it exposed not only a disturbing past sealed in secret policy files, but also deep ties with current post-communist politicians and politics in Romania. Presided by Vladimir Tismaneanu, a Romanian-American political scientist, the commission included remarkable Romanian public intellectual and scholars, some of whom had ties to the Romanian former Communist regime. Some had lived in exile in Western Europe or the U.S. for many years, having been ostracized during the Communist regime (e.g. Virgil Ierunca, Monica Lovinescu). The purpose of the report and
implicitly of the commission was to unveil detailed information and sources about many aspects of Communism in Romania particularly informants, secret police files, etc. The report represents an effort to confront a traumatic past, but it also tried to achieve more transparency about a historical past shrouded in much falsehood, secrecy, and even conspiracy. While the report was published in 2006/2007, only in the last few years have the files of the Secret Police and of Romanian Communist Party been gradually released to the public. Only since 2006-2007 with the establishment of various institutions\(^\text{37}\) aimed at investigating the Communist period, have libraries such as the Library of the Academy, with a long-standing tradition for guarding cultural texts and manuscripts, opened their doors to researchers outside exclusivist scholarly networks.

As mentioned in Chapter two, the production of secret files in Romania was indeed an important agenda of the Communist party creating a written archive through which the Party exercised its control. The sorting and organizing of such files has been labor intensive, but it is also a political move to obscure information or make disappear some cases that might potentially comprise current political figures. Therefore, accessibility and information brokering is a highly problematic issue in Romania even to this day. Similarly, following Romania’s inclusion into the European Union in January 1, 2007, new legislation\(^\text{38}\) concerning open access to information had to be amended in order to align to the statutes and laws of other European states. But the issue of access to information seems to be an ongoing and current problem. Just recently on June 18, 2012, an online petition has been circulating asking for “maintaining transparency at the Romanian National Archives.” (Society for Romanian Studies, Personal Communication, June

\(^{37}\) Examples of such institutions include IICCMER (the full name is Institute for the Investigation of Communism’s Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile) established in 2006.

\(^{38}\) While there have been many changes concerning the National Archives of Romania, after January 2007, there is an urgent need to archive-related legislation in Romania (Law 14/1996 - the Archives Law) especially as it relates to facilitating access to documents, simplifying procedures, and as explained on the National Archives website, “confining abuse due to the personal subjectivity of the public workers and institutional dysfunctions.” (http://www.arhivelenationale.ro/images/custom/image/Pdf-uri/Proectul_Legii_Arhivelor.pdf)
18, 2012). This email sent by the Society for Romanian Studies has been asking for signatures of scholars and public intellectuals from Romania and the Romanian diaspora in response to the unexpected and most likely ungrounded suspension of historian Dorin Dobrincu, the director of the Romanian National Archives since 2007. Access to information is then highly tied in transnational processes, as scholars from the diaspora broker and advocate for transparency of information from abroad.

*The Presidential Commission Report* (2006) stirred many inquiries not only about general access to information and its potential impact on people and institutions, but also questions about this commission’s access to the resources cited in the actual report at a time when the institutions housing these materials had not been open for research. These scholars, like many others received preferential access to these archives. Their access is a form of particularism built through intimate connections. As the *Presidential Commission* case reveals, at times these scholars function as brokers of knowledge, but other times they themselves represent structures of control that censor access to information. When they resort to their own positions built through long held social networks in institutions such as the Romanian National Archives, the Library of the Academy, or other political or cultural affiliations, they reinstitute hierarchies of privilege and power. However, when they manage boundaries between public and information, such as in the case of the publication of the *Presidential Commission*, they become brokers of information crucial in the research process.

In an earlier discussion of writing and composition scholars functioning as information brokers, Lunsford (2012)—drawing on Haythornthwaite’s work—defines the information broker as “an individual who has contacts with more than one cluster; he or she controls the flow of information from one part of the network to another” (p. 222). Extending Lunsford’s
conception of the writing researcher as an information broker, one must examine the nature of
the networks created in order to understand the dynamics of interactions and the flow of
information. In the case of public scholars and intellectuals in Romania, the networks are marked
by selective affiliation to intellectual circles in Romania and abroad and to institutional
affiliation such as the Library of the Academy as exemplified earlier. Another example of
information brokers comes from the University of Illinois. As various student researchers mostly
of Romanian origin began to study at U.S. institutions, they formed a cluster that is slightly
different than the one of Romanian public intellectuals. Since their education is a hybrid of
Romanian and U.S. ideologies, they created networks through interactions that merge formal
institutional connections such as reading groups or area cluster studies (Eastern European
Reading group is an excellent example) with informal knowledge gathered from navigating
bureaucratic labyrinths in Romania. This knowledge—concerning research sites, archives,
libraries but always paths to access more effectively valuable resources—has been further shared
in various ways. In 2011, the Romanian Student Club invited historian Dr. Mihaela Wood, a
graduate of the University of Illinois, to speak about the process of doing research in Romania.
In her talk and through various informal conversations, Dr. Wood brokered access to information
at research institutions, archives, and libraries in Romania facilitating the research process with
specific steps and guidelines. This network, constituted based on common research interests, has
also developed on the basis of shared ethnic or national background of researchers located at
U.S. research institutions. Younger than the previously mentioned cluster, these researchers are
driven by different motives and research methodologies generally shaped by U.S. research
practices and institutions rather than Romanian intellectual traditions.

Both clusters—public intellectuals in Romania and abroad and the new wave of
researchers with hybrid practices—engage in research practices aware that state institutions and public service continue to *particularize* access depending on, as Mungiu-Pippidi explained, one’s proximity to groups of power and influence. Although the hierarchical structure within the national context of Romania is generally established as outlined earlier—through institutional, political, or cultural affiliations—there are subtle differences of professional status that are less explicit. Dr. Wood provides such an example when in the late 1990s, she had to use her educator credentials, not her university student status, when she sought access to the Library of the Academy. Only the former identification afforded a legitimate identity that would grant her access, while the latter, the university student status was ranked lower in the scale of accessibility. However, in a different research situation, at the National Archives, Dr. Wood confessed being granted access to take digital photocopies of documents before open access was instituted because of her connections to a personal acquaintance. Such particularism represents then a form of breaking the rigidity of norms and institutions that often cannot legitimize their practices of control and surveillance. This particularism represents a form of local knowledge that impacts the researcher as well as the research process; it is local knowledge that a broker, such as Dr. Wood’s acquaintance, develops with an understanding of institutional limitations and the larger context of information censorship in Romania.

In the context of transnational mobility, practices based on particularism and local knowledge are sometimes transferred and recontextualized. Referring back to Dr. Wood’s research experience, her local experience and research activity have been repurposed when, in her talk in 2011 at the University of Illinois, she deployed that knowledge transnationally to broker access to other researchers. Thus, local knowledge gained in a particular context becomes mobilized through new networks created through people’s movement. In this case, Dr. Wood’s
experience as both educator and student in Romania became valuable resources in her new role as a graduate student and researcher in the U.S. Simplifying context as either global or local (Sassen, 2010) or using hybrid terms such as glocalism (Sarroub, 2009) prove insufficient to capture the intricacies of local knowledge. As researchers are increasingly more mobile, various other contingencies including age or affiliation with particular cohort influence the type and degree of access. While former intellectuals were reinstituted as legitimate public researchers and intellectuals, young Romanian researchers must strive to build their own legitimacy and social networks to gain access to various types of resources. To some extent, affiliation with a U.S. institution may occasionally destabilize certain privileged networks formed within Romania. The cluster of Romanian new researchers formed at U.S. institutions—and by extension affiliations with other transnational institutions—seems to disrupt both the mentality of particularism and the research practice itself. The interplay between national, transnational, and local is essentially in understanding access and research practices in international contexts. As the case of Romania shows, understanding the role of the state and affiliated institutions as well as a long history or censorship is crucial to untangle the role of information brokers and their interactions and impact on information access. In the following sections, I discuss how access is connected to other types of brokers, librarians and archivists but also to hierarchical institutions that regulate one’s research access.

Librarians and Staff as Brokers of Knowledge and Research

The importance of librarians and archivists in doing research in Romania cannot be overstated. Examining the role of librarians as brokers of access to knowledge reveals how networks of particularism operate in practice. Generally, librarians develop identities closely shaped by the institutions where they work. Seeing themselves as guardians of books and
documents, opening and closing access depending on particular networks of power and influence, librarians and archivists broker long-established hierarchical structures, at the Library of the Academy and to a lesser extent, the Central University Library.

As more and more studies in Rhetoric and Composition scholarship assess the challenges and benefits of doing research transnationally (Donahue, 2009; Hesford and Schell, 2008; Horner, Lu, Royster & Trimbur, 2011), more attention needs to focus on understanding and negotiating disciplinary and cultural boundaries in addition to language difference (Horner, Necamp & Donahue, 2011). Just as writing research in the U.S. has deep roots in monolingual ideologies and institutional histories connected to the first year writing class at Harvard, research in Romania is connected with brokering practices tied to national, historical, and material conditions. Rather than conceptualizing this research site as a center-periphery binary (Canagarajah, 2002), I argue for attention to the internal hierarchical structures already existent in the national territory and the historical context of state and public institutions that impact research processes.

In order to understand the role of librarian and archivists as brokers of knowledge, I first offer a brief history of one of the institutions, the Library of the Academy in Bucharest, Romania, as a way to understand this hierarchical context more in depth. The Library of the Academy is the most prestigious library in Romania. Established 1867, one year after the institution of the Romanian Academy Society, the Library of the Academy prides itself with the preservation of oldest manuscripts in Romania and of texts in the Romanian language. Its crucial role in affirming and preserving old documents, newspapers, and literature is linked to the formation and the establishment of the Romanian national identity (Anghelescu, 2000; Dumitrescu, 2011). Given this history of its engagement in legitimizing and affirming the
Romanian national character through texts, it often controlled the Romanian literary and cultural scene just like the state controlled various other social spheres.

The history of the Library of the Academy essentially reveals that this is more than a research site. It is a contested space where knowledge making has been restricted to limited number of elite scholars, who at the same time became the spokesmen of the Romanian people. This hierarchical center of knowledge needs to be further understood in the largest context of post-Communist Romania and the role of the state in regulating literacy and access to literacy. While the Romanian nation has officially and publicly declared its discontent and desired break with the Communist rule at the Revolution of December 1989, deep-established forms of institutional practice cannot be instantaneously disrupted. Given Romania’s forty year history of building a nation as a “collective individual,” (Verdery, 1996, p. 23), it comes as no surprise that through this representation, the Romanian citizens have been socialized into identifying their public identity with one entity, that of the state. Although often in disagreement with state policies, state employees and in fact, Romanian citizens learned the art of duplicity\(^{39}\) of preserving and assuming an official identity depending on circumstances (Shafir, 1978, p. 25). At the same time, the same “collective individual” learned to detach the personal from the public self especially as the state and its destructive policies sought to invade even private spaces.

Librarians, as agents of the state, have learned to serve as tools of surveillance and control. Through their institutional affiliation from which they derive their authority, librarians function as brokers of research knowledge. This practice has been visibly incorporated in the librarian’s official identity inasmuch as it often goes unquestioned; this meshing of identities—where the libraries act as the state—sediments in phrases such as “this is the system,” suggesting

\(^{39}\) In reference to Communism in Romania, Lucian Boia argues that doublethink and doubletalk are some of most problematic legacies of Communism (2001b, p. 140).
a reality that apparently cannot be changed. The practices of these librarians include enforcement of rules, refusal to disclose information, bending of roles, control over bodies, access to books, and manuscripts, and ultimately control over knowledge. Contextualizing the librarians and archivists’ practice affords an understanding of the historical conditions that had shaped the institutional forms of this state employee identity. Yet, as the beginning account showed, librarians may shift from their assigned state employees and negotiate some spaces of flexible roles. In doing so, they manipulate hierarchical institutional structures disrupting it as the center of knowledge and controller of culture. In this sense, librarians are similar to teachers discussed in chapter two especially in the way they find or create spaces of negotiation.

To understand the way librarians and archivists are involved in the research process as brokers of the research path, I offer a narrative of my own process of gaining access at the Library of the Academy. This account follows a step-by-step process about how I obtained a library permit, learned about the catalogues, requested materials, and photocopied resources for further analysis. Most importantly, this narrative offers details about librarians’ interventions and their role in facilitating, delaying, or controlling my access to sources at this institution. In this process, they brokered by research path influencing the types of materials that I consulted, the quantity, as well as reproduction and preservation of these materials.

*Step 1: Brokering the Library Card*

Before my research visit at the Romanian public libraries and the Romanian National Archives, I was actively engaged in reading scholarship pertaining to my area of specialization including Romanian history and culture during the 1980s. As mentioned earlier, this work was done in preparation for the special fields examination, a necessary step in identifying major themes and potential topics of inquiry. Since I surveyed an extensive body of literature, I felt
strongly equipped to further explore primary sources such as school curricula, literary school magazines, official education-related documents of the Romanian Communist Party, and additional resources. Before leaving for Romania, I consulted with several student-researchers of Romanian-descent, all Ph.D. candidates at our institution, who had preceded me in this process. I sought the council and expertise of Dr. Keith Hitchins, a remarkable historian and researcher. In my conversations with Dr. Hitchins, I was advised on the most important libraries and archives most useful for my research interests. Dr. Hitchins, who is also serving in my dissertation committee, was one of the first American scholars to have conducted research in Romania during the Cold War period and his scholarship has been highly recognized nationally and internationally.

Until my first day of research in Bucharest, I was confident that I had done my homework well. I started my research at the Library of the Academy. Armed with two letters of introduction and the I-card from the University of Illinois, I thought obtaining a library permit would be a smooth process. A few years prior to my visit, acquiring a library permit was difficult. In the late 1990s, the director of the Library of the Academy made decisions about issuing library permits after a thorough “interrogation;” at that time, college students were generally denied access (Wood, 2011). As I explained earlier, the underlining assumption was that college students held a lower scholarly position compared to renowned scholars, published writers, and educators who were exclusively entitled to access valuable scholarship. In my case, the library permit was obtained relatively easily but not without obstacles. At first, I could not request a library permit, because I had forgotten to bring a photo ID for the library permit that was supposed to be stapled onto the card. This would have delayed my work by a day, which meant at least 8 hour of work wasted. Missing a day of research does not seem significant except
that when I arrived in Bucharest, I learned that the Library of the Academy would close within two weeks. Therefore, every hour mattered. In fact, when I arrived in Bucharest, I also learned that the staff hired to make photocopies was leaving on vacation in the following next two days. Needless to say, such constraints on the research process dealing not only with access to information, but services to photocopying or digitizing documents of interest were difficult to navigate. As I sat there for a good ten minutes, wondering how I could obtain a photo within the next hour before the library closed, the receptionist remained silent. Eventually, she decided to instruct me in detail about what to do. She told me where I could obtain the required photo ID at a nearby photocopy facility, where to go, what to do and what to say so as to obtain my ID within the next 15 minutes. Although not a librarian but hired staff, she too had the power to open or delay my access into the library by offering (or retaining) details about following institutional regulations. As a broker of access, she deliberately withheld or delayed offering an essential piece of information necessary for obtaining a library permit in a short period of time. This illustrates a brokering strategy that implicates not only knowledge of the institution where the broker works, but also knowledge of the local context: the neighborhood, the photocopy facility with all its regulations (the type of photocopy needed, the cost, etc.) and the entire step-by-step procedure needed to fill gaps of knowledge.

Step 2: Brokering access to bibliographic catalogs/materials

Shortly after this first obstacle, I was allowed to enter the reference room. Soon, I found myself surrounded by a mass of little drawers filled with hundreds of typed or handwritten reference notecards. Although the reference cards were organized alphabetically and thematically, finding sources required several hours of searching through hundreds of bibliographic notecards. After that, filling out information request forms required substantial
time, followed by another waiting period until the librarian on duty would bring the requested books. The level of regimentation and limitation of access was manifested in a series of rules: only five books could be checked out at a time; the researchers had to sit in a designated spot in the reading room with a number attached to it, and almost all belongings had to be checked in the locker room. Another restriction that nearly offset all my research plans concerned the in-house photocopy service, which allowed only thirty pages a day. In the first half an hour, I had already used up my photocopy allowance for the day. Certainly, similar restrictions about locker rooms and assigned seating are in place at other libraries here in the U.S. The restrictions at Library of the Academy and Central University Library were similar to my visit at the National Archives in Chicago, where even chewing gum was on the restricted list. One difference concerns details related to behavior and attitudes. In Romania, librarians or archivists acted as if they were the personal guardians of knowledge. In the U.S., rules—even those restrictive such as chewing gum—are framed to represent institutional regulations rather capricious expectations of librarians/archivists. Prior to my visit to the archives in Chicago, I exchanged numerous emails with one of the archivists. When I arrived there, he came to meet me personally and walked me through all the steps and trainings. He also informed me of all the rules and regulations, but the assumption in this entire process was that I had the right to access documents and the archivist brokered my access to various documents with an open attitude and desire to help. In Romania, all or most of these restrictions are, however, negotiable and often contingent on the availability and disposition of the library staff. A fellow researcher explained that researchers often rely on the “kindness of the archivist,” almost always being “at their mercy” (Wood, 2011). Based on Wood’s experience and that of many other scholars, research in Romania at these institutions is a highly subjective and contingent experience. It depends on one’s personal connections but also
on the broker’s “kindness” and “mercy.” As such, connecting with a librarian/archivist not just rationally but on the personal and emotional level influenced the type of access and the extent to which a researcher received extra leeway in manipulating institutional regulations. This means that as Susan Crowley explains “elaborated experience (…) one that is connected to other experiences” (as cited in Trainor, 2008, p. 87) has more persuasive force than the punctuated one. In the case of librarians, the level of connectivity on multiple levels afforded a better position to influence them to be collaborative and helpful despite strict regulations.

I note here two important brokering situations. In the reference room, although I asked the librarian on duty several questions, hoping to receive assistance in navigating the old bibliographic system more efficiently, I hit a wall. The reasons for her resistance could be multiple: lack of knowledge of how to better guide me, distrust or disinterest in my own research topic or in me as a researcher, or unwillingness to offer more assistance. At a different library, the National Library whose resources I only examined on one occasion given that all their deposits were blocked due to relocation, I experienced a similar resistant attitude when I asked similar questions. However, having already acclimated to the “system” and to other librarians, I gained courage in speaking up and my interaction with the librarian took an interesting turn. My first question about how to navigate the multitude of bibliographic entries on small notecards was received with admonition. The librarian proceeded to scold me that I should come prepared to check up their catalogues and informed me she was not there to do my job. With respect and firmness, I turned the next five minutes into a pedagogical moment. I took my librarian through a tour of my research project, scholarship, and materials consulted, research questions, etc. My deposition worked wonders. Her attitude changed instantaneously. Suddenly, her stiffness melted. Kindness, even apologetic explanation poured out as she walked me through the
organization of bibliographic catalogues. Slightly embarrassed, she admitted to the limits of their system as well as the chaotic situation caused by the library’s relocation. In this situation, in spite of my apparent illiteracy of the bibliographic system in place, I brokered my own access half way through by using my researcher status as well as general research knowledge. The other half way, the librarian continued the brokering process through pieces of information I was lacking. The researcher status and specialized knowledge constituted essential strategies in establishing my credentials in spite of some limits: some language failure in trying to explain my research in Romanian and certainly, lack of knowledge of an obsolete bibliographic system.

The second example of brokering took place at the in-house photocopy center at the Library of the Academy whose history of hierarchical structures I have outlined earlier. Trying to adjust to the 30-page per day photocopying limit was certainly a challenge since it required a more much selective process of examining the sources than I had anticipated. The day when I learned about this rule, I also found out the staff making these photocopies was leaving on vacation for the rest of the summer. The news was disheartening. This new information pushed me to redesign my reading strategies and note-taking but also the selection criteria for what was going to be photocopied or not. My interaction with the staff responsible for photocopying started with her proclaiming all the rules: the photocopy limit, her vacation time, and the fact that I came too late for that day, as she was about to leave. There were at least 30 more minutes before the official closing time. Similar to my interaction with the receptionist, I stood there baffled, wondering how I could broker my way in. As a Romanian, I had experienced in the past both the system’s strict rules and the brokering of these rules, most of the times through illegal paths. Some of these strategies included bringing gifts to the librarians (or to other gatekeepers, depending on context). I never mastered such strategies, but as I connect easily with people, I
used to broker my way through social ties. Rather than leaving I engaged in conversation with her. I tried to explain my situation and the fact that I have little time to collect as much data as possible. I did not say more than that. Just like the librarian from the National Library, this library employee brokered my access to these resources, offering not only to break the rule for my first set of books, but to do it for future photocopying jobs as well: “Come first thing in the morning and I will take care of it.” In the first example, the librarian met me halfway and through my research knowledge and status, access to bibliographic catalogues was brokered successfully. In the second example, the office clerk brokered my access to photocopies but only on her own terms: I had to come back the following day, rather than claim my right to her services that day. In following her rules, I gained more than if I had followed the institutional rules. While I engaged in conversation, she had the sole authority under those circumstances to broker my access to more photocopies than the institutional limit. I could have certainly made a petition to higher authorities such as the Director of the Library, but this path would have been longer and time was essential in this situation. Although these two examples are similar, what triggered the brokering process is different. As Wood (2011) explains, sometimes the brokering depends on the staff’s “kindness” or “mercy” but sometimes it depends on intellectual persuasion that becomes a legitimate ground to broker access. The first example illustrates a more intellectual or logical argumentative process, while the second denotes an affective brokering; yet, both instances involved highly subjective interactions that yield results depending on the person. In her talk, Wood (2011) advocates strongly to “build connections, drop names,” “to navigate the personalities of librarians and archivists.” Establishing connections, sharing experiences—such as what brought one to the archives—and sometimes engaging in conversations are strategies through which one builds affinity with those in positions of influence.
and power. Based on these affinities, librarians/archivists then use their position to soften the
rules. All these affinities are built in time and through repeated conversations rather than through
one-time encounters. But eventually and most of the time, they yield good results. Rigid rules
become flexible as the networking strengthens through daily encounters.

*Step 3: The Study Room: Brokering Reading and Studying*

One final setting where the brokering occurred is the study room. As mentioned earlier,
the rules were quite strict, similar those at the National Archives in Chicago: all but a notebook
and a writing utensil were restricted. I had an assigned seat and filed out by hand numerous
information request forms for each book or document I requested. Since I had long lists of
materials I wanted to consult, I asked at some point the front desk librarian in the study room, if I
could consult more than five books at a time. She informed that she had already
delivered more
books than I was allowed to, although I do not recall having more than five books at a time. In
this situation, I learned that sometimes, librarians out of their own initiative without any
prompting or persuasive devices would volunteer to help and broker one’s access. In the study
room, I was offered more “help,” and advice on how to keep the books for several days than in
any other location.

As I started to build a practice of consulting materials every day, with a strict schedule of
seven or eight hours a day, I started to notice a slight change in the librarians’ attitudes: from an
impenetrable identity mimicking an official, rigid ethos to one of a broker operating between the
institution and the researcher. This flexible institutional (re)positioning accounts for the failure of
Romanian institutions to reclaim their legitimacy that was historically lost through their
compromise with totalitarian political regimes. A distrust of formal institutions gives birth to
processes of mediation and negotiations that often subvert the very system that legitimizes the
identity of librarians as state-employees. An example of this negotiation and dissociation of librarians from the system comes from a situation when I had to pay a relatively high fee for making digital copies. I introduced this instance through the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter. As I was given instructions about writing a petition to the Director (or Assistant Director) of the Library, I was also told, “After you are granted permission, you pay this fee at the accountant’s office, and then, you can take digital photos. You can pay for two or three digital copies, and then we close an eye.” What the librarian did was to instruct me in how to unofficially work the system. Librarians know that generally taking only two or three digital images is rarely sufficient and most researchers need to make several digital copies. However, they offered to “close an eye” because they too acknowledge indirectly that the institution whose representatives they are, had set an unjustifiably high price for digital copies. As a result, librarians functioned as brokers and intervened in resolving this situation. The “closing of the eye” suggests that librarian do adopt a “bird eye perspective” on what happens in the library. They are there to watch over what happens, “the eyes” that survey and if necessary reinforce control over knowledge. “The closing of an eye” is in fact an interruption of the surveillance.

In Table 3, I offer a more comprehensive view of the brokering strategies encountered in my research path. To reflect equitably all situations with librarians and archivists, I also inserted a final category: “refuse to broker.” Not all situations can or will be brokered; my experience shows that sometimes librarians or archivists decide to reinforce a rule or to delay/withhold information instead of offering to help. This happened even in situations when as a researcher, I believe I had the right to obtain particular information. I did not include brokering through other means, such as small gifts to librarians and archivists, because I did not resort to these means.
Although I am certainly aware of such practices, I cannot offer any reliable information about the frequency of this type of brokering.

Table 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brokering Strategies</th>
<th>Brokering Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brokering through local knowledge</td>
<td>Using a local photocopier in the neighborhood to obtain a photo ID for the library card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brokering through the researcher’s ethos</td>
<td>Learning to use credentials and knowledge from the U.S. system (knowledge of research) to build a case for credibility in the Romanian system (in spite of limited knowledge of bibliographic catalogs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(knowledge of research/ research methods even if from a different system) (intellectual persuasion); co-brokering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brokering through the affective or subjective ethos of the broker</td>
<td>“Learning to navigate the personalities of librarians and archivists” feeling at the “mercy” and “kindness” of librarians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brokering by “closing an eye”: manipulation of institutional regulations/ rules</td>
<td>Making digital copies: pay for a small number, and receiving unofficial permission, to take as many digital copies as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refuse to Broker</td>
<td>Delay or withhold information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reinforce a Rule</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this chapter, I examined the role of the researcher as a broker and the affinities that are built in the research path. Created through attachments of ethnicity, nationality, institutional identity, and cultural and epistemological beliefs, these affinities take different forms and engage different networks depending on context. In the case of the two research sites where I conducted fieldwork, the presence of institutions and librarians as guardians of access of information was more evident in libraries and archives in Romania than in the immigrant community in Chicago. At the same time, since in the Romanian immigrant community any participant was a potential broker of the research path—in the way they introduced me to other participants or recommended research materials but also in the way they shared particular details about the community—the issue of representation was a central point of contention. Representation is certainly one of the major critical points in the research process. The selection of participants and the interpretation of their stories allowed me as a researcher to build one account and one possible representation of this immigrant community. There are multiple other approaches and ways of representing the community. My research interests—in the personal and the mundane literacy practice of those individuals educated in a highly censored context— influenced the selection criteria of the informants and the narratives that I decided to include in this study.

The issue of language was equally valuable in both sites. In Romania, my ability to speak Romanian allowed me direct access to research materials without resorting to a translator. Both the language and the cultural understandings of hierarchies of power served as guides in interactions with librarians and archivists. But language and culture also create powerful affinities. They carry values, beliefs, experiences that build affective experiences. Also, since all documents were in Romanian, knowledge of Romanian made the selection process more efficient. In the Romanian immigrant community, my affiliation based on ethnicity opened doors
to research that are impenetrable otherwise. Certainly, the Romanian community is open to sharing stories and information both on a personal and communal level. Yet, based on my involvement in the community in everyday circumstances—going to a church picnic, having dinner with a family or volunteering to help at community events—I learned more about being in the community with the people than just learning about them.

Finally the interplay between particularism and universalism as philosophies of relating to state powers and institutions should be viewed on a continuum rather than in a dichotomous relationship. If particularism is often more prevalent in communal societies (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2005), in the context of transnational mobility communities become more flexible and changing.

Essential about particularism is the way it indexes a set of intimate connections. Particularism is in fact a manifestation of a particular affinity in an interaction or through an experience. Universalism strives for equality and in doing so, it often creates distance and alienation. Particularism creates bridges, fills gaps, and allows for flexible approaches to rigid circumstances. One should not exclude the other. On the contrary, they should work together.

This interplay of affinity and universalism can be illustrated in the example of the new wave of Romanian researchers studying at U.S. institutions. Although they built connections based on ethnicity, they also act and develop in the context of institutions and disciplinary spaces. Ultimately, none of our affiliations as researchers are negligible. In certain contexts, certain aspects of our identity matter more than other. In transnational research challenges, the researcher should always become an information broker, seeing first to evaluate the type of affinities s/he has built and then seeking to bridge knowledge transfer, as well as methods and methodologies. If we understand the researcher as a broker through a series of affinities, we can better understand motivations for research, the relationships built with informants, the access
established through various paths, but also the entire research process. Affinity, while not always following a pattern of logic, is built through everyday encounters and it always fills a space with experiences and interactions that fall outside the realm of prescriptive practices. Affinity allows for creativity to unfold, for interruptions to occur, and for new discoveries in the research path.
CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, my goal was to explore the role of literacy brokers—those intermediaries who assist others with reading and writing—in the context of transnational movement of people and texts. I argued that literacy brokers perform *literacy as affinity* as they intervene in multiple contexts. I define literacy as affinity as linguistic and textual repertoires meant to recapture or compensate for what is displaced, managed, or contained in the process of transnational mobility. Literacy brokers also intervene within the nation-state, particularly in bureaucratic contexts to make up for the erasure of the personal, emotional language, and affective relations. In each chapter except for Chapter two, I show how literacy brokers function as facilitators rather than obstructors of literacy, highlighting the need for personalization and for humanizing bureaucratic discourses. Chapter two seems to be rather dissonant as it underscores an extreme case of brokering where an oppressive nation-state performs the work of affinity. Yet, the implications are the same for all these contexts where the brokers operate: the work of affinity emerges and manifests forcefully precisely in contexts where it is most likely neglected or marginalized.

**Contribution to Literacy Studies Scholarship**

Scholars in New Literacy Studies (NLS) have long advocated for and researched literacy as a deeply social practice (Baynham & Masing, 2001; Papen, 2010). Yet, too often, the assumption is that a social context carries similar meanings across situations. that the social is inherently good and conducive to writing persuasively. The reassessment of literacy brokers that I offer in this study complicates understandings of the social with attention to the relationality of brokers in assisting others with textual practices. In doing so, literacy brokers create powerful webs of connections through a series of affinities, personal, institutional, national, or communal.
But literacy brokers—when embodied by authoritarian regimes—also may manipulate interactions between people, within and across institutions, and in all the social spheres where they can reach out. More attention should be given to somewhat romanticized views of the social as inherently good. While literacy brokers, as I have presented them in this study act for the most part for the good of those whom they represent, they can too misrepresent, misuse, or seek to extract benefits from the act of socializing. (Chapter two on the Romanian state as a broker of literacy exemplifies such negative effects resultant from abusing social relations)

As I relate in the introduction, literacy brokers emerged as significant agents of mediation in language and textual interactions, and the brokers’ emotional work of mediation permeated all social contexts where they operated. As literacy brokers help interrogate social relations, I was particularly interested in analyzing them in multiple contexts—schools, communities, bureaucratic institutions, and nation-states. It is because of their mobility within and across contexts that literacy as affinity or the brokers’ emotional work started to become a visible, compelling presence. As others studies of literacy brokers have shown, these mediators assist others with reading and writing, with cultural and linguistic gaps; in most of these activities, literacy brokers are indeed framed as mere tools. Yet, the brokers’ rich emotional investment permeates textual interactions with others. To be more specific, I conceptualized the brokers’ emotional work or literacy as affinity as manifesting in personal stories (generally their focus on the value of the individual), language of empathy, and various relations and partnerships they seek to cultivate.

*Literacy as affinity and the politics of the personal*

For immigrants, personal narratives matter. The story of immigration in particular mobilizes the personal in such as way as to give coherence to an experience that uproots the
individual from one context and replants him/her in a new place. Writing about Hmong immigrants, Duffy (2007) notes that their stories of literacy development are “profoundly personal” (p. 194). In the case of Romanian immigrants, the personal and individual experience need special attention given the historical context of this immigrant group; as explained elsewhere, the individual in a socialist country was expected to matter only as long as it was included in a social group, where each member was a political subject, an adherent of Marxist ideology. The personal is foregrounded when immigrants talk about their stories of immigration. While many stories shared some similarities—some immigrants left Romania on foot or by fraudulently crossing the border into Hungary or Yugoslavia; others left through work visas or family reunification—each narrative followed a different pattern. Each story was unique in the way it combined personal motives—some religious, some economic, some political—with various social groups: family, community, immigration agencies, or work place contexts. The personal matters also when it surpasses individual expression and serves as a vehicle for political change; such is the case of Eugen who used personal stories to advocate for those refugees trapped in-between countries, in refugee camps. Personal stories may constitute grounds for building empathy particularly in contexts where institutions seek to manage and regulate emotions. Manuela’s personal experience as a former alien builds a space of empathy that connects her experience to that of her clients. Even though as paralegal, she can help immigrants towards achieving legal status only within the limits of the law, she can build empathy through her personal experience.

Understanding literacy as affinity by allocating more attention to personal experience may resurrect long-held debates about the place of the personal in academic discourse. The personal versus the academic antagonism carries long histories of scholarly conversations (see
for instance Bartholomae/Elbow debate (1995)). The most recent I witnessed on the Writing Program Administration (WPA)’s listserv was in October 2013. As this study engages the personal, specifically personal narratives and experiences, it contributes to such scholarly conversations in writing studies by showing the complexities of the personal. In my study, personal stories are rhetorical and in the context of bureaucratic writing—which Richard A. Lanham (2003) calls “unvoiced” and “asocial” (p. 117)—their rhetorical force is deeply intertwined in political and economic discourses. When brokers assist people with crafting their stories of immigration and persecution, they socialize the applicant’s experience. They become the audience for this story but also the co-authors as they work with the immigrants’ texts; brokers socialize the immigrant experience even if the final product is changed into an asocial legal account. Although this socializing process is rather invisible in the finalized textual product, the work of the brokers affects positively day-to-day communication, a process that ultimately matters for the individual.

Another important dimension of the personal and its deployment in this study resides in its ability to establish historical and transnational connections. This means that these immigrants’ personal narratives do not present a liberal conception of the individual as professed in the Western world. It is not necessarily a personal that as the liberal philosophy outlines, “cultivate[s] the private realm as a sphere of unfettered and authentic individual subjectivity” (Hellback, 2006, p. 86). Rather, these immigrant personal narratives emerge in context where the personal, the private, the whole personhood was regimented in the interest of a political doctrine. Such a historical understanding of the personal, I believe, should reconsider binaries between personal/academic, between emotional/rational, and even personal/public. The personal is highly complex intersecting multi-layered political, socio-economic, and religious dimensions.
Literacy as Affinity and Textual Partnerships

Literacy as affinity deserves more attention in literacy scholarship for the ways in which it implicates social relations, connectivities, communities, affiliations, and partnerships—all deeply related to textual production, circulation, or production. Operating organically in immigrant communities, literacy as affinity shows that texts are about relationships, connecting belief systems, values, and experiences. In Chapter four, I discuss how these partnerships are built between members of the same ethnic group but also between ethnic groups. In Chapter five, I elaborate on how the researcher as a broker combines a varied arrangement of professional, ethnic, or national affiliations—relations based on values, beliefs, or experiences—all embedded in the research of transnational literacy practices. Through these series of affinities, the researcher particularizes relations, selecting from distinct contexts those relations and experiences that pertain to previous or future actions.

Co-brokering. I developed the term co-brokering to identify those partnerships that immigrants build to negotiate legal papers, documentation, and application procedures, all comprising collaborative “file selves,” a term introduced by Julie Chu (2010). Co-brokering operates both at small and large-scale levels. Immigrants learn to co-broker, for instance categories of immigration, which as expected triage people based on the interests of the governing nation-state. Economic immigrants can be accepted only as long as they contribute to the prosperity of the country. Co-brokering functions at small scales too, in specific situations such as compiling documents and building a case for immigration purposes. In such situations, immigrants learn “to build texts,” creating hidden transcripts that mimic the official language of bureaucracy. In Chapter three, I showed that co-brokering develops among those groups who share affinities in terms of socio-economic class, but also those who are legally or racially
marked as other. Although co-brokering involves partnerships between similar socio-economic groups, these partnerships are ethnically and racially unequal. While Romanian immigrants were willing to establish partnerships, those were developed through points of affinity but dissolved once each party completed its role. These points of affinity require a complex process when ethnic or race relations come into the picture. Romanian immigrants become aware that being white gives them more power, of course only temporally until they speak and reveal their accents. “The advantage of the skin” as one of my participants remarked puts at disadvantage racialized, less valued bodies. Thus, co-brokering exposes systems of difference and inequality, and for this reason, it deserves further inquiry. What is the nature of co-brokering in other contexts? What sustains them and how does it shape literacy practices?

*Bi-institutional perspective.* I also discussed the bi-institutional perspective as a concept that discursive spaces where emotions are permitted, how they are managed, and ways in which emotions might be recovered. Institutions have generally been criticized for their control of emotions (Trainor, 2008) for promoting a writing style that is depersonalized and asocial. Whether these are educational, state-governed, economic, or political institutions, the ability to move from one setting to another and to learn various discursive practices affords a critical position as exemplified in Chapter three. I also discussed the role of institutions in Chapter five when I examined the writing scholar as a broker operating in research institutions such as libraries. Although I focus more on sedimented practices and ideologies associated with these institutions, the identity of the researcher is marked by institutional affiliation as well other affinities of ethnicity, nationality, and personal interests. Engaging discursive practices from these multiple perspectives can produce an accumulated repertoire of language experiences.
Through this repertoire, I argue, one can develop language of empathy and experiences through which to connect with people and their own perspective.

Pedagogical Implications

There are multiple pedagogical implications some of which I alluded in my previous discussion. As I reiterate that transnationalism has its double emphasis on trans- and –nation, I envision writing classes that engage with the trans- as a mark of mobility whether it is reflected on flexibility of genres, of topics, rhetorical invention, or audience. With an emphasis on the trans-, writing is not longer static, but it changes and shifts depending on context. Such changes could mean a study of genres cross-culturally or historically, a study of writing as travel, or writing from a global perspective. The teaching of writing considering the latter segment of transnationalism should bring forth the nation as a contested term. In a chapter devoted fully to taking up emotion as an analytical tool in the classroom, Micciche (2007) introduces the citizenship narrative assignment as a useful discursive exercise in which students not only learn about various forms of citizenship but also about the emotions associated with such definitions. Although Micciche’s (2007) goal in the chapter is to present pedagogical approaches to teaching emotions as performative and embodied acts, I find her suggestions applicable to getting students to think critically about the nation, about immigrant literacy, immigrant narratives, and connections to larger political structures.

Since literacy as affinity emerges precisely in this context of instrumental discourse, where bureaucratic structures seek to depersonalize and expedite communication, we need to pay more attention to ways in which writing in the classroom becomes a decontextualized practice, performed only in response to a course assignment. In dialog on the issue of the instrumental nature of technical writing, Patrick Moore (2004) a supporter of instrumental discourse suggests
that instrumental discourse has been overly criticized by professors as “the tool of capitalist oppression,” mainly used for “profiteering, dehumanization, domination, and expediency” (p. 56). Although not intentionally, writing in academic contexts continues to be taught as practice independent from other discursive contexts. Even with the public turn in composition and the opening of our classroom towards service-learning, students continue to be taught that efficient communication is about being “objective, impartial, and unemotional”—an old advice found in an outdated technical writing textbook, yet unfortunately a current belief professed even today (Miller, 2004, p. 49, emphasis added). Immigrants, international students, and other marginalized groups know about the objectifying power of language precisely because they are the ones who must wrestle with bureaucracies, often more than others. Because of these experiences and exposure to various styles of such “objective” discourse, they are thus able to expose and critique such forms of discursive management. Our classroom pedagogies should reflect these multiple perspectives on writing and encourage students’ participation even if their views may offer a critique of U.S. writing conventions. Too often, immigrant and international students continue to be taught implicitly or explicitly that academic writing conventions are generalizable to all rhetorical contexts without any acknowledgement of other rhetorical possibilities. With such a belief system and writing pedagogy, these students’ experiences are rendered irrelevant; like all other students, they are taught to follow the rules as if they were immutable and valid across multicultural contexts. My purpose here is not to advocate for pure expressivist pedagogies nor to encourage an abolition of rules. In “Class Affects, Classroom Affectations,” Lindquist (2004) clearly shows how emotions management in the college writing class can also be a site for manufacturing authenticity in exchange for a good grade (p. 197). Rather, I see the writing classroom as a space where writing is taught rhetorically and cross-culturally. In this way,
whether students are domestic, immigrant, international, they may learn actively about global citizenship.

In a global citizenship frame, certain assumptions about our identity and our discourses are challenged. When Andrzejewski & Alessio (1999) discuss the learning they experienced in formal education, they critique the omission as well as the bias:

The U.S. is presented as the best nation in the world; one which, despite a few "mistakes," fights for human rights and democracy. Other countries are primarily studied for the natural resources available in them. People from other countries are generally portrayed as less knowledgeable, less advanced technologically and often incapable of handling their own country's affairs.

In “Stories from our people,” I seek to challenge these views. Immigrant narratives show the intricacies of human experience and the ways in which the personal, the bureaucratic, and the national shape, control, and interact with each other.

In considering additional pedagogical implications of my study, I draw attention to ways in which literacy brokers can also be studied in and integral of a writing classroom. My suggestion is not necessarily innovative since others have already experimented in this area. Maria Jerskey (2013), for instance, relates about her experiment with language and academic brokers—terminology derived from Lillis & Curry’s (2006) study of brokers in academic publishing—a campus-wide pilot program whose goal was to offer support to multilingual faculty writers. Specifically, it was meant to “cultivate a proactive and community-based approach to an individual’s text production” (Jerskey, 2013, p. 201). Although intended as institutional support for faculty having difficulty either with the English language or with academic research expectations, the program ran into the issue of targeting particular writers; this
particularism translated in a form of deficiency was rendered more visible through this program. Despite such limitations, Jerskey (2013)’s experiment is a model that can expand to various other situations. One additional example is the thriving of dissertation boot camps and programs such as the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD) that work with networks for writing and publishing, develop mentorship programs, writing groups, as well as time management and psycho-emotional coaching. A literacy brokers program, as Jerskey (2013) implemented, can serve not just for multilingual faculty but also for various other writing groups. I see such a program implemented in schools that are creating partnerships with schools abroad, in writing classrooms with traditional and non-traditional students, multilingual, or immigrant students, or in service-learning classes that connect academic settings to other organizations and businesses.

Implications for Research in Transnational Contexts

In the introduction, I suggested that in writing and composition research we are witnessing a transnational turn where much attention is currently directed towards texts and practices in contexts other than the U.S. Rather than adopt transnational research just as a trend, I argue that through transnational work, we can reassess taken-for-granted epistemologies and practices. In other words, transnational research has the potential to reactivate critical inquiry in areas that have become sedimented and uninterrogated. Histories of writing, for instance, take different trajectories than those rooted in Harvard freshman composition course in 1874 or developed dialectically with other branches of the English department at U.S. institutions (Berlin, 1987). Xiaoye You’s (2010) book Writing in the devil’s tongue provides a history of writing in China and in doing so, it reveals the multiple ways in which writing is shaped by national and transnational conditions.
In “Stories from our People”: Immigrants, Brokers, and Literacy as Affinity, I tried to offer a critical perspective on issues that matter in transnational research: literacy as affinity—a repertoire of discursive strategies that is developed in the interaction between immigrants and brokers as intermediaries who facilitate, manage, or obstruct mobility of people and texts; and the immigrant as critical subjectivity. The brokers’ emotional work in this study permeates multiple aspects of the social level, whether it is through affinity for the nation, affinity within one’s own ethnic group and across ethnic groups, affinity through the personal story, or affinity manifested in membership of particular group (organizations, professional groups, or institutions). All of these—the nation, ethnic and racial groups, personal narratives, as well as institutions and organizations—shape transnational literacies, challenging us to rethink what we teach, how we teach, and how we research writing.

Understanding and approaching literacy as affinity orient us towards a communicative practice that engages the entire human experience. It binds the rational and the emotional in a symbiotic relationship rather than treat them as independent, discrete functions. Literacy as affinity is ultimately about relations. It is about relationships with one’s past experiences, but also relationship with larger rhetorics of nation-states that impact the human experience. By advancing the notion of literacy as affinity, we acknowledge that people have histories with reading and writing, and those histories may involve traumatic experiences, forced expatriation, severe poverty, and more. As such, literacy as affinity intervenes in those moments of change. Economic and political shifts bring to surface what Raymond Williams calls “structures of feelings.” These come to surface at particular times of societal transformations, William argues. Change renders them more visible, in a similar way in which emotions or management of emotions become more visible in contexts of loss, mobility, or institutional constraints. Literacy
as affinity comes to fill in those gaps, precisely because affinity ensures adaptability and transfer of knowledge and practices.

    Literacy as affinity challenges us to rethink the texts and the social aspect of literacy through emotions. In *Towards a Civic Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism*, Sharon Crowley (2006) explains that “affective influence depends on whether the experience is elaborated or punctuated (...)” (p. 84). Crowley further defines elaborated experience as one that is attached to “experiences and memories” (p. 85). With this definition in mind, we can envision literacy as an experience that connects people to other experiences. Affinities and emotions emphasize relationality and support in developing new concepts through connections. But more than understanding literacy as affinity for the individual is seeing its potential to connecting the individual to other contexts of learning beyond the classroom—communities, families, geopolitical spaces of nation-states, ethnic enclaves, and so on. All of these are imbued with values and belief systems that shape literacy development and literacy education at any given moment. Thus, literacy as affinity provides a sustainable system for learning and research by engaging larger communities and partnerships that reach out beyond formal sites of learning. Literacy as affinity, then, is about sustainability and life-long learning as much as it is about transforming gaps into opportunities for knowledge making.
APPENDIX A

Escape from Romania to 9-11 [Poster/Invitation].
APPENDIX B

This is an overview of textbook revisions highlighted in Chapter two. The revisions address the inclusion of specific texts which richer patriotic or ideological content (from CC of PCR, Propaganda and Agitation Section, File 37/ 1988):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbooks</th>
<th>Revisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ABC (last revised in 1970)</td>
<td>p. 8: Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu and Elena Ceausescu should be in color, from a more recent period (where pioneers and the country’s hawks should appear)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>p. 9 the image of the opening festivity of the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the sky should be colored in blue and the school yard should be paved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading, 2nd grade (last revised in 1979)</td>
<td>More poems included to be dedicated to patria and the party and Nicolae Ceausescu:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Song to Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“To comrade Elena Ceausescu”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Romanian Voice”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-revise the section “Knowledge about nature”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading, 3rd grade</td>
<td>Inclusion of more significant texts:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“How the fall begins”, “Work is dear to us,”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“From the lives of Dacians”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>Texts and Additional Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Romanian, 4th grade | “The Wars of Trajan and Decebal”  
|                     | “the Hands”  
|                     | “The Story of the “Country’s Hawks””  
|                     | Similar to 2nd grade but it should include texts concerning industry and agriculture and the new life of people in towns and villages  
|                     | - poems for Nicolae Ceausescu: “Nicolae Ceausescu’s Epoch,” “Song,” “The Supreme Oath”  
|                     | New texts: “As boy I was roaming the forests” (M. Eminescu), “Brother Ioane” (T. Arghezi), “Seen from the Moon” (Z. Stancu), “The Battle at the High Bridge” (N. Iorga)  
| Romanian, 6th grade | New exercises of composition included with the main literary texts and supplemental readings  
|                     | Some valuable texts already included: “Our Patria,” (G. Cosbuc) “Our Language” (Alexe
Mateevici), “Winter” (V. Alecsandri),

“Sobiesky and the Romanians” (C. Negruzzi)

**New texts:** “Letter III” (M. Eminescu), “To my Country” (V. Voiculescu), “Song to Michael the Great”

---

**Romanian, 7th grade**

(last revised in 1975 and 1977)

- “The Country” (Z. Stancu)
- “The Field of Liberty” (St. O. Iosif)

---

**Romanian, 8th grade**

(last revised in 1975 and 1977)

- the change will involve 2 textbooks: one for literary texts and one for grammar. Both the structure and the conception, as well as the content of the textbooks will be superior to the previous one in its patriotic-educative value.
- the purpose of this textbook is to be a synthesis of all previous work, as an end of a segment.
  - Emphasis on writing in various diverse situations of the school life and adult life.
  - Study of grammar and vocabulary will be
emphasized, especially the cultivation and perfection of expression in the Romanian language.
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85-94.


Heinemann.


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