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Author
Flamenbaum, Rachel

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Literacies, Language, and Technological Transformation in the 'New Ghana'

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Anthropology

by

Rachel Nora Flamenbaum

2016

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Literacies, Language, and Technological Transformation in the 'New Ghana'

by

Rachel Nora Flamenbaum

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Elinor Ochs, Chair

This dissertation engages with the classic linguistic anthropological question of literacies in the context of the rapid technological shift in Ghana, West Africa. It examines the slippage between widespread claims of technological transformation made by global tech entrepreneurs and their local partners on the one hand, and the uneven practices through which students at different levels of socioeconomic access are socialized into digital literacies on the other. Specifically, it considers the role of shifting local notions of hierarchy and epistemic rights in the uptake of digital literacies.

Situated as a response to the dearth of research into digital literacies in contexts outside of the post-industrial world, this dissertation argues for greater attention to the pedagogies through which such literacies are taught, in the face of the persistent, widely held belief that digital technology represents a straightforward panacea for the problems of poverty and underdevelopment.

It first considers widespread claims about technological transformation in light of rote pedagogical practices in Ghanaian schools. Close examination of classroom practices in the socialization of ICTs reveals that the deference to elders and authority figures that organizes classroom routines lies orthogonal to the values of learner-centric, critical thinking-oriented values that inform the design of computer hardware and software imported from the Post-Industrial world. The embedding of technologies into contexts of rote learning thus does not produce educational transformations, but rather tech taught by rote.

The latter half of the dissertation engages with the phenomenon of the 'New Ghana,' a diffuse alternative public sphere born in part from Ghana's economic efflorescence relative to the ongoing global economic crisis. I focus especially on the practices through which Ashesi university, an elite tech-focused liberal-arts-based institution at the core of the New Ghana, socializes students into modes of universalist ethical action, critical knowledge production, and ways of speaking that explicitly challenge the age-graded respect hierarchies of the status quo. The organizing principle of Ashesi's institutional efforts to reshape the habitus of Ghanaian youth into "a generation of ethical, entrepreneurial leaders for Africa" is a belief—shared by many within and beyond Ghana—in the transformational power of technologies to bring about political change and economic development.

In the dissonance between these spaces, I argue that, despite claims about the kinds of participatory democracy and economic spheres that new technologies enable, the forms of print and digital literacy necessary to participate in these domains remain exclusive—thus reproducing class hierarchies even as age-graded hierarchies are dismantled.

The dissertation of Rachel Nora Flamenbaum is approved.

Andrew Apter

Marjorie Harness Goodwin

Paul V. Kroskrity

Russell G. Schuh

Elinor Ochs, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016

Table of Contents

LIST OF TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION SYMBOLS

:	Colon(s): Extended or stretched sound, syllable, or word.
(( ))	Double Parentheses: nonverbal details.
( )	Single Parentheses: Transcription doubt.
?	Question Marks: Falling vocal pitch.
=	Equal Signs: Latching of contiguous utterances, with no interval or overlap.
[	Bracket: Indicates speech overlap.
!	Exclamation Points: Animated speech tone.
—	Hyphens: Halting, abrupt cut off of sound or word.
> < < >	Less Than/Greater Than Signs: Portions of an utterance delivered at a pace noticeably quicker (> <) or slower (< >) than surrounding talk.
Okay	Bold: Emphatic prosody.
hhh .hhh	H's: Audible outbreaths; the more h's, the longer the aspiration.
(.)	Intra-turn pause of one second or less
Okay	Underline: English
Okay	Italics: Twi

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VITA

Education

2007   BA, Anthropology
            New York University

2011   MA, Anthropology
            University of California, Los Angeles

Teaching & Research

2010-16   Research Assistant
            Elinor Ochs
            Department of Anthropology
            University of California, Los Angeles

2011   Teaching Assistant
            Department of Anthropology
            University of California, Los Angeles

2012-2014   Dissertation Fieldwork
            Berekuso, Ghana

2015   Instructor
            Department of Anthropology

Awards

2009-13   Graduate Research Fellowship Program
            National Science Foundation

2010   Award for the Intensive Study of Twi
            Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS)

2012   UCLA International Institute
            Graduate Summer Research Fellowship

2013   UCLA Departmental of Anthropology
            Research Travel Grant

2013-2014   Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research
            Dissertation Fieldwork Grant

2014-2015   Collegium of University Teaching Fellows (CUTF) Fellowship
            UCLA Graduate Division

2014-15   Dissertation Year Fellowship
            UCLA Graduate Division

Publications and Presentations

In prep   "The Digital Subversion of Ghanaian Hierarchies."

In prep   "Teaching Tech by Rote: Socialization into Digital Literacies in Contemporary Ghana."

Forthcoming   "A 'New Ghana' in 'Rising Africa'?" in Paterson, Franks, & Bunce (eds.) Africa's Media Image in the 21st Century: From the Heart of Darkness to Africa Rising. New York: Routledge, pp. 116-125.

2015   "The New Ghana." Invited lecture, Africa in Global Perspective Seminar, UCLA Global Studies (November 30)

2015   "Socialization into Digital Literacies in Rural Ghana." Invited lecture, Language Socialization Graduate Seminar, UCLA Anthropology (October 21)

2015   "'The Future Was Yesterday': Cultivating Repertoires of Possibility in the New Ghana." Breaking Future(s) Conference, University of Indiana-Bloomington. (March 23-26)

2015   "Socialization into Digital Literacies in Contemporary Ghana." Sandrizona Graduate Student Conference, University of Arizona. (February 14-15)

2014   "What We're Learning from Online Education in Ghana." Vital Topics Forum: Anthropology in and of MOOCs, ed. Graham Jones. American Anthropologist, vol. 116 (4), pp. 830-831.

2014   "'Are You My Co-Equal??': The digital subversion of Ghanaian hierarchies." 113th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, DC. Panel Co-Organizer. (December 3-7)

2013   "The Pragmatics of Codeswitching on Ghanaian Talk-Radio." Li Wei (ed.), International Journal of Bilingualism, Special Issue, vol. 18(4), pp. 346–362.

2013   "Anthropology for Design." Invited lecture, Ashesi University College, Ghana. (November 4)

2012   "'And Then He Said (in Twi)...': Practices of Strategic Translation On a Ghanaian Blog." 111th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, San Francisco. Panel Chair & Organizer. (November 23-29)

2007   "Speak Your Kasa: Broadcasting Ambivalence on Ghanaian Talk-Radio." 1st Annual Conference on Codeswitching in West Africa. University of Ghana, Accra

CHAPTER ONE:
Introduction

In July 2012, in an exurb of Accra, the capital of Ghana, my close friend Efua, her husband, and I sat watching satellite feed from South Africa on their new flat screen television. We talked and joked during commercial breaks, until a commercial with a very different feel came on:

A smiling man[1] swayed under a baobab tree, singing, "All I need is right here in Africa; I love you Africa." As laughing children dressed in white gathered around him under the tree and began to dance, text scrolled across the screen:

"There are a billion reasons to believe in Africa."

The song continued, and the text changed as the ad transitioned between shaky video of a violent street protest in the global north and a vibrant scene of revelers in a dance club:

"While the world shakes and stumbles,

Africa dances to a difference beat."

The shot jumped to a desktop computer with a pixelated padlock on the screen, followed by a grinning Maasai man with a cell phone incorporated into his personal decoration:

"While the world tries to control the Internet,

Africa becomes the most connected place on the planet."

The transitions continued, pitting dismal grey images of 'global' (implicitly, Western) social and economic disarray against bright 'African' landscapes full of promise: a happy mother receiving money from family abroad via mobile phone, runway models strutting in wax print couture. In spite of myself, I felt my heart catch in my throat at these declarations of optimistic belief in the continent and its future, and looked over to catch Efua's reaction—a mix of surprise

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[1]Steve Kekana, renowned South African musician.

and sheer delight at seeing the values that animated her life illustrated on a global satellite TV channel. The ad closed with a final juxtaposition:

"While the world worries about the future,

One billion Africans are sharing a Coke."

My reaction soured immediately, but Efua's did not. She giddily shouted, "Yeah! New Ghana, baby!"

Efua's delight in seeing her own optimism for her country's future reflected in a transnational beverage advertisement leveraging a broader 'Africa Rising' rhetoric is telling of the contemporary Ghanaian zeitgeist. While there was negative reaction to this ad as essentializing and problematic from around the continent and its diasporas in YouTube comments and various Africa-centric news forums (cf. Nairaland.com: 2012), the themes the ad identifies, the stance it takes towards Africa as a site of optimism and technological innovation, and indeed the fact of the commercial as an advertisement geared towards Africans as a viable consumer market, were constant themes in my research amid the diffuse network of digitally-savvy youth that comprise the 'New Ghana' to which Efua referred.

As I became familiar with this new affective landscape, friends and colleagues who had previously harbored long-term plans to leave the country now excitedly articulated the same ideas: reject Western imports and take pride in the local; produce homegrown innovation so cutting edge that the world comes begging. All hail the Internet; Africa is the future. The nation's problems had not disappeared, but the resignation that characterized my previous experiences in Accra, especially among the upwardly mobile, seemed to have vanished. My interlocutors now characterized the country's contingent economic position and dearth of job opportunities for youth as "opportunities for growth." Young people previously skeptical of business were rapidly adopting the buzzworthy moniker of 'entrepreneur' in the grey area of unregulated digital

landscapes. Efua herself quit her several part time jobs and began freelancing as a self-styled social media marketer.

