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Community Literacy, Labor Market Intermediaries, and Community Communication Ecologies

Michael Pennell



Arguing that we fail both parents and students if we continue to think of community literacy as a dichotomy between school and work, this article illustrates Labor Market Intermediaries (LMIs) as sites of community literacy. The investigation of LMIs in a particular community (Greater Lafayette, Indiana) allows for a more thorough understanding of community literacy outside of traditional sites such as schools, community centers, and adult education programs; in turn, the article argues that such an understanding may lead to more productive involvement by literacy educators in our communities.

“Like other public and private resources, literacy is valuable—often volatile—property” (Brandt “Literacy Learning” 376).

Literacy, like real estate, hinges on, as the popular mantra goes, location, location, location. And literacy, like much real estate, is both a valuable and volatile property. In my state of Rhode Island, homeowners have watched their properties triple in value over the past six to seven years. While this property growth is welcomed by many homeowners, it further shuts out non-homeowners who find themselves facing the reality of never owning a home in the ocean state. This real estate trend parallels a trend in the literacy market. Those prepared for the post-industrial workplace, labeled symbolic-analysts by Robert Reich, find their value at a volatile but rising level. Those workers remaining in industrial jobs, regions, and/or skill sets find themselves, like the non-homeowners, potentially locked out. One need only look to industrial regions of the American Midwest, such as Flint, Michigan and Gary, Indiana, for proof of such volatility.

These workers, like those in search of affordable housing, find themselves dislocated from capitalist America. But it is not only work that more people are finding themselves lacking; many of these laid-off and under or unemployed citizens are withdrawing from community and civic life (see Rimer; Putnam). Dislocation in this sense (a term favored by the U.S. Department of Labor) involves much more than the loss of a job. In turn, the process of relocation involves much more than simply locating another job. Yet, a new “third sector” industry has blossomed around the training and education, or relocation, of America’s workforce. The myth that more education and training will



lead to employment—and therefore to a reintegration into America—fuels the growth of a sector of organizations melding literacy education with employment services. One might go so far as to position these sites as the blossoming of community literacy. Yet, traditional sites of literacy education may find themselves, sadly, far removed from such relocation. A recent Purdue University advertisement reflects such a disconnect: “Preparing Indiana for jobs that don’t exist. Yet.” Boldly explicit is the university’s claim that many of the jobs for which workers are currently training do not exist. The education and training programs proliferating within and outside of education institutions hold out hope for that “Yet.” Echoing the *Field of Dreams* mantra, many educators and politicians believe that if you train them, work will come. Unfortunately, much of our research into community literacy illustrates just such a dichotomy between school and work.

By focusing on non-academic and non-workplace “sponsors of literacy,” specifically a network of sponsors labeled Labor Market Intermediaries (LMIs), I echo Jeffrey Grabill’s concern that we “should focus on the procedures by which communities are constructed and the related social institutions that result” (92–3). In *Community Literacy Programs and the Politics of Change*, Grabill exposes the networks that compose traditional community literacy programs, as well as community development organizations such as the United Way. In particular, Grabill’s focus on the intertwined histories of institutions and community in local regions uncovers much of the complicated web that is “community” in much literacy research.

My concern, however, is the vast networks of institutions and organizations that fall outside of the traditional purview of “community literacy.” As a means to address some of those less exposed networks, I turn to a less literacy-based lens: Labor Market Intermediaries (LMIs). If we enter our communities with literacy blinders, we may miss many institutions and sponsors that are performing literacy training under the guise of job brokering or unemployment counseling. We do not grasp many nodes of the community ecology. Through the lens of LMIs, we can investigate traditional literacy sponsors such as adult education classes and nonprofit literacy centers alongside government-sponsored unemployment centers and for-profit employment firms such as Manpower, Inc.

Labor Market Intermediaries (LMIs)

In a 1978 report for the National Commission for Manpower Policy, D. Quinn Mills claimed, “So pervasive are labor market intermediaries in our economy...that it is difficult to imagine our economy functioning without them” (15). Despite the pervasiveness Mills claims for LMIs, the report positions LMIs as job brokers mainly. It was only in the late 1990s, following the contingent work “tipping point,” that LMIs came under closer scrutiny, especially as a group of organizations filling similar roles in the labor market. Richard Kazis describes these “new” labor market intermediaries as relying on “collaborative, networked approaches” to labor markets (9). Eventually, researchers began exploring this networked nature of LMIs in detail, especially community college programs, unions, and temporary employment agencies (see Seavey; Fitzgerald; Takahashi and Melendez; Lynch, Palmer, and Grubb; Harrison and Weiss).

Labor market intermediaries are the organizations (the interfaces) mediating work and (dislocated) workers, such as government-sponsored unemployment centers,



temporary employment agencies, and community centers. Relying on the typology developed by Chris Benner, I classify LMIs into three general categories (see Table 1).

Table 1: Types of LMIs

Organization Type	Examples
<i>For-profit sector</i>	Temporary agencies and for-profit training providers Contractor Brokers Professional employer organizations Online job search Web sites
<i>Membership-based</i>	Union-based initiatives Membership-based employee associations
<i>Public sector</i>	Employment Training and Workforce Development System (One Stop Career Centers) Education-based initiatives (adult extension, community college contract training programs) Non-profit initiatives (publicly or privately funded training programs)

Private sector, or for-profit, intermediaries are the most prominent sector of LMIs. Temporary employment agencies in particular were developed in the upper Midwest and remain popular in the region today. Beginning as providers of clerical workers, temporary agencies now occupy a central position in all industries (see “Staffing Firms”). They are consistently the largest daily employer (Manpower, Inc.) and a key economic indicator, despite representing only 2.5 percent of non-farm employment (see Barker and Christenson; “Temporary Employment”; “Temporary Help Employment”). In addition, online job search sites such as monster.com, careerbuilder.com, and hotjobs.com have flourished in recent years (especially since monster.com and hotjobs.com became the first dot-coms to advertise during the Super Bowl). Private sector intermediaries remain loyal to employers because they are market-based organizations, requiring a profit to survive.

It is hard to imagine the industrial Midwest without unions, even if the significance of unions has fluctuated through the years and their actual bargaining power has lessened of late. Although their membership numbers increased for the second straight year in 1999 for the first time since the late 1970s, their vitality has not neared past levels, with only 13.9 percent of the U.S. workforce unionized as of 1999 (“Labor Unions”). The primary function of a labor union is to partake in collective bargaining, but an increasing number have attempted to aid displaced workers through skills training,



such as the AFL–CIO Job Corps. Other membership–based LMIs include professional organizations, which are vital sources of information for workers in certain fields, especially the computer industry.

Whereas the previous two types of LMIs are tied mainly to employers or workers, the third type, public sector intermediaries, are tied to government policies and regional economic fluctuations. Represented in adult education classes, government–sponsored one–stop career centers, or community centers, non–profit intermediaries focus on the public good. These may be the most familiar group of LMIs to many readers as they represent most closely our field’s understanding of community literacy. This sector is especially key in rustbelt regions housing workers in a post–industrial downturn or in areas with large numbers of new citizens, such as the Center for Employment Training (CET) in the San Jose, California region or the Lafayette Adult Resource Academy in Lafayette, Indiana. In terms of literacy, many of these organizations center on functional literacy (the CET outstanding) as workers study for their GED or for improved English skills.

As a whole, LMIs, according to Chris Benner, are the third parties that help individual employers and job seekers “find the best match of skills, attitudes, interests, and needs” (84). Their popularity is traced directly to the growing flexibility of the labor market, and, therefore, workers rely on these organizations “to deal with changing *information* and *skill* requirements” (Benner 84; emphasis added). Whereas in the past LMIs were mainly passive job brokers, offering, for example, clerical workers to companies, today, these organizations have expanded into nearly all industries and therefore occupy various positions in literacy development. Although their roles differ, as noted above, they definitely play a critical role in worker and workplace literacy development. Yet this aspect of LMIs is consistently downplayed as “skills development or training” (see Benner and Kazis). The organizations are not recognized as “sponsors of literacy” (Brandt “Literacy Learning”).

These sponsors highlight the importance of social networks in their success and reflect Lewis Friedland’s claim that “the overall democratic opportunities for any given community are circumscribed by its location in these larger political and economic systems” (360). Based on Friedland’s illustration of communication ecologies, he shows that “the network...is not a unitary concept” (369). Moreover, these sponsors represent the extensive networked state of community operating at both the global and local levels. In commenting on the concept of community, Friedland explains,

The forms of tightly bounded, well–integrated community that we associate with the rural village, the city neighborhood, and even the suburb no longer correspond to a social structure characterized by more complex patterns of mobility and migration, the use of communications technologies to sustain certain ties (but not others) over time and space, and, more generally, voluntary patterns of association based on personal networks rather than ties of loyalty to social groups based on community and kin. (364)

I now turn to Lewis Friedland’s community communication ecology model to help uncover and expose the LMI networks in this more complex understanding of community. Table 2, reproduced from Friedland, outlines the networks of a community



communication ecology. This table does more than provide dichotomies such as global and local or workplace and school. While the global and local are useful ways for considering LMIs, these institutions are operating at more than simply the local and/or global levels. Communities are messy connections between a variety of individuals, institutions, and forces. And, community literacy is more than university/community collaborations. Friedland offers six levels in a community ecology spanning the global and the individual.



**Table 2: Community Communication Ecology
(reproduced from Friedland)**

Media Level	Location	Medium of Communication
<i>System</i>	Global, national, regional	System-wide media: national networks, national newspapers, elite journals, global computer networks
<i>Macro</i>	Metropolitan	Metro newspapers, metro broadcast media, metro Internet portals, cable systems
<i>Macro-meso</i>	Metropolitan/ community-wide	Zoned editions, cable access, specialized community media (e.g., ethnic radio), civic Internet portals
<i>Meso</i>	Community-wide/ neighborhood	District newspapers, micro-radio, community Internet portals
<i>Meso-micro</i>	Neighborhood	Neighborhood newspapers, newsletters
<i>Micro</i>	Neighborhood/ interpersonal	Newsletters, point-to-point communication (telephone and e-mail), interpersonal network discussion

While Friedland is operating at the level of media, his ecology provides a useful framework for us to complicate the literacy relationships of LMIs. Moreover, this table offers a less imposing way of envisioning and engaging with community networks because the ways in which LMIs rely on literacy as the brokering interface between workers and employers is influenced by the ways in which they manipulate or exist on global, national, regional, and neighborhood stages. In addition, the model provides levels



of bridging and bonding vital to any successful LMI or community organization (see Warren, Thompson, & Saegert). The table also asks us to situate our own community literacy efforts in a larger network that goes beyond, for example, a bridge between a university and an urban community.

At this point, the previous discussion may prove more useful by locating it in a region. This example showcases the ways in which LMIs both span communities and span our understandings of community literacy. The state of Indiana offers regions reflecting both the tragic postscript to the industrial boom and the rise of the industry of higher education. In contrast to the steel production of Lake County and Gary, Tippecanoe County and Greater Lafayette, provide a unique site for the examination of LMIs' roles in a community, especially a community housing a large university.

Located in the west central portion of the state, Tippecanoe County represents the core of the Lafayette Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with a population exceeding 180,000. Long before any white settlers entered the Wabash Valley, numerous Native American tribes called various areas along the Wah-ba-shik—a home, such as the Weas, the Potawatomis, the Shawnees, the Kickapoos, and the Winnebagos (Hayman 6). The county derives its name from the buffalo-fish, called Kith-tip-pe-ca-nunk, which used to abound in the Wabash River. The region was settled by a small group of French settlers in 1717 and saw the first fortified European settlement, Fort Ouiatenon, in what would become the State of Indiana (6). After changing hands between the French, English, and Native Americans, the Fort and villages were burned and destroyed in 1791. It wasn't until January 26, 1826, that the county was officially settled, covering an area of 504 square miles.

As the county seat and nexus of Tippecanoe County, Lafayette began as a boisterous riverfront town with its founding by William Digby in 1825 (Hayman 10). Surviving early ridicule as “Layflat” or “Laughat,” Lafayette and the surrounding county soon found themselves “wed” to each other, opening a reciprocally productive relationship between agriculture and commerce (11). By 1850, the county seat had become a thriving community, housing about one-third of the county's population. Its location as the northernmost point of steamboat navigation on the Wabash River made the town a key transition point for goods headed to the northern parts of the state. Furthermore, farmers from surrounding communities relied on Lafayette as a key marketplace for the buying and selling of goods. By 1976, Lafayette had overcome its moniker as “the hardest place on the Wabash” and developed into “the hub of a nine county agricultural, commercial, industrial, and educational heartland among the most prosperous in the United States” (10). Yet this hub had been realized, at least into the 1900s, through a process unique to other regional development. Whereas certain industrialists put other Indiana areas into prominence, such as the DePauws with New Albany, Lanier with Madison, the Studebakers and Olivers with South Bend, and the U.S. Steel Corporation with Gary, “no such aggressive individuals...put Lafayette's name in industrial prominence” (Jarosz 68). But this fact is due more to the type of industry that developed in the county, just across the river from Lafayette.

West Lafayette, formally recognized in 1866, has a history intertwined with Lafayette and the surrounding community due to Purdue University. The institution that has now become the center of the county emerged as an early land grant university based on the Morrill Act—an act signed by President Lincoln in 1862 and responsible



for the founding of many state universities (see Edmond for a history of the Morrill Act). The early years of the University were marked by disagreement as arrangements were made for the existence, location, and name of “The Indiana Agricultural College” (Hayman 32). Eventually, the idea and reality of Purdue University in West Lafayette gained momentum, and the first official semester began on September 16, 1874 (*A University of Tradition* 4). Today the school is flourishing, with enrollment pushing over 38,000 students and employment placing it near the top in the state of Indiana. In 1999, the West Lafayette campus offered 6,700 courses in more than 200 specializations in the schools of Agriculture, Consumer and Family Sciences, Education, Engineering, Health Sciences, Liberal Arts, Management, Nursing, Pharmacy and Pharmacal Sciences, Science, Technology, and Veterinary Medicine (Kriebel 136). As the largest single employer in the county and one of the top employers in the state, Purdue University proves to be the economic nexus of Tippecanoe County (and surrounding areas).



Further, the university has positioned itself as a major component of the state’s economy, claiming recently that Purdue research outreach provides nearly 13,000 jobs (Pettit). As stated earlier, Purdue considers itself key in preparing Hoosiers for jobs that don’t exist. Yet. In John W. Hicks’ year as acting president in 1982, he noted the vital role Purdue could play in the state’s economic shift from “a smokestack, hands-on economy to a highly technological and diverse ‘heads on’ society” (Topping 375). Purdue’s research expenditures support this claim: “In fiscal year 2000, Purdue put forth \$263.4 million of the total \$503.4 million total research expenditures by [Indiana University, Ball State University, University of Notre Dame, and Indiana State University]” (Pettit). Although Purdue has dominated the economic scene in recent years, Tippecanoe County has, since its inception, fostered a balanced economy between agriculture and industry, allowing the county seat to function as a hub, a marketplace of exchange. While Purdue is the largest employer in the county, the region also relies on manufacturing with employers such as Wabash National, Subaru–Isuzu of America, and Caterpillar accounting for over 80,000 jobs.

In the late 1990s, the Indiana government, following federal legislation, instigated a more developed, formal approach to dealing with dislocated workers of the “new economy.” In the state of Indiana, this shift resulted in a new component of the Department of Workforce Development (DWD)—WorkOne centers. These “full-service” centers, as well as smaller “express” centers, began appearing in counties throughout the state, particularly in areas overwhelmed by dislocated workers. Lafayette, Indiana houses the Tecumseh Area’s WorkOne center, serving Benton, White, Carroll, Warren, Tippecanoe, Clinton, Fountain, and Montgomery Counties. The Tecumseh area is also aided by seven express centers, with two in Lafayette (including a partnership with the central, and important, non-profit Lafayette Adult Resource Academy).

Before exploring the Lafayette, Indiana WorkOne ecology further, I will situate the institution in a description of the state’s DWD. As the physical and local instantiation of statewide policy and assistance, the WorkOne centers mediate the local setting and trends of a region or city and the more global or state shifts and policies. The DWD is a component of the Community and Economic Development group of state agencies. According to the Department’s web site, the DWD “is tasked with helping Hoosiers prepare for rewarding careers and good jobs through lifelong learning” (“Overview”). The DWD positions technology as the force behind changes in employment in the state,



claiming, “As technology continues to evolve, so do the needs of Indiana employers and workers” (*ibid*). Even a superficial browsing of labor literature might contradict the agency given to technology by the technologically deterministic stance of the DWD. Regardless, the DWD reinforces one of the central claims about community literacy in this article—it is hard to limit and constrain into neat categories. This situation is especially so when it comes to skills and training (i.e., literacy education) and their role in the intermediation of work and workers. The DWD lists numerous partnering constituents, from school corporations and higher education institutions to private citizens and business councils. This blurs the earlier boundaries introduced in my categorizations of non-profit and for-profit intermediaries and provides an example of the difficulties inherent in grouping and classifying LMIs and literacy sponsors as a whole. Moreover, the DWD and its partners exhibit the global pressures always acting on local institutions.

The Indiana DWD is a government agency and presents itself as an interface for both workers and employers:

The DWD is committed to building a user-friendly system that helps hard-working Hoosiers upgrade their skills and maximize their earning potential. Plus, we're committed to creating a system that provides employers with labor market information, recruitment and referral of job seekers, and unemployment insurance services. (“Overview”)

Throughout the DWD’s self-description, the interface system is described in post-industrial literacy terms such as workers’ skills, education and training, lifelong learning, and evolving. Further, each of the DWD’s initiatives, such as the WorkOne centers, rely on such language to promote their services to both dislocated workers and employers.

Indiana’s WorkOne Centers represent a physical site for both workers and employers to negotiate the “new economy,” and these centers are nodes in global, statewide, and local networks. Dislocated workers are directed to their local WorkOne center rather than a variety of locations for employment and training assistance, which, in turn, aids their negotiation of the complicated dislocated worker network, as well as reinforcing that network. Witnessed in the numerous partners from local social service agencies to education institutions, as well as the connection to the U.S. Department of Labor, Indiana’s WorkOne Centers present a growing, multi-faceted resource for dislocated workers in the state’s regions. In the most recent calendar year, the WorkOne centers served 480,000 dislocated workers (Madaras). According to Patrick Madaras, this number does not represent all those served by the centers, as some services do not require registration. Regardless, many unemployed workers find the WorkOne centers a required resource.

Many of the advertised services center around employment and training, from career counseling to GED classes to apprenticeships. The administrative entity at these centers is Workforce Development Services (WDS), a nonprofit agency that provides employment and training services. The primary funding for WDS is the Department of Labor’s Workforce Investment Act. The WDS is overseen by the Integrated Service Delivery Board and is composed of members of the business community, local government, unions, and education and community organizations. Es-



entially, the board holds training providers accountable for not just helping people find jobs but to keep jobs.

Even with the conflation of job and literacy brokering in much of the WorkOne centers' activities and materials, the centers seem genuinely interested in local workers' development and employment. As Madaras explains,

Volume wise, the labor exchange service is by far the predominant service of the local one-stop system. Investment wise, training/skills advancement is roughly comparable to the labor exchange effort. We are able to perform the labor exchange function very efficiently, which translates to large numbers of individuals served per dollar. The training and skill enhancement effort is understandably more costly per person, but it has a high return. Different customers have different needs, and this blend offers us an opportunity to address them.



Despite the postindustrial language of people as natural resources, the WorkOne centers focus on serving individuals.

These centers seem to help dislocated workers and, despite representing a government agency, remain closely connected to local economies. They take into account a place's history as well as recent shifts and downturns. Their success depends upon their close connection to various parts of the community and state ecology. In Tippecanoe County, for example, WorkOne is assisting the City of Lafayette to support a new program called Manufacturing Fast Track which aids downtown Lafayette workers through education, internships, and jobs. In addition, WorkOne has partnered with the Lafayette Adult Resource Academy (LARA) at their downtown location to offer a more extensive help center. LARA has a lengthy history in the community and is well-known and respected throughout the county as a literacy and resource center. Whereas temporary employment companies have been criticized for finding workers only temporary employment, the WorkOne centers strive for long-term employment. In addition, WorkOne centers help dislocated workers navigate the difficult process of registering for and receiving aid, particularly the national dislocated worker aid, through an actual physical center.

The WorkOne center in Lafayette exemplifies such labeling difficulties and the global and local forces acting on and in LMIs. One way to examine such forces is through a key term—a marker of an institution's discourse. For the WorkOne Lafayette, and for WorkOne centers throughout the state, the “dislocated worker” is central to its policies and self-definition because it is in the dislocated worker, both as an actual person and as an institutional construct, that the real and imagined effects of the new economy and globalization—of the shift to a postindustrial society—come into being. Further, and more importantly for the audience of this project, it might be in the dislocated worker that literacy workers, especially those housed in institutions of higher education, find a connection with workers in general.

Why the dislocated worker? Well, in both labor and recent literacy work, as well as in the documents and missions (implicitly and explicitly) of many intermediaries, “dislocated worker/s” are central. As a literacy counselor at the Lafayette WorkOne central office told me, everything the office does revolves around the dislocated worker (Linda). Moreover, the federal government, especially in the Department of Labor, tar-



gets dislocated workers (“Dislocated Workers”). As described on the WorkOne Lafayette web site, a dislocated worker is “an individual who has lost employment through no fault of their own due to plant closings/relocation and is unlikely to return to their previous employer (“Dislocated Workers” WorkOne).” Workers are no longer simply unemployed. Sure, we look to unemployment data, and workers receive unemployment benefits; for example, the WorkOne center specializes in assisting dislocated workers with unemployment claims. But, “dislocated workers” is so much more because it points to the lack of a place-ial fix in late capitalism (playing off Harvey’s spatial fix). The dislocation of workers is much more than unemployment—and unemployment, even under Fordism, was not just unemployment. Rather, dislocation points to a violent rupture, a break, between work and workers and from work and community. More drastically, if the worker becomes dislocated due to a transfer of work to another country or the importing of foreign parts, WorkOne offers a program called Trade Adjustment Assistance. This program, aimed at the impact of foreign trade and instigated by the federal Department of Labor, involves rapid response teams that will provide retraining, re-employment, and unemployment claims assistance.

But the worker, through her literacy skills, is the dislocated entity in the rupture requiring retraining and relocation, in order to regain location, i.e., employment. These workers dislocated by plant closings are offered a variety of reemployment services through WorkOne, ranging from job placement assistance to counseling to resume assistance and Internet access. These services are implemented as not only reemployment services but also relocation services for dislocated workers. Again, key here is the role of the “dislocated worker” as central to how the agency defines itself and its services. The agency relies on the “dislocated worker” as its starting point, and its own grounding in the local labor market. Thus, the “dislocated worker” grounds larger global shifts and statistics in the local situation.

The literacy counselor at WorkOne, Lafayette, described the ebb and flow of people into the center based on local labor shifts such as plant closings, strikes, etc., (Linda). She remarked that in a nearby county, hundreds of workers had recently been laid off, resulting in a rapid response on the part of the center to the workers’ needs. Moreover, she expressed relief over a local plant’s recent agreement between the union and management. Therefore, the dislocated worker is both real (she is the worker that comes through the center days after being laid off looking for assistance), and imagined (as a face for the shifts in larger economic trends). While unemployment claims may be down in the state or nation and we hear politicians making daily claims as to the positive future for jobs in America, the WorkOne literacy counselor claimed, “Unemployment is the worse I’ve seen it in twenty years” (*ibid*). In other words, dislocation is the worst she has seen it in twenty years.

While the WorkOne offices are firmly tied to local regions, they complicate their placement in the county through the networks they foster. As the DWD outlines, partnerships are formed with both private and nonprofit organizations. This fact is strengthened at the local level through the connections fostered by WorkOne Lafayette. Explicitly they advertise partnerships with the LARA, the Area IV Agency on Aging and Community Action Programs, Ivy Tech State College/Community College of Indiana, Tecumseh Area Partnership, Inc., and Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Services (similar relationships are advertised by the Northwest WorkOne centers). When asked about temporary work



agencies, a literacy counselor explained that WorkOne lists job listings from places such as Manpower (*ibid*). If workers show interest, they offer them the option to contact the agency as opposed to going through WorkOne. While this admission showcases the complicated nature of profit versus forprofit intermediaries, it was followed by the comment, “they [the temp agencies] are gaining a strong foothold in the county” (*ibid*). This comment highlights the spatial implications of such networking in which some intermediaries gain footholds in local regions. Further, the central WorkOne center in Lafayette exhibited a strong connection to local social service agencies by offering flyers on local agencies, food pantries, subsidized and temporary housing, etc.

Again, these flyers, as material representations of less pronounced connections, bolster the centrality of the dislocated worker in the intermediary network. These social service agencies provide relief, albeit temporary, from the material reality of many dislocated workers; the actual dislocation, not just from employment, but also from housing and food. In addition, the center features numerous advertisements for various branches of the armed forces; obviously, a lure to recently, especially young, dislocated workers.

Successful LMIs, such as the WorkOne centers and initiative, operate at the micro, meso, and macro, if not system, levels. Table 3 begins to use Friedland’s community communication ecology in light of LMIs such as WorkOne centers. In the place of media, I have inserted programs or connections that WorkOne offers and fosters.

Table 3: Lafayette, Indiana WorkOne Community Communication Ecology

Level	Location	Program/Connection
<i>System</i>	Global, national, regional	Trade Adjustment Assistance, Manpower Inc., armed forces recruitment, WorkOne/Department of Workforce Development website
<i>Macro</i>	Metropolitan	Community College of Indiana, WorkOne website, INEWS, Manpower Inc.
<i>Macromeso</i>	Metropolitan/ communitywide	Community College of Indiana, WorkOne website, INEWS, resume database
<i>Meso</i>	Communitywide/neighborhood	Lafayette Adult Resource Academy, Community College of Indiana, WorkOne website, INEWS



<i>Mesomicro</i>	Neighborhood	Lafayette Adult Resource Academy, Community College of Indiana, GED preparation, Youth Council
<i>Micro</i>	Neighborhood/interpersonal	Food pantries, temporary housing, computer lab, resume assistance, unemployment claims, Manufacturing fast track program

As highlighted in my investigation of the Lafayette, Indiana WorkOne center, these institutions respond to local unemployment shifts, while at the same time aiding workers in their applying for, and receiving, national dislocated worker benefits. Moreover, by utilizing the rhetoric of the dislocated worker, the WorkOne centers are reflecting the systemlevel networks of the Department of Labor and its use of dislocated worker rhetoric. At the microlevel, WorkOne assists in the Manufacturing Fast Track program in downtown Lafayette, aids with temporary housing, and assists individuals with resumes. But it also spans the ecology by fostering connections with the Community College of Indiana and the Lafayette Adult Resource Academy; both of which are more communitywide institutions. Nationally, WorkOne relies on Indiana government sponsorship and connects workers with Trade Adjustment Assistance and other unemployment benefits programs. By building such strong local and national initiatives the WorkOne strengthens the local community but also creates bridges into and out of the community.

These points of intersection call for the involvement of literacy educators and educators in general; yet, many of these sponsors represent noneducational based institutions out of the comfortable purview of our typical investigations and involvement.

Evan Watkins relates a hypothetical scenario in which a school district meeting asks parents to choose whether they want

their children to get on the production, services, or symbolic analysts tracks. Rightly, Watkins claims that one room would be packed. Moreover, he points to the fact that, more than likely, a representative voice would not be achieved at the meeting. Clearly, intermediaries play a crucial role in the lives of “history’s shock absorbers” (Zuboff and Maxmin); those children and their parents who both aren’t at the meeting and do not get on the symbolic analyst track. But we fail both parents and students if we continue to think of community literacy or intermediaries as a dichotomy between school and work.

As Louis Uchitelle illustrates in his profile of airplane mechanics, both bluecollar and whitecollar workers are finding themselves in the transition process of retraining. Many “displaced” workers, according to Uchitelle, are finding that the traditional



wisdom is only a myth: “Education and training create the jobs, according to this way of thinking.” “This way of thinking,” echoed by Purdue University’s advertisement, shifts blame squarely on the shoulders of dislocated workers. Workers who, according to Patrick Gaston, the Verizon Foundation’s president, “[D]on’t have the purchasing power to buy our products” (qtd. in Lewis). He continues, “We can’t be successful if Americans are falling below the right reading levels” (*ibid.*).

If citizenship is now granted based on residence as opposed to birth, then the intermediaries of various residences play no minor role in the strength of democracy. Bennett Harrison and Marcus Weiss, in *Workforce Development Networks*, highlight the possibility that “the education and training being provided to lowincome persons, generally, and to people of color from the inner city, especially, are out of date” (34). This supports Jennifer Wolch and Michael Dear’s claim that “every social group operates within a typical daily ‘prism,’ which, for the disadvantaged, closes into a ‘prison’ of space and resources” (6). This prison becomes difficult to escape, according to Harrison and Weiss:

It is becoming increasingly clear that there is practically no way that low income, already socially ostracized individuals—no matter how highly motivated—can singlehandedly reconstruct and negotiate a city’s map of social and business connections...[they] must be supported by the greater economic and political power of agents: organizations that can break paths, open doors, insist on quality services, and negotiate collectively with employers and governments. (389)

In other words, they require institutions or sponsors that bridge and bond, that operate at the micro, meso, and macrolevels.

These points of intersection call for the involvement of literacy educators and educators in general; yet, many of these sponsors represent noneducational based institutions out of the comfortable purview of our typical investigations and involvement. While we have acknowledged and illustrated the intersection of literacy and economy, we tend to follow research avenues that reflect two trends. Our bridges into the community tend to lead to the workplace or the nonprofit community literacy centers. We have a tremendous, and growing, body of scholarship illustrating workplace literacy movements. In addition, we have examined the implications of the symbolic-analytic movement for our own pedagogy, especially in technical communication. Represented in the Community Literacy Center described by Peck, Flower, and Higgins, or the research of Grabill, many bridges have spanned the university/community divide through community literacy initiatives. However, when these initiatives represent pedagogical-based goals or agendas, they can miss much within community networks. Perhaps most striking about the Lafayette, Indiana WorkOne example is the absence of the county’s powerful resource, the university (see Table 3).

The vast network that composes the WorkOne and DWD initiative showcases very few educational institution nodes. As literacy educators, we should be aware of such intermediary networks and the history behind them. The involvement I call for may be as simple as familiarizing oneself with the community histories surrounding our educational institutions. I included the brief history of Tippecanoe County because it is necessary if one is to understand the LMI network surrounding Purdue University today.



The process of gaining access to regional LMI networks can be done without selling out to industry or “jobseeking” pressures. At the same time, we do a disservice to the community when we shy away from the for-profit or membership-based sectors, positioning our bridges of involvement as firmly rooted in the community literacy of nonprofit sites. Predetermining our involvement limits what we can offer our communities and leaves our institutions, and us, on the outside of those community networks.

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LMIs exist in the zones of ambiguity beyond workplace and education-based institutions—in the networks of local and global social and economic policies and trends. This calls for an engagement with LMIs and their roles in the “developing networks of relationships that weave individuals into groups and communities” (Putnam, Feldstein, & Cohen 1). We must, as Grabill argues, “learn how to understand institutional systems” and utilize “local knowledge” (161). These networks are where action is happening: “[T]he most interesting developments arising from globalization and post-fordist economic restructuring can be found in the ‘inbetween’ spaces, the new geographies of power emerging between the national and the global and the national and local scales” (Soja 205). But instead of seceding to our enclaves, as Reich notes, we must explore the zones of ambiguity—the communities—surrounding our enclaves, whether those be enclaves of gated communities or universities and colleges. The place of secondary associations such as LMIs in the lives of dislocated workers is clear; what is unclear is the place they hold and will continue to hold in our lives.

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