The New Ghana

Fueled by oil prospects and the relative instability of much of the world, Ghana is experiencing unprecedented economic optimism that has attracted a growing number of 'returnees' and convinced upwardly mobile youth to mine burgeoning opportunities at home rather than seek employment abroad–the reversal of a decades-old trend (cf. Gagakuma 1984: "Labor: Ghana's Other Export" as a case in point). The transformations taking place in have opened up a space in which technologically-inclined youth are attempting to recalibrate ideologies and practices surrounding what it means to be 'genuinely Ghanaian' in ways that take up signifiers of cultural and national pride even as they challenge the age-graded hierarchies of the status quo. The tech-entrepreneurial zeitgeist currently underway in Ghana is part of a broader regional phenomenon, as tech hubs spring up all over the continent and would-be arbiters of global opinion such as *The Economist*, *The Guardian*, the Gates Foundation, and *Time Magazine* lead with headlines proclaiming 'Africa's Rise is Real,' (*Foreign Policy*, 11 January 2013; *The Economist*, 2 June 2013) and 'Why Tech Innovators are Africa's Future' (*CNN*, 22 February 2013). Youthful 'New Ghana' bids to redefine what it is to be Ghanaian are thus implicated in broader contestations over the nature of and possibilities for civil and economic participation in Ghana, and for Ghana's participation on the global stage, that are transected by local, national, regional, and transnational stakes and interests, and profoundly shaped by traces of ongoing historical processes.

Centrally, however, New Ghana denizens turn to digitally-mediated platforms and their offline equivalents as a means of imagining and enacting alternative, horizontal networks outside

of the rigid age-graded hierarchies that organize contemporary Ghanaian social and political life. Many feel these hierarchies both enable corruption and deny youth access to the scant opportunities for employment and advancement. Even as mainstream Ghanaian institutions adopt the fervor of the ideology of new technologies as transformative for national development, participation in digital imaginaries represents a radical challenge to the Ghanaian status quo. In this moment, then, attention to the ways in which youth are socialized into digital literacies illuminates the ways in which key notions of hierarchy, knowledge production, and transparency are being contested and re-articulated.

Fig. 1.01: A selection of billboards from in and around Greater Accra and the Eastern Region highlighting the technological zeitgeist.

Orienting Frameworks

This dissertation engages with classic linguistic anthropological questions of literacies and diglossia in the context of the rapid technological shift in Ghana, West Africa. It examines the slippage between widespread claims of technological transformation made by Western tech entrepreneurs and their local partners on the one hand, and the uneven practices through which students at different levels of socioeconomic access are socialized into digital literacies on the other. In what follows, I argue that close attention to emerging digital literacy practices within Ghana's broader multilingual literacy ecology reveals competing visions of Ghana's future, at once informed by enduring norms around deference and respect for figures of authority, and by (ostensibly new) globally circulating interventionist ideologies around literacy, technology, and poverty reaching back centuries.

Though this work is informed by my nearly decade-long relationship with Ghana, the chapters which follow are based primarily on 15 months of dissertation fieldwork in Berekuso, a small subsistence farming town in Ghana's Eastern region which provides a microcosm of the many divides transecting the nation. Though the town is situated less than 20 miles outside of the kaleidoscopic cosmopolitanism of Ghana's capital of Accra, it is all but cut off from the city's economic largesse. Within Berekuso, my research was sited both at Ashesi University, an elite private tertiary institution—among the best in all of west Africa—set on a hill above Berekuso proper, and down the hill at Berekuso Basic, a struggling public Primary and Junior Secondary School with one of the few rural computer labs in the country.

Fig. 1.02: A student participant in a summer robotics workshop on the Ashesi campus looks out over the campus, and beyond it, the town of Berekuso.

While I maintain the anonymity of nearly all my interlocutors, Ashesi's singularity and global reputation (and with it, Berekuso's legibility beyond Ghana) far precedes my own intervention, making anonymity of the place and its institutions all but impossible.

A university and a junior secondary school are, of course, not comparable sites; rather, each provides an illustration of the many asymmetries that pervade contemporary Ghanaian life as students move through institutional spaces in the course of their studies and eventual engagement in civic, political, and economic life. My participation in and interpretations of classroom interactions at both institutions was nuanced by observations in numerous interconnected sites of the New Ghana, including: ICT teacher training workshops run by the Corporate Social Responsibility arms of various Ghanaian software companies; meet-up groups, workshops, and networking events for Ghanaian tech enthusiasts hosted across the county; a girls' coding club in the heart of Accra's predominately Muslim *zongo*; shared workspaces and tech hubs; encounters with employees of the Ghanaian branches of the likes of Google, Microsoft, and GE; and many conversations with bloggers, start-up founders, social media marketers, programmers, engineers, artists, writers, and musicians all committed, to varying

degrees, to the potential of a Ghanaian future radically reimagined through the possibilities of digital technology.

Fig. 1.03: Ashesi's Google Student Ambassador, in red, discusses an upcoming coding event with fellow students during the annual club fair.

Reflecting on her own place in the burgeoning New Ghana sphere, Ashesi faculty and Blogging Ghana co-founder Kajsa Halberg-Adu once described the zeitgeist to me as "what one imagines Paris in the 1930's must have been like," an intimate, heady time of creative foment and change. While I hope my analysis will make clear my own critical distance from the changes underway in Ghana, I was nonetheless deeply compelled by the possibility of carrying out research in Africa that could contribute towards destabilizing the enduring characterizations of the continent as a space of poverty and lack. I situate my work within the growing interdisciplinary conversation around the embeddedness and experience of digital media globally (Manovich 2002; Turner 2006; Poster 2008; Turkle 2011; Burell 2012), by directly responding to calls by Coleman (2010) and others for ethnographically grounded inquiry into social understandings of technology outside the North American and Post-Industrial contexts that predominate in extant scholarship. Contrary to scholars who cite new media as a radical break in the way we understand ourselves in the world (Lessig 2004; Benkler 2006), I follow Bauman

(2010), Hutchby (2001), and others in situating new media and digital literacies in an historical continuum of engagement with technologies, anxieties about which can be traced at least as far back as Ancient Greek concerns over alphabetic literacy's potential for disrupting the human capacity for conversation, memory, and the engaged co-production of knowledge (Plato 370 BCE; Gee 1996; Ong 1982; Gitelman 2006).

I further situate my work as an intervention into scholarship on the 'digital divide.' Studies across Anthropology, Science and Technology Studies, Communications, and Informatics (cf. Mossberger et al. 2003; Ginsberg 2006; Ito et al. 2010; Vehovar et al. 2006) have complicated the notion of the digital divide as not merely a matter of access to technologies, but a multiplicity of access divides–to digital literacy skills, economic opportunity, democratic participation, and more–that are symptomatic of broader social inequalities and global asymmetries rather than simply a matter of technological availability. My contribution to this ongoing conversation is to demonstrate, first, the centrality of *language* cross-cutting all of these dimensions of the digital divide(s), and secondly, the critical role of pedagogy and orientations of knowledge as an often ignored feature of "last-mile connectivity."

In emphasizing language and its socialization, I approach the phenomenon of digital literacy from firmly within the linguistic anthropological canon, following the exhortations of scholars of print literacies to consider "how a community 'takes up' literacy, how it develops, how it is understood and deployed depends very much on the ideology and context of who is doing the introduction as well as on the ideology and context of those to whom it is being introduced" (Schieffelin 2000: 293). In particular, I follow the pioneering perspective of Shirley Brice Heath, whose classic (1983) ethnography of literacy practices across class in a Southern US town is both the methodological and ideological mother of my multi-sited inquiry. Her work emphasizes the longterm inequalities that arise when children from one social context, with its

attendant genres and expectations around literacy and orality, are held to the standards of another social context which presumes itself to be universal. My own research considers these same dynamics writ against the *transnational* circulation of standards of speaking, listening, reading, and writing across mediated modes.

Finally, I contend that the rhetoric and practices surrounding technology-as-panacea in Ghana are firmly embedded in a much older globally-circulating ideology of interventionist strategies on the part of those in centers of economic power to leverage the technologies of the day in disciplining marginalized speaking subjects. As such, contemporary contestations over 'authentic' Ghanaianness as viewed through the lens of digital literacy practices can be seen as connected to 'Great Divide' literacy crusaders in the multilingual immigrant slums of 18th century London and New York City; to missionaries the world over from at least the 14th century onwards furthering their proselytizing efforts by fostering print literacy, and to linked colonizing efforts; and to contemporary US efforts to close the "word gap" in lower-income communities (Gupta 2012; Collins & Blot 2003; Avineri et al.2015). Recognizing this legacy is not to suggest that Ghanaians or Africans more broadly are fully in the sway of interventionist policies and unable to act agentively in light of such policies; rather, I follow the logics of Ferguson (2006), Prestholdt (2008), and indeed the bulk of my interlocutors in Ghana, that Ghanaian alignment with 'Africa Rising' tropes or participation in the rhetoric of technology-as-transformation should not be seen as merely mimetic of the West but rather as agentive African bids for involvement in the global.

Methodology

From my interviews and observations among Accra's burgeoning scene of tech-enthusiasts in my pilot research, I knew that a major tenet of the New Ghana is a belief in the transformative possibilities of technology. Yet very few people were willing to discuss the fact

that a substantial segment of the country does not have literacy in any language, much less adequate digital literacy, to readily engage with the new technologies and digital futures imagined by would-be denizens of the New Ghana.

In order to investigate this curious erasure at the heart of the New Ghana logics, I wanted to trace the means through which digital literacies are actually being taught in the midst of the rhetoric about the necessity of technological transformation. I was especially interested to engage ethnographically with digital literacies outside of the Post-Industrial world, where much extant work on digital learning has been sited; to focus specifically in an African context long held to be pre-modern and devoid of technological innovation or savvy; and to investigate the formal teaching of ICT skills, given that much existing literature focuses on the ad hoc and informal means through which contemporary Post-Industrial youth glean digital literacies. Moreover, as a linguistic anthropologist, I was concerned to put both language socialization (Ochs & Schieffelin 1984; Kulick & Schieffelin 2004; Ochs & Schieffelin 2011) and language ideologies (Irvine 1989; Schieffelin, Woolard, & Kroskrity 1998; Kroskrity 2003) at the core of my inquiry as guiding theoretical frameworks for the methodological directions my research would take. I therefore took as a priori the assumption, first, that novices are always socialized simultaneously into and through language, and thus that language ought to figure prominently in the examinations of socialization into literacies, digital and otherwise. Secondly, I worked from the assumption that, as a feature of communicative competence in a given community of speakers, the socialization of literacies would come bundled with particular language ideologies, or "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests," (Irvine 1989) that could help illuminate the larger sociopolitical processes at play in New Ghana efforts to re-articulate ethical citizenship through a

technologized lens. As such, I sought to situate myself in ICT classrooms to document the linguistic and pedagogical practices organizing everyday classroom interactions.

Recruitment: iTeach Digital Literacy Workshop (Eastern Region/South Akuapem District):

I initially sought to recruit focal teachers from among those attending the annual weeklong iTeach Digital Literacy Workshop. Now in its fourth year, the iTeach program is a private-public partnership between DreamOval, a Ghanaian software company, in conjunction with the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), of which most public school teachers are members. The workshops are held in a different region each year, and teachers are selected to participate at the district level. DreamOval employees volunteer their time as curriculum developers and instructors, and GNAT organizes the logistics of the workshops out of their professional development operating budget (per interviews with Francis Ahene-Affoh, coordinator for DreamOval, and Earnest Asamoa, coordinator at GNAT). The iTeach workshops provide public school teachers with basic digital literacy skills to improve their teaching overall and assist them in teaching (compulsory) Information and Communication Technology (ICT) classes. While teacher training colleges are required to teach ICT skills as a core module of the teaching certificate, group interviews with participant teachers suggest most of these classes are theory only and have no hands-on component. As a result, many teachers in the Ghana Education Service have never used a computer, not do they have the resources at their schools to teach ICT. This public-private partnership thus represents a crucial intervention for professional development that is not otherwise available.

With the enthusiastic support of the lead coordinators from both GNAT and DreamOval, I engaged in participant observation at the August 2013 workshop, which was held at Ashesi University while students were still on holiday and drew teachers from across the Eastern region of the country. Specifically, this entailed: (1) video recording workshop sessions, (2)

11

administering a brief survey (concerned with demographic data, prior experience with and

feelings towards new technologies, and linguistic repertoires) which then served as a jumping-off

point for (3) semi-structured group interviews with teachers to explore their experiences in

acquiring technological literacies and their expectations for their own students in the future. I

intended to then (4) recruit 5 teachers in these interviews to follow back to their classrooms

across the Eastern region.

The combination of the location of the workshop at Ashesi University, the fact that

DreamOval was itself co-founded by three Ashesi graduates and staffed almost exclusively by

graduates of Ashesi's computer science program, and the enthusiastic participation of two

teachers from Berekuso conspired to change my research plans. The campus was unlike any

institutional space I had ever visited in Ghana, both in terms of its state-of-the art, well-

maintained infrastructure, and the relaxed culture of the campus itself.

Fig. 1.04: GNAT teacher-participants in iTeach 2013 in one of Ashesi's computer labs.

The Ashesi alumni leading the bulk of the workshop sessions were all in their early

twenties, making them significantly younger than any of the participating teachers—and yet

occupied their role as experts with a combination of poise and irreverence that intrigued me as much as it startled the teachers. DreamOval staff insisted that they be addressed by their first names, rather than the titles or honorifics that were technically their due as the authorities on ICT in the room; and yet they also insisted on calling the *teachers* by their first names as well, which they were certainly not entitled to as juniors. The spirit of the classrooms was informal and friendly, and yet the Ashesi alumni also admonished teachers for not asking more questions when they didn't understand, for retaining the formality of rising to ask questions, and for not taking the initiative to try different ways of getting to the same solution other than the one suggested by workshop facilitators. Having witnessed many professional development workshops in my previous life as an intern in a Ghanaian NGO developing mother tongue literacy resources after a change in the educational language policy in 2007, I was frankly flabbergasted by the informality and eager productivity of the entire affair. It seemed clear that the university's informal ethos was producing individuals keenly aligned with the New Ghana perspectives I was witnessing elsewhere—but here was a site in which I could witness the process of that alignment in real time. Given that two of the participants at the workshop were conveniently employed in a school just down the hill from the university, siting myself in Berekuso to observe both the elite structuring of Ashesi's remarkable alterity and the marginalized strategizing of ICT classroom practice in a setting in many ways quite representative of Ghanaian public school classrooms more broadly—and the overlaps of these spaces and ideological orientations towards the technological—would be ideal.

Methods at Berekuso Basic School:

My goal was to observe and video-record those teachers from Berekuso who were trained in the iTeach Workshop in their ICT classrooms for the full school year. This proved challenging on a number of levels. First of all, the ICT computer lab was not wired for adequate electrical

load to power the computers themselves until January of 2014. The ICT classes themselves were held irregularly, and on days with no electricity, could not be held at all. Of the two teachers who were trained at the workshops, one did not teach ICT at all that school year, and through miscommunication, I gathered that the other was also slated to teach social science rather than ICT. Instead, the headmistress directed me to focus on the classes taught by Patience, a young contract teacher hired exclusively to teach ICT classes to the Primary students. Because she had to travel nearly two hours by poor public transit to reach the school, Patience was often late to teach her scheduled classes or was unable to come at all; when she was present, ongoing lessons in other subjects were often put on hold to take advantage of her presence and resumed later. From a research logistics standpoint, this meant often missing her altogether or rushing to catch the tail end of a lesson, and provided no opportunity to situate myself in one classroom and develop longitudinal relationships and understandings of students' engagement with the material, nor the identification of focal students to interview and follow into their home worlds, as I had hoped. While intensely frustrating from a research standpoint, these circumstances also served to underscore my appreciation for the effects of contingency and scarcity in Ghanaian learning environments.

I relied on the methodological template laid out by recent linguistic anthropological dissertations focusing on language ideologies in multilingual classroom settings, specifically Garcia-Sanchez (2009, Spain) and George (2014, Serbia). My methods at Berekuso Basic ultimately involved the following:

(1) Observation and recording of classroom interactions.

The Berekuso ICT lab, though set up by September of 2013, was not operational until January of 2014 due to electrical problems. I recorded 100 hours of video, both the 'theoretical' lessons carried out with textbooks alone, and the 'practical' lessons carried out once the ICT lab

was functional. Video recording is an essential tool of linguistic anthropological research, as it captures not only subjects' choice of words, intonation, and so on, but gaze, body alignment, gestures, engagement with objects and other non-verbal signals that are crucial clues to meaning (Duranti 1997: 114-15; Ochs et al. 2006). This proved particularly true in my efforts to capture the ways in which both students and teachers, as novice computer users, oriented both their bodies and pedagogical aims to the unfamiliar literacy objects of the ICT lab laptops.

Fig. 1.05: Salifu, one of two ICT teachers at the Junior Secondary School branch of Berekuso Basic, leading a 'practical' lesson with a desktop computer as prop.

Fig. 1.06: Patience, Berekuso Basic's contracted Primary School ICT teacher, demonstrating correct mouse usage on her own laptop.

(2) Collecting computer-mediated and other written texts produced in formal and informal settings.

   Though there were scant computer-mediated texts to collect, I made a photographic inventory of print matter in the school, including books in the small library kept in the headmistress's office and posters of the daily timetable. Such an inventory is in keeping with scholarship which views orality, literacy, and visual technologies as interrelated practices in situated ecologies of meaning-making best studied in context (Ong 1982; Goody 1987; Street 1993; Mackey 2007).

Fig. 1.07: Timetables and attendance rosters in the Headmistress's office.

(3) Conducting interviews with teachers based on classroom interactions.

Given that classes were often delayed from the posted timetable and that rolling blackouts frequently put ICT classes on hold, much of my time at Berekuso Basic was spent waiting and conversing with teachers. The formal hierarchies of the school were such that it was not considered appropriate for me to fraternize with students during this 'down time.' Instead, while students were often sent on errands for individual teachers or put to work cleaning various parts of the school, I spent such time out under a tree in the courtyard that the teachers had claimed as an ad hoc break room. This meant that in addition to follow-up interviews with the three main

teachers teachers who ran ICT classes about the specifics of classroom practice, I was also able to have frequent informal conversations with these and other classroom teachers about about their personal and educational backgrounds, their pedagogical perspectives, and so on—as well as gain a keener sense of the age-graded boundaries of Ghanaian institutional life.

Methods at Ashesi University (Berekuso):

Ashesi is a four-year accredited degree program that is unique among Ghanaian tertiary institutions for a number of reasons, including: its offering of computer science oriented majors with a liberal arts grounding; its focus on technology and entrepreneurship; and its emphasis on cultivating African ethical leadership committed to local change. This combination of factors, along with the fact that the school was founded by a former Microsoft engineer and Ghanaian 'returnee,' Patrick Awuah, means Ashesi in many ways epitomizes (and indeed could be seen as a key catalyst of) the ethos undergirding the 'New Ghana.' My preliminary observations on the campus revealed that the loose consensus around that ethos which exists elsewhere, including a focus on dismantling hierarchies, on timeliness, and on innovative African solutions to local problems, are consciously operationalized in both informal and classroom interactions. This confluence of factors makes Ashesi a particularly interesting site to observe the machinations of a growing network of tech enthusiasts who assert that Ghana is capable of creating products and innovation to rival anything produced abroad without resorting to 'copying the West,' and yet are being apprenticed into expertise in a space with conventions and norms radically unlike the rest of Ghana. Ashesi provides the ideal location to observe socialization into ICT skills at the most connected end of the digital divide spectrum, and also the ways in which markedly new forms of participation are cultivated, linguistically encoded, and reinforced. Moreover, given that Ashesi is situated in relatively poor Berekuso, it provides the opportunity to observe ICT-related practices across the digital divide within one town. (It should be noted that Ashesi has

undertaken a number of responsible initiatives to address the gap that exists between its well-appointed campus and the relatively marginalized town below, including robust student-driven community service initiatives.)

I obtained official affiliation with the University as the institution's first ever 'Scholar-in-Residence,' with the understanding that I would teach a guest lecture for students, and present my preliminary findings to faculty at the end of my fieldwork in Ashesi's fledgling faculty research working group. I also presented the first proposal to its newly inaugurated IRB process (Ashesi IRB#-001), which was spearheaded by one of the institution's rotating expatriate visiting professors. I engaged in participant-observation at Ashesi throughout the 2013-2014 school year and into the summer, ultimately occupying a role not dissimilar to a Teaching Assistant—not quite a faculty member, not quite a student. This specifically involved:

(1) Recording (audio and video) spoken communication produced in formal and informal settings in and around the school.

I made over 150 hours' worth of systematic, longitudinal recordings in seminars, the ICT and Honor Code orientations that incoming freshmen receive, informal interactions during meals and study group sessions, relevant club meetings, and in student dorm rooms. Given my particular interest in the communicative ideologies that teachers convey to students, I widened my scope from that of computer programming classes alone to the required freshman writing seminar and its complementary course, "Text and Meaning," both of which instilled particular ideals of self-representational literacies and required significant use of social media as key components of the course.

(2) Collecting computer-mediated and other written texts produced in formal (course materials and websites, fliers/signboards) and informal (web forums, social networking sites, SMS and emails) settings.

I documented these texts and their emplacement in lived and online spaces via photography, screen-shots, and detailed notes. Collecting such texts has become increasingly

popular among the growing cohort of researchers developing new methodologies for mining

online interactional data (Boellstorff et al., 2012). In addition to providing a point of contrast in

terms of the relative print-richness of different classroom environments, my goal was to analyze

these texts for degrees of formality, degrees of directness, and other register features, and their

potential role in reinforcing certain hierarchies and dismantling others; this produced such an

enormous corpus, however, that it quickly became clear that analyzing it would be beyond the

scope of the current dissertation.

Fig. 108: Laptops of two Ashesi students, adorned with stickers declaring affiliation with such New Ghana tropes of entrepreneurship and Africa-centric global tech.

(3) Conducting semi-structured ethnographic interviews with students and faculty.

The open-ended nature of person-centered interviewing as a method is meant to ensure

that data collection and analysis is motivated by the compelling concerns of the interviewee,

rather than the abstractions of the interviewer (Hollan 2001; Kohut 1971). I did, however, assert

some structure into the thirty-five interviews I ultimately carried out, including questions about

students' and faculty members' visions of the 'New Ghana,' their views on affordances of new

technologies, their experiences at Ashesi, and their own particular histories with technological

skills-building. While interviews were ultimately crucial in informing the analyses in "Chapter

Three: The Honor Code," fully delving into the richness of these conversations is also beyond

the scope of the current document. While Ashesi students have been socialized to be critical

thinkers and expressive communicators, they are rarely given an opportunity to be self-reflexive

about their own experience. I found that nearly all my interviewees were hungry for such a conversation: most of my early interviews lasted several hours. After the first several of these hours-long conversations, I adopted the method of an initial interview with several follow-up conversations.

In recruiting interview subjects, I aimed for a cross-section of the student body in terms of gender, class, cohort, and level of involvement with school activities/governance. I was particularly interested to follow students funded through the Mastercard Foundation initiative, which provides a full scholarship and a laptop to 40 students from marginalized backgrounds across West Africa each year. As these students often have less access to ICT skills and infrastructure before arriving on campus, I anticipated that longitudinal interviews and observations of the arc of these students' enskilment and socialization into the Ashesi/'New Ghana' ethos would be particularly revealing. It held true that these students had some of the most nuanced and self-aware commentary on the paradoxes and conundrums of New Ghana exhortations towards digital futures, and were more keenly aware than their more affluent peers of the enduring inequalities in contemporary Ghana. All students, however, were initially quite perplexed by the notion of choosing their own pseudonym. After all, they are repeatedly told that they should be transparently themselves—using their actual names with clear photographs of themselves, rather than nickname handles or avatars—across social media platforms.

Fig. 1.09: Alumnus and staff member Ezra leads a workshop on appropriate self-branding on social media

Why on earth would they want or need to hide who they were for the purposes of an interview?

Many then recanted and chose a pseudonym in later interviews after we touched on more

personal matters. I have taken the liberty of choosing pseudonyms for the remaining

interviewees, with the exception of Ashesi founder Patrick Awuah, given how difficult it would

be to anonymize either him or the university itself.

Sites:

The New Ghana as Meta-Site

Mirroring the continent-wide trends highlighted in the Coca-Cola advertisement, the

combination of Ghana's discovery of offshore oil reserves in 2007, its rapid rollout of mobile

and Internet technologies from the mid-2000s onwards, and the global economic downturn of

2008, helped to spur a reinterpretation of the value of African locality and Ghanaian identity in a

fiercely positive light among youth and young professionals. These contemporary patterns echo

past efforts of youth across the continent to forge cosmopolitan, millennial selves to push against

their exclusion from avenues of power and participation (e.g. Newell 2012; Cole 2008, Comaroff

& Comaroff 1999; Meyer 1998). Yet, such attempts were often sustained by youth doubly

marginalized by age and class. The New Ghana and its counterparts elsewhere in Sub-Saharan

Africa (cf. Poggiali 2015) are unique in their intensive alignment with technology as a tool of transformation, enabling an overlapping network of on- and off-line spheres, and in the proportion of highly mobile and educated core participants. The youth—in practical terms, anyone younger than 40—of the New Ghana could in fact be thought of as a permutation of the media-producing new cultural elite that Avle (2011) identifies emerging out of the convergence of structural adjustment and economic liberalization in the early 1990s.

When I began research in the context of 'Africa Rising' claims about the continent's viability as a site of tech entrepreneurship in 2012, Ghanaian social media overflowed with exhortations to both represent Ghana and Africa positively, and to actively reinterpret one's own experience optimistically. My research participants described these efforts, both to me and to each other, as a necessary corrective to centuries of derogatory external characterizations of the continent. As Wainaina (2005) viciously satirized in "How to Write About Africa," the longstanding narrow Western representations of the continent as a primitive site of moral turpitude, disease, poverty, and war are stereotypical to the point of banality. Though much literature focuses on the role of such imagery in colonial domination (e.g., Gordon 1997; Mitchell 1991; Mudimbe 1988) and its persistence in contemporary representations (e.g., Ferguson 2006; Lutz & Collins 1993; Mbembe 2001), the notion of the African Other can be traced back as far as Ancient Greece (Feinberg & Solodow 2002). The New Ghana is both an outward-facing challenge to the violence of these ancient and enduring stereotypes, and an inward-directed rejection of the Afro-pessimism, or "fatalistic attitude toward economic and social crises" (Diawara 2002: 39) that pervades the West African postcolonial experience (Mbembe 2001).

Consider Figure 10 below, repeatedly shared on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram in 2012 and 2013. On the left, stereotypical associations of Africa with foreign aid, disease, and

war are presented in stark black font under the heading 'They Say,' juxtaposed against a profusion of colors and fonts under the heading 'We Say,' proclaiming entrepreneurship, creativity and talent as characteristic of the continent. Figures 2 and 3, Facebook statuses from two of Ghana's most prolific bloggers, highlight the value of Africa's human resources, rather than its raw exports, for implicitly foreign (Figure 11) and local (Figure 12) audiences.
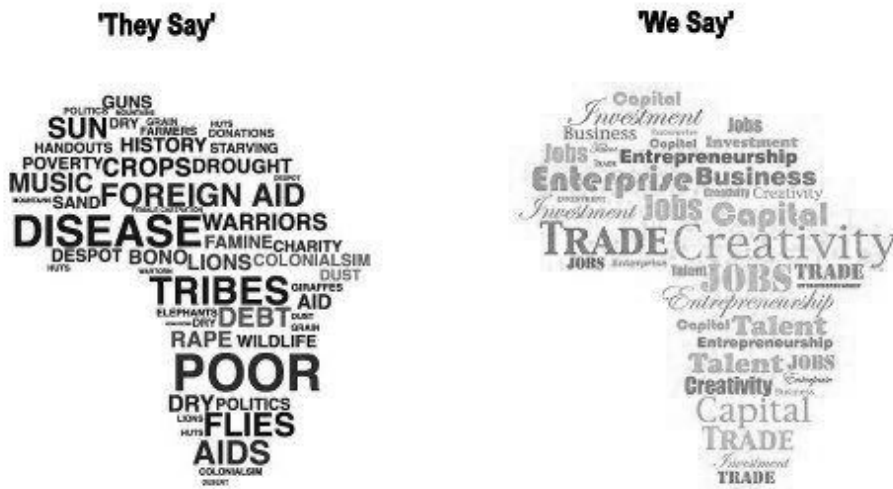
Fig. 1.10: "They Say vs. We Say"

Fig. 1.12: Facebook statuses from two of Ghana's most prolific and popular young bloggers.

23

While New Ghana perspectives share much with the Africa Rising tropes of positivity, optimism, tech-entrepreneurship (cf. Nothias 2014), my research participants repeatedly framed the values and politics that animated such self-representations online as directly opposed to what they characterized as the stagnant, overly stratified Ghanaian status quo. The age-graded respect hierarchies of contemporary Ghanaian social and political life consolidate knowledge production, access, authority, and status at the top (cf. Coe 2005; Nugent 1995; Nukunya 2003). Mainstream Ghanaian institutions—the civil service, schools—are characterized by titles, bureaucratic formality, and conservatism. The good Ghanaian student and child respects elders, knows their place, and does not seek to improve upon tradition. In classrooms, the British colonial legacy of rote learning supports the cultural value placed on youthful submission, allowing knowledge to safely circulate unchanged between expert and novice. In and beyond the classroom, adults often put impertinent young people in their place by calling them "too known"—a label New Ghana author Sumprim (2006) sardonically defines as someone who has "the audacity to tell someone to do the right thing" (26).

Many Ghanaians who are locked out of opportunities by virtue of their youth see the Ghanaian preference for deference to elder authority figures as holding back not only their own material advancement, but, in discouraging potential innovations from below, that of the country as a whole (Flamenbaum 2014). In interviews, and across social media platforms, my research participants repeatedly framed the contemporary moment as caught between the failures of the 'old' Ghana and the promise of the new: the 'old' Ghana is slow, nepotistic, responsible for failing infrastructure and stalled development, all talk and no action; the New Ghana is future-oriented and ready for change, rejects party politics and foreign solutions to Ghanaian problems, refuses to give or take bribes, and believes in the transformative power of technology and

positive thinking. The following examples from the popular Facebook group called, aptly, "The New Ghana," are indicative of these broader sentiments:

Fig. 1.12: Sample statuses from the official New Ghana Facebook group

The considerable appeal of online platforms for participants in New Ghana practices lies in the ostensibly horizontalizing potential of mediated spaces, where, as my research participants claimed, 'anyone' can participate and be heard. Sites of the New Ghana that extend out into the physical world—e.g., the Blogging Ghana consortium, the electoral advocacy project Ghana Decides, Ghanathink's development-driven public workshops, the monthly entrepreneurship-focused discussions of the WHO-sponsored Accra Discourse, innumerable TEDx events—are communally organized, informally run, inclusive spaces built around individual creative expression, the radical obligation to "Tell the African Story" along positive lines, and the promise of technological transformation. The carefully worded letters of introduction required by the bureaucracies of the 'Old Ghana' are laughably out of place in such contexts; instead, the ultimate right to participate is framed as the willingness to participate. I often heard analogies

made to 'good' software engineers, who are judged on the basis of the efficacy of what they produce, rather than their stated credentials—an implicit indictment of the Old Ghana as too status-oriented to be effective. Indeed, by participating in the mutually-embedded physical and mediated sites driven by such participatory ideals, denizens of the New Ghana consciously pose a moral challenge to the hierarchies of the status quo.

The diffuseness of the New Ghana poses obvious challenges for traditional anthropological notions of what constitutes a 'community' or even a 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger 1991; Bucholtz 1999). Based on prior work (Flamenbaum 2013), which traced how both moderators and guests on a radio talk show framed speakers who relied on indirection as obfuscating and political, I believe the New Ghana emphasis on lateral participation and direct speech is part of a wider shift in seeing some traditional ways of speaking as problematic rather than virtuosic. In the absence of a singular site or New Ghana community, and given the preponderance of mediated communicative modes that are central to the makeup of what could be called the 'New Ghana,' I attempt in what follows to illuminate boundaries of the New Ghana by focusing on tensions between 'old' and 'new' forms of participation and interaction spanning a localized instance of the digital divide.

Berekuso

It is tempting to consider the boundaries of Berekuso itself as the neat border of my community of practice from a methodological point of view. Yet much is palpably present in the view from Berekuso beyond the town itself, metaphorically and otherwise—the ancient history of the town itself; its entanglement with the vicissitudes of the housing crisis in Greater Accra, whose borders fairly lap up to the edge of the hills surrounding the town; its profound economic marginalization, even as flows of capital stream into Ashesi from as far away as the high-powered tech networks of Seattle and Silicon Valley; its ongoing chieftaincy crisis, itself born

out of generational disagreements about who has the right to sell land and profit from it as affluent city dwellers increasingly seek out the cooler, calmer environs of the Eastern Region; the future imaginaries of well-planned suburban development literally staked into the hillsides, alongside other New Ghana connections from cities around Ghana and from abroad. One cannot fully make sense of the trends and contradictions of life up the hill and down, without taking these far-reaching historical and ideological incursions into and out of this space into account.

Fig. 1.13: The lights of Greater Accra visible from a hilltop in Berekuso

Fig. 1.14: Sign advertising a future planned suburban development on a hilltop

Berekuso has seen the enstoolment of a full 39 chiefs, lending it an almost mythic pre-colonial history. Local oral histories detail how the town was first settled several centuries ago

by the Akan-speaking Twafo (lit. 'Twa people') as they fled wars elsewhere, very possibly from the present-day coastal neighborhood of Labone in Greater Accra. While the Twafo and their allies initially set up camp on opposite hillsides in order to see their enemies approaching, the groups eventually populated the valley itself after three natural springs were discovered. One of these springs is even said to bear the permanent footprints of Okomfo Anokye, a storied folk hero from the 1600s who occupies a near-magical position in Ghanaian history. At one point, Berekuso was a seat of considerable power, controlling all of the land from its current site to the area now occupied by Kotoka International Airport, a region of some 16 square miles. While the land ownership between then and now is a point of ongoing contention, it was often explained to me that the various Twafohene (chiefs of the Twafo) had parceled out land to favorites, out-marrying kin, and supplicants over the generations until very little was left in their immediate control.

Fig. 1.15: The hills of Berekuso

In the town's current configuration, 2000 or so people live in multi-generational family compounds densely clustered along either side of a roughly 2 mile stretch of the badly rutted St. John-Dome Road, the area in the valley between the hillsides where the Twafo first settled.

Fig. 1.16: The most densely settled area of Berekuso, with a loop of the St. John-Dome Road cutting through it.

While no formal statistics are available, residents themselves estimate unemployment at over 90% and pass rates on the WASSCE (West African Senior School Certificate Examination, a test similar to the SAT) at less than 20%. While an outsider might be tempted to dismiss the town as a backwater with a universally impoverished populace, the town is segmented into a dizzying array of sub-neighborhoods, individual landowners, 'newcomers,' tolerated outsiders, and densely overlapping kin networks, all at quite different levels of affluence, prestige, and multilingual complexity. This includes several Big Men with the National Democratic Congress political party with palatial estates, a very poor Ewe-speaking neighborhood split across the road, a community of early Christians who disavowed tribal affiliation centuries earlier, several retired white American expats up in the hillsides, and a number of kin-based Akuapem-speaking

communities with their own sub-chiefs and sacred groves. There is also a nearly monolingual

Ga-speaking community several kilometers away who maintain strong ties to the coast.
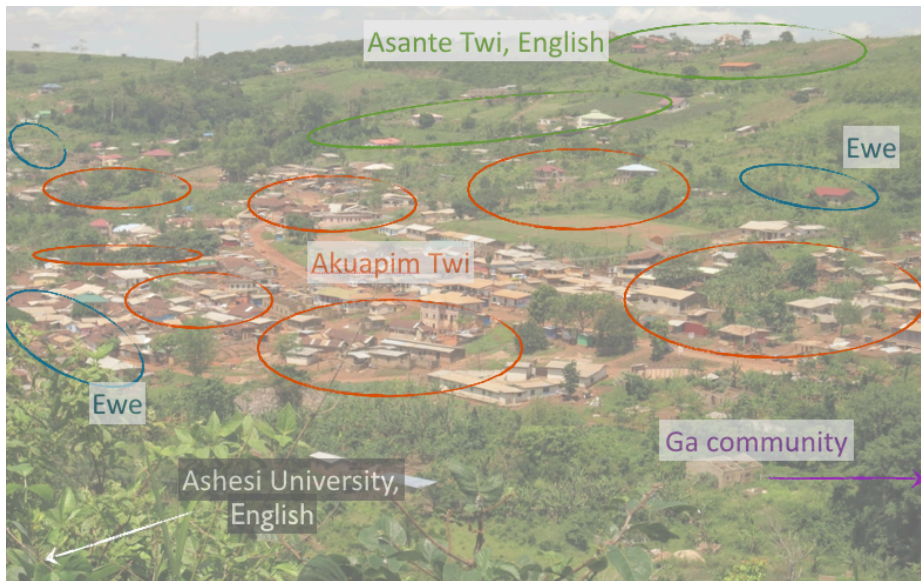
Fig. 1.17: A rough map of the language communities co-existing within Berekuso

For such a small town, Berekuso also supports a veritable cornucopia of congregational

options, including a Seventh Day Adventist church, several Pentecostal sects, a Presbyterian

church affiliated with the public school (quite common in Ghana, given historical associations

between schooling and missionization), an Anglican church, and a number of informal

unaffiliated fellowships. Notwithstanding all these proclamations to piety, the town has gained

contemporary notoriety both as a purported hotbed of juju practitioners, and for its ongoing,

sometimes violent, chieftaincy dispute between the sitting head chief and the six aforementioned

sub-chiefs. Berekuso's increasing economic precarity—the tired litany of low-yield subsistence

farming, poor educational attainment, chronic unemployment, and migratory outflow to urban

centers—puts pressure on the heads of families to sell the only significant resource available:

land. Land rights exist in a murky grey area in Ghanaian legal code, however, putting the profits

from these sales in contention as chiefs stake claim to the exclusive right to use these profits

while their extended kin, especially youth with poor prospects of employment and self-sufficiency, vie for control over resources and political power. Several contingents of town residents have called for the funds to be reinvested in the community for health, development, and industrial projects, or at least more fairly distributed. In late 2012 a group of townspeople supported an attempt to enstool a different head chief from among the sub-chiefs in order to ensure that distribution, leading to a series of violent skirmishes, an official curfew, and a long process of untangling the legality of local chieftaincy in the courts (Graphic Online 2013). The courts eventually found for the sitting chief, Nana Oteng Korankye III.

There are as many perspectives on what might constitute "fairness" in this dispute as there are residents of Berekuso, so I hesitate to claim any absolute certainty in my own understanding of the motivations or possible outcome of the circumstances. I describe the situation to the best of my understanding to highlight the parallels between the circumstances in town—a longstanding hierarchy being contested by youth who feel they are being locked out of opportunity—and that of the hyper-cosmopolitan denizens of the New Ghana. This dispute is a

Fig. 1.18: Nana Oteng Korankye III, 39th Twafohene of Berekuso, center, speaking in full regalia at Ashesi University in 2013. Photo Credit: E. Gwumah

classic instance of "village modernity," following Charles Piot's description of post-colonial

circumstances which appear 'backwards' and traditional but are rather born of profoundly

contemporary circumstances and flows of capital, goods, and people (Piot 1999).

I lived half the year in town, 'down the hill,' and half the year 'up the hill' in student

housing. From my second story balcony in town, I had a vantage on the busiest of the Berekuso's

untreated wells, where women and children would gather in the early morning to fill yellow

Fig. 1.19: Recycled plastic containers for carrying water, arranged in front of Berekuso's largest well.
recycled gasoline containers for 10 pesewas each (approximately 8 cents USD at the time) and

carry them home for baths and breakfasts. This ritual was followed by a ragtag parade of farmers

in their boots with machetes in hand and students in hand-me-down uniforms trailing off to their

various destinations in the hillsides, forced to step aside repeatedly to make way for the

alternately dusty and gleaming four-wheel- drive vehicles of Ashesi faculty and staff lurching

over potholes on their way up the hill. When it was dumsor—the near-constant state of electrical

blackout—I was near enough to the campus and set at just the right angle to the hillside to hear

the low hum of the university's massive generators and see the orange sodium glow of its lights

from my darkened room. On weekends, I had a view of the path up to the graveyard, plied—

often multiple times—by mourning revelers in red and crisp black, and, zipping over the ruts in in the other direction from Aburi gardens, gangs of bicyclists kitted out in bright spandex headed for Accra.

Fig. 1.20: Bicyclists to the left, mourners to the right.

Berekuso Basic School

I refer to the public school where I carried out my research throughout as 'Berekuso Basic,' despite the fact that the school itself was a joint Basic (that is, primary) and Junior Secondary School (JSS), following the local nickname "Basic School." The school complex is set on a large grassy slope towards the edge of town, with the JSS set to the left of a large staging ground where the students marched in assembly every morning, and the Primary block set to the right. Though there is a fair amount of socioeconomic diversity in town, most parents with means tended to send their children to private schools just outside of town. The bulk of students attending the public school, by contrast, were relatively poor. Though all schools in the Ghana Education Service (GES) system are technically free, the uniforms and notebooks required to attend and the extraneous fees often levied to keep schools running often keep students out of school for years at a time. As a result, it was not uncommon for students in any given class at the joint Basic school to have quite a significant age range. The classes themselves, especially in the Primary school, were all quite large, with more than sixty students per class. Students sat three to

33

a desk and shared textbooks when they were available, and took notes dictated from their teachers when they were not.

With one exception, none of the teachers were local, and none shared their students' circumstances. Though they often sent students home for minor infractions like wearing the wrong color socks or not having clean fingernails, they were all thoroughly committed to teaching and to their students' success. The fact that the teachers had been posted from elsewhere in the country also meant that ensuring their students' success involved navigating a substantial linguistic divide. The majority of the teachers were first language Ewe speakers, spoke both English and the Asante dialect of Twi which serves as the lingua franca of much of the southern half of the country most fluently as second languages, and had a fair to middling grasp of the Akuapem dialect which predominates in the Eastern region. The students, by contrast, were predominately Akuapem speakers, with a fair grasp of both English and the Asante dialect. Younger students tended to have less control of English registers than their older colleagues, which led some (though certainly not all, as the picture below illustrates) of the teachers to codeswitch during lessons to ensure their meaning was clear. This language barrier adds to the
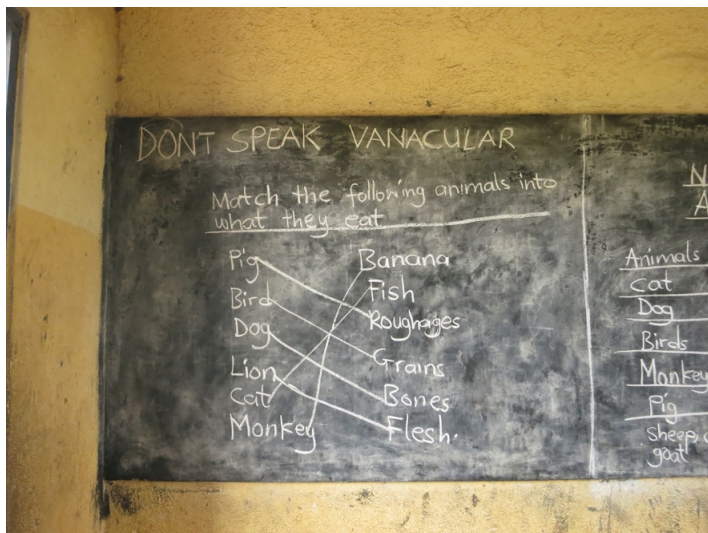
Fig. 1.21: The exhortation to students, "Don't Speak Vanacular [sic]," i.e. Akuapem Twi, in the Primary 3 classroom.

overall contingency of classroom learning at Berekuso Basic.

Due to its proximity to Ashesi University and the volume of Ashesi volunteers at the school, Berekuso Basic came to the attention of General Electric-Africa's Ghana branch, which donated twenty laptops to the school and retrofitted the old teacher's break room as an ICT lab. Unfortunately, the room itself was not wired for adequate electrical charge to power more than light bulbs, and stood unused for almost a year until funds could be gathered for cable to carry the proper load. (GE-Africa were not interested in assisting in that stage of development.) In the meantime, students were taught from textbooks and props alone—as indeed are much of the country's ICT lessons. While there was a small internet café in town, it was almost never open; some students had been to internet cafés in the nearest large town, but most students had never used a computer before, let alone seen one in use for a particular purpose embedded in the course of daily life. Though about half had access to a mobile phone, the majority of those were devices shared across several family members.

Ashesi University College

Things could not be more different 'up the hill.' Founded in 2002 by Patrick Awuah, a Ghanaian former Microsoft engineer, Ashesi University is built both on a liberal arts model that emphasizes critical thinking, and on the kind of decentralized horizontal organization that holds at many North American software firms and start-ups. The school's mission of producing "an African Renaissance driven by a new generation of ethical, entrepreneurial leaders" (Ashesi University 2016) informs everything from the open design of the buildings, to the rigorous exam Honor Code, to student-driven extra-curriculars and governance. Students are expected to be exceptionally tech-savvy, to "brand" themselves coherently and transparently across social media platforms and face-to-face settings, and to "hold each other accountable for their ethical posture on campus". To make these expectations possible, students have access to resources and

training simply unheard of elsewhere in the country, including two state-of-the-art computer labs with brand new equipment donated by Microsoft, as well a substantial library.

Fig. 1.22: A view of the Ashesi University library, the central fixture of the school's courtyard.

I had been aware of Ashesi University from my own study abroad experience in Ghana nearly a decade earlier. At the time, Ashesi was barely three years old, and was still based out of a small compound in the Labone neighborhood of Accra. In the years since, Ashesi had not only moved to its verdant, cutting-edge campus in the hills of Berekuso, but gained both a local and international reputation for the caliber of its teaching and graduates. Students are now regularly recruited abroad by the likes of Goldman Sachs, General Electric, and Bank of America, as well as by top Ghanaian corporations, and many go on to start their own successful organizations across the African continent—much like the team at DreamOval. Perhaps most tellingly, however, students themselves feel markedly changed by their experience, in line with the founder's guiding vision of cultivating a generation of ethical entrepreneurial leaders who can insert themselves into a corrupt society and transform it by their own example.

It was hard not to be utterly taken with what Ashesi had become when I first began my research. I had lived on and off in Ghana for several years before returning for fieldwork, and retain a firmly ambivalent relationship with the embodied experience of being there. This takes many forms, not least of all because of my own alien and inalienably white body and its indexes of affluence, privilege, and loose morals. Beyond the signifiers my own body throws off, however, there are the bodily effects I feel in the convergence of my own Western habitus and the situated politics of post-colonial places—the kinds of things one realizes about oneself only when unmoored from one's context, and the toll such realizations take: the frustration of being told "I'm coming!" when a colleague is late to meet you and you know full well they haven't even left; the despair called up by streetside landscapes of stark rebar jutting from perpetually unfinished third and fourth stories of banks and markets and homes; the absurdity of using toilets built with elaborate but useless plumbing, and flushing those toilets with buckets of water instead. Living in a perpetually unfinished environment, in and among infrastructure built for circumstances that do not exist and strewn with the half-broken and used up detritus of the first world is straining, heartbreaking, exhausting—even for a brief visit, much less a lifetime. To suddenly enter a space that was conscientiously designed from the infrastructure to the curriculum to the hiring, well built and well maintained, full of people too sure enough of their own well-earned exceptionalism to covet what I represent, who ask critical questions and talk both earnestly and urgently about changing the world, was extraordinary. It was also initially a relief, which I noted with a kind of ethnographer's guilt was born of recognizing more of the elements that undergirded my own socialization than are legible in the rest of Ghana. In the informality that prevailed on campus, I found my liminal not-student, not-faculty position ultimately allowed me to cultivate friendships all across campus, among faculty, staff, and

students alike. I was welcomed into the Ashesi family, into classrooms and dorm rooms and lives and homes, in a way I had not anticipated.

Fig. 1.23: An postgraduate Teacher's Assistant wearing a school t-shirt emphasizing the Ashesi value of social entrepreneurship, left; One of many Ashesi volunteers with her star mentee from Berekuso, right.

Over time, as one would hope, this picture shifted and deepened. I lived half of the year in Ashesi University student accommodation, in an effort to gain the greatest possible access to student life and "treat the initial interview merely as a prelude to later ones" (Obeyesekere, 1981: 10). Unfortunately, the only available space was in a dorm technically considered "off campus," with no common areas, and predominately older students under pressure to graduate who kept to their rooms either to study or party hard (depending on the hour of the day). Ultimately, I gained more access when I lived in town and occasionally "perched" overnight—the Ghanaian slang equivalent of what Americans might refer to as "crashing"—in the dorms connected to campus proper. From my borrowed mat on the floor of various rooms over the year, I gathered a keen sense of the pressures and challenges of Ashesi student life.

Space and privacy were perpetually tight: students were tucked five to a room, with four rooms and two shared bathrooms clustered around a common vestibule and connected to other

clusters of rooms via open air hallways. If any of the five students had work to do, they often

kept the main florescent lights on even while others slept; during stuffy hot nights of dry season,

the open slats of the windows let in dusty breezes as well as music, light, and conversation from

other rooms well into the night. As most classes were organized around group projects, students

juggled numerous group meetings nearly every night of the week. There were few common areas

and even fewer private spaces built into the design of the buildings themselves, leaving groups to

meet in odd corners or study silently together in large numbers in brightly lit classrooms well

into the evening.

Fig. 1.24: Chairs pulled into a corner of the central courtyard for a group meeting and briefly abandoned for a meal.

Fig. 1.25: Freshman working in an open classroom in the early evening.

In the dorm room where I stayed overnight most frequently, one particularly enterprising young woman sold snacks and phone credit out of her closet, leading to a near-constant stream of students after hours when the campus convenience store was closed. Even when she wasn't present, her roommates carried out transactions on her behalf, tucking the money into a pocketbook kept under her pillow. Doors were rarely if ever locked. During the day, students walked from the dorms to their classes with those same devices close at hand or tucked under their arms, rather than safely tucked in backpacks. What first appeared to me as rather brazen and foolhardy ostentation I soon realized was a sign of mutual trust. Following students' examples, I took to leaving my laptop or bag in a classroom while I went to grab a meal or a snack, trusting implicitly that it would be there when I got back—and it always was. Acting otherwise was interpreted as antisocial.

Fig. 1.26: A common sight during classes and study sessions: many devices

Part of what makes this possible is constant co-surveillance. At its best, this co-surveillance continually reproduces Ashesi's campus culture as that of a genuine community of trust. At its worst, as will be discussed in chapter three, the expectation of co-surveillance produces a deeply uncomfortable sense of policing and being policed by one's peers—not only

during exams, per the school's Honor Code, but in all aspects of life. The Honor Code is, in fact, regularly leveraged as a kind of ethical lifestyle rather than merely a vow related to the taking of tests. Tied up with the constant exhortation that students should identify and live their values, and occupy a positive "growth mindset" (Dweck 2006), and conduct themselves as transparently as possible, any social interaction is grounds for ethical interrogation by others. Add to this the utter lack of privacy, the constant threat of being kicked out for dropping below a minimum grade point average for even one semester, and the intensive expectations of success on a global level, it is no wonder that students nearly always look tired. Constantly under enormous pressure, students gradually internalize the moral gaze of others, in the shape of the school's high educational and ethical expectations. While the founder repeatedly exhorted students to eat in the cafeteria and engage in dialogue with one another, students almost always preferred to get their meals to go so they could eat in the comfort of their rooms. Most often, this meant eating while watching illegally downloaded anime, Bollywood, and K-Pop films, as well as popular American television shows, alone on their computers with headphones plugged in. Numerous students told me this time alone with their food and a film was their only time of reprieve and relaxed privacy. Inevitably, students fell asleep to the glow of their laptops, their phones tucked under their pillows or clutched in their hands as they slept—at once a conduit of connectivity and an escape away from the constant surveillance of peers and staff.

Fig. 1.27: Escaping into connectivity.

In spite of this co-surveillance and mutual exhortations towards ethical choices in all aspects of life, my evenings in the dorm made clear the limits of such ethics. This arose in small ways and large: the occasional snide comment about students on scholarship, or how the residents of Berekuso deserved their poverty for lack of industry; the offhand joke about how unlikely it was that a young person would actually confront an elder for littering or taking bribes, per an ethics role playing exercise some freshman students had carried out in a seminar; or the widespread copying of notes and homework when students were particularly under pressure, in spite of the Honor Code's insistence that such actions are anathema. Ultimately, I was left with the sense—both implicitly and from explicit comments—that despite their fierce attachment to and belief in the school and its vision, many students doubted their ability to enact the kinds of transformation they were repeatedly told their presence would create in the nation in the face of enduring inequalities. Simply put, the Ghana for which they were and are being socialized does not yet exist outside of Ashesi's walls—not unlike so much of the imported notions of 'developed' infrastructure that anticipates steady, reliable water and electricity.

Digital literacies: intersections of technologies, literacies, and registers

The notion of digital literacies and an ostensible 'digital divide' between elite and marginalized spaces is central to this dissertation. I integrate linguistic anthropological concerns with the burgeoning interdisciplinary conversation around the knowledge economy and digital media globally (Castells 1996; Manovich 2002; Turner 2006; Turkle 2011; Burell 2012). I also situate my work as a response to calls (cf. Coleman 2010) for ethnographically grounded inquiry into understandings of technology outside the North American contexts that populate the existing literatures on digital media, digital literacies, and the 'digital divide.'

Much extant scholarship on the information age and 'digital literacies' considers issues of technology and literacy to represent new, sweeping changes to the way individuals orient to selfhood, community, and the public sphere. While acknowledging the potential for change and shift that new technologies can engender, I conducted my research from firmly within the linguistic anthropological canon. I consider the emerging literacies required for engagement with and through digital technologies to be historically situated and ideologically-mediated processes in dynamic play with the broader communicative competencies in play in particular speech communities and the repertoire of genres, registers, and styles within them. As such, questions of what forms of meaningful social action digital literacies make possible, who can access and leverage them, and how they interact with other forms of communicative competence in a broader media ecology, are subject to the same concerns about the political economy of language and the linguistic market that are at the base of much inquiry into language, society, and self in a global era. In carrying out this research, I was working from a set of linked assumptions around technologies, literacies, and communicative competence:

(1) First, following Goody & Watt's claim that literacy is a "technology of the intellect" (Goody & Watt 1968: 27), and Laura Ahearn's contention that "…literacy is not a neutral, uni-

dimensional technology but rather a set of lived experiences that will differ from community to community" (Ahearn 2001: 7), I take it as a given that digital literacies are themselves non-neutral technologies that should be seen as in continuity and dynamic co-existence with other historical and contemporary forms of technologies of communicative mediation in situated use (Gee 1990; Peters 1999; Manovich 2001; Gitelman 2006; Bauman 2010; Gershon 2010).

Moreover, this perspective emphasizes that literacies, like any technology, are not causal (Scribner & Cole 1981); it is the culturally and ideologically grounded practices which animate them and users' structural access to other forms of social and cultural capital which bear the potential for reconfigurations of the social. Seeing both literacies and technologies as situated and as linked forms of mediation makes visible the continuities in narratives that see both literacy and technology as inherently transformative. As will be further elaborated below, these narratives are often not seen as part of the same process, leading to problematic policy and development efforts.

(2) It follows that if we view 'literacy' not as a singular technology, but as multiple and situated in an ecology of mediation where orality and literacy are relative and represent contextually-relevant competencies (cf. Street 1993; Heath 1983; Duranti & Ochs 1997; Schieffelin 2000; Blot & Collins 2003; Blommaert 2008; Cody 2011), then all literacies can be seen as forms of communicative competence.

Just as 'literacy' entails different practices, so too does 'orality'—they need not, indeed should not, be seen as bounded categories existing along a telos headed towards modernity. Michel de Certeau, in the *Practice of Everyday Life*, speaks of the process by which orality, the imagined "voice of the people," comes to be seen as the pre-modern precursor to prioritized "modern" practices of writing. Against this received teleological disjuncture between "orality" and "literacy," de Certeau contends that "voice" is everywhere, recorded and re-mediated in

every way imaginable in complex intermingling with modes of (re-)mediated inscription, such that "orality itself insinuates itself, like one of the threads of which it is composed, into the network—an endless tapestry—of a scriptural economy" (de Certeau 1984: 133). Clanchy (1979), further notes the persistence of oral modes, including reading aloud, after the emergence of print literacy in early modern Europe, thus calling into question the purported teleological displacement of orality by literacy; Gupta (2012) points to the persistence of a privileging of the oral and face-to-face in courtrooms and academic settings in the contemporary US, two sites which ostensibly favor the written above all else (202).

As a result of these interpenetrations, or as de Certeau calls them, the "unities" of orality and literacy, "the result of reciprocal distinctions within successive and interconnected historical configurations...cannot be isolated from these historical determinations or raised to the status of general categories" (Gupta 2012: 134). Schieffelin similarly exhorts us to "view both oral and literate practices as historically contingent and ideologically grounded, a set of culturally organized practices linked to the political, social, and economic forces that shape them" (Schieffelin 2000: 293). That is, the particular configurations of orality and literacy in a given sociohistorical context must be understood as co-mingling but asymmetrically valued aspects of the same system—a "scriptural economy"—such that what 'counts' as literacy or orality in one economy, how such modalities are leveraged, and to what ends, often figure quite differently in another (de Certeau 1984: 133). Or in other words, "Not only are the connotations of orality and literacy quite different [in diverse cultural and historical circumstances], *but the meaning of such a distinction itself is unstable*" (Gupta 2012: 197, emphasis added).

Following Hymes (1996), Basso (1974) suggests we can think of writing events much like speech events, thus viewing forms and varieties of writing as an integral part of what 'counts' as communicative competence in a given community. In this perspective, then, literacy

cannot be thought of as a separate system outside of the verbal language practices of a society, but predicated on, and mutually constitutive of, those practices; or, as Blot & Collins (2003) would later write, "The acquisition of communicative competence proceeds through immersion in cultural practices that include oral and written modalities" (Collins & Blot 2003: 39). Blommaert (2008) implicitly picks up the thread of Basso's reformulation of Hymes in writing, "The question can be reformulated sociolinguistically as: what is the particular place of writing in the sociolinguistic repertoire of people (Hymes 1996: 36)?" (Blommaert 2008: 5).

Digital literacies, in incorporating both oral and written features of communication, are both unavoidably embedded within extant scriptural economies and distinct from orality and print literacy in their meaning and use. Ilana Snyder (2002) elaborates:

> In an electronically-mediated world, being literate is to do with understanding how the different modalities are combined in complex ways to create meaning…language now comprises a wider range of semiotic systems that cut across reading, writing, viewing and speaking. What looks like the same text or multimedia genre on paper or on screen in not functionally the same. It follows different meaning conventions and requires different skills for its successful use (Snyder 2002: 3).

Lemke further argues that these different meaning conventions are guided by multiplicative, rather than merely additive, meaning-making in the context of digital technologies (Lemke 1998: 283), and moreover by a different metaphor of interpretation: that of hypertext rather than narrative (Lemke 2001: 80). A view of 'literacies' as mode-specific communicative competencies needed to communicate normatively would then include the mode-specific norms for turn-taking, appropriate greetings and leave-takings, degrees of formality, registers, various multi-modal semiotic resources, and so on, which may be quite different across mediated and non-mediated settings, even for the same speakers. But it would also include different interpretive norms of the 'same' symbols in different mediated settings.

(3) As forms of communicative competence, literacies can be viewed in much the same way as linguistic registers: as sets of communicative features and skills which are unevenly distributed, enable "distinctive modes of access to particular zones of social life," are "often linked to asymmetries of power, socioeconomic class, position within hierarchies, and the like" (Agha 2004: 24) and which are implicated in reconfigured ideas of self, agency, responsibility, interiority, and structures of feeling entailed in projects of reconfiguring modernity (cf. Besnier 1991; Ahearn 2001; Burrell 2008, 2012; Bate 2013). In fact, I argue that controlling the appropriate register for a given mediated context of use is central to literacy in that medium.

While not denying the agentive, creative responses of individuals and communities in engaging with new literacy practices and emerging registers, I follow Blommaert's (2008) contention that "Literacy is organised [sic] in *literacy regimes*, in structures of distribution, access, value, and use that are closely tied to the general makeup of societies"—that is, the unequal makeup of societies (Blommaert 2008: 6, original emphasis). As is also the case with respect to register, asymmetries of value in and across societies represent unequal distributions not just of the material or symbolic resources of forms of capital but of "kinds of persons and social subjectivities" within a linguistic market who are indexically linked to those available symbolic resources (Collins & Blot 2003: 45; Bourdieu 1991). As such they can be seen not merely as a proxy of broader social asymmetries but deeply implicated in the instantiation, maintenance, and transformation of social boundaries and the ability of actors to imagine and enact possible future selves. (Volosinov 1973; Irvine 1989; Irvine & Gal 2000).

Shirley Brice Heath's 1983 ethnography Ways with Words is a clear illustration of the notion that controlling prestigious forms of communicative competency is consequential. Heath approaches the acquisition of literacies within larger language socialization contexts across racial and class divides, looking at the varying literacy practices into which children are socialized in

the communities of "Trackton" (a black working class community), "Roadville" (a white

working class community), and "Maintown" (a while middle class community). She found, first,

that the normative literacy practices in each community emerged out of that community's

broader ideologies regarding appropriate communicative action. Most tellingly, however, her

study demonstrated the consequences for those children socialized into routines and expectations

vis-à-vis literacy and oral production that were not ratified in the school context, where white

middle class communicative values held sway. Lower class students' apprenticeship into

literacies at home which were considered 'non-standard' in school settings thus put them at a

disadvantage and curtailed their academic and future job success, thus reinforcing their class

positions. Her research clearly demonstrates the idea that all individuals do not have access to the

full range of practices in a given society's repertoire (à la Agha) and that some linguistic

practices (and by proxy, persons) are considered more valuable than others.

Literacies, globalization, & the 'digital divide'

In contrast to scholarship that views the digital age and its screen-based technologies to

represent a radical break radical break in the way we see ourselves in the world, stressing

historical continuities in narratives about the inherent transformative powers of literacies and

technologies makes visible the connections between contemporary anxieties around the 'digital

divide' and older flawed efforts to bridge the 'Great Divide' of print-based literacy.

Part of the problem of 'autonomous' literacy/Great Divide policy initiatives in the 19th

and 20th centuries (and related scholarship; see Goody & Watt, 1968) was the tendency to treat

literacy as an agentive force in and of itself, capable of conferring predictable cognitive, cultural,

and linguistic changes regardless of social, historical, or political context:

> Such a view of literacy is of course central and tenaciously rooted in developed countries,
> and it is regularly espoused by serious and well-intentioned educationalists, politicians

and development consultants. The problem, however, is that by attributing agentive power to literacy, one tends to diminish or disregard the role which human agents play in the processes of acquiring and maintaining literacy (Kulick & Stroud 1993).

In addition to problematic assumptions about the need to bring ostensibly backwards, pre-modern communities into a particularly narrow vision of the privileges of the modern era, this perspective ignores numerous structural and social factors other than literacy that might be inhibiting a population's full development and participation (Heath 1983; Ahearn 2001; Gupta 2012). Indeed against the implication of the autonomous literacy theory that only good can come from greater access to literacy in the singular, seeing literacies as multiple and situated rather than singular and deterministic sheds light on the ways in which they can be implicated in sedimenting existing hierarchies of value and access. In addition to Heath's research, Ahearn's (2001) study of the rise in female literacy rates in Nepal suggests that, while providing both men and women with new outlets for unsupervised sociality and performances of self, the growth in literacy also "reinforced gender ideologies and undercut some avenues to social power, especially for women" (2001: 7).

Along similar lines, Gupta's recent study of Indian development bureaucracy shows how writing functions to constitute the state and prevent the meaningful participation of the poor by rendering representations of them inaccessible (Gupta, 2012: 149, 188). While this might suggest that inscription is a form of state violence, Gupta is careful to emphasize that while there are certainly ways in which texts and literacy articulate with structural violence under certain circumstances, he wishes instead to "argue emphatically against a dominant scholarly and political tendency that sees writing as inherently exploitative in the context of widespread rural illiteracy" (Gupta, 2012: 188). Rather, he contends that "the attainment of literacy by the poor *does not have the magical effect of empowering them and increasing their capacity to resist structural violence*" (Ibid.,198; 232, emphasis added.). In disregarding the role of human agents,

proponents of Great Divide bridging programs ignore the play of existing ideologies and hierarchies of power and access that channel the ways in which literacy is taken up and meaningfully put to use. As Schieffelin reminds us, "how a community 'takes up' literacy, how it develops, how it is understood and deployed depends very much on the ideology and context of who is doing the introduction as well as on the ideology and context of those to whom it is being introduced" (Schieffelin 2000: 293).

The tendency to treat literacy as a deterministic force unto itself has echoes in the propensity of many scholars and policy-makers to see technology more broadly as causal, agentive, or deterministic. Even as the problems with the autonomous theory of literacy were being clearly demonstrated with respect to autonomous views of literacy underlying Great Divide policies, the rise of personal computing and the launch of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s led to great furor over both the purportedly inherent possibilities of such technologies, and what quickly came to be described as the Digital Divide between those who could and could not access such transformative tools (Mossberger et al. 2003: 3).

Just as with the Great Divide, real inequalities certainly exist between populations who do and do not have access to the technology of literacy and the literacies to make use of technologies. However, early Digital Divide scholarship and policy work was dogged by much the same teleological and narrow categories as earlier proponents of Great Divide perspective. A number of studies across the social sciences have complicated the singular notion of the digital divide as inadequate to capture the multiplicity of divides in access– including "a skills divide, an economic opportunity divide, and a democratic divide" (Mossberger et al. 2003: 2; cf. also Warschauer 2003; Vehovar et al. 2006), as well as access to the resources and infrastructure needed to support and maintain digital technologies themselves (Ginsberg 2006: 32)–that are symptomatic of broader social inequalities and global asymmetries. As Veohavar et al.(2006)

note, "the digital divide is both a symptom and a cause of broader social and economic inequality" (280).

Yet while Mossberger et al. (2003) note the danger of exacerbating social inequities, their policy-oriented model, like many others, does not allow adequate room to account for the ways in which those very inequities might condition uptake and value. In the U.S. and much of the post-industrial world, national taskforces continue to focus on access to technologies themselves as a solution (the 'One Laptop Per Child' program as a case in point), again echoing earlier misapprehensions of the role of literacy: treating technology as an agentive, deterministic force with stable consequences regardless of context; ignoring local views and understandings of technology (sometimes elaborated as 'media ideologies,' cf. Gershon 2010a, 2010b) which impact their uptake and embedding into existing media ecologies; and re-inscribing understandings of rural and developing communities as 'behind' and imposing a top down view of what access, development, and participation should look like.

Warschauer recounts an experiment carried out in a Delhi slum in 2000, called the Hole-in-the-Wall project, where computers with internet access were installed in a closed kiosk, with only monitors and joysticks (rather than keyboards and mice) accessible from the outside (Mitra 2003; Warschauer 2003: 1-2). No training or education of any kind was provided, in order to test whether access to technologies alone might be enough for resident children to learn to make use of the computers, thereby effectively bridging the digital divide. While the researchers themselves (Mitra 2003, 2006) have repeatedly hailed it as a success—resident children were able to teach themselves by trial and error a range of basic computer skills in a matter of days, thus 'proving' that "children are able to learn to use computers and the Internet on their own, irrespective of their social, cultural or economic backgrounds" (Mitra 2003: 367)—Warschauer is highly critical of the experiment, noting from his own observations at the site that children

spent most of their time drawing and playing games (Warschauer 2003: 2). Like the perspective on literacy as a technology iterated above, technology is only as effective or causal as the practices that animate it; without further education, resources in Hindi (the only language the children spoke), or community involvement, Warschauer contends that the technology failed to, in his terms, "foster social inclusion" (ibid.).

Though Warschauer does not put it in these terms, the experiment does not just demonstrate that making adequate use of technologies relies on more than just access, it begs the question: what counts as 'adequate' in the first place? The further questions of 'what is technology good for?' or 'what counts as literacy in technologically mediated modes in any given context?'—questions that guided my research in Ghanaian ICT classrooms—are far from transparent or predetermined. What is curious is the persistent lack of such questions in much (though certainly not all) contemporary work on technologies or the digital literacies, in spite of the fact that there has been an blossoming of scholarship working within a much more critical model of print literacy since at least the late 1980s.

Tellingly, much of this scholarship persistently sidesteps the question of language and access, eliding threads of continuity between work on literacy and work on mediation. A crucial contribution of this research is to demonstrate the critical role of language cross-cutting all of these dimensions of the digital divide(s), and in particular, the ways in which linguistic routines and genres organizing classroom pedagogy also organize the uptake of digital skills. Is goes beyond the questions of access to ask how people experience newly embedded technologies as these media are implicated in, and come to reorganize, existing asymmetries of value, power, and participation. Blommaert (2008) argues that the literacy practices of marginal persons who attempt to move away from the local are subject to standardizing regimes that are distinctly unidirectional. Not unlike the circumstances described by Heath (1983), locally inculcated

practices of literacy, or what (following Fabian) Blommaert describes as "grassroots literacies," are of little help in writers' bids to participate in a globalized public sphere if they are not ratified in the marketplace of that sphere—severely complicating efforts to participate in a global culture of modernity:

> The matter [of asymmetries in language value] gains in complexity as soon as we move these issues into the field of globalization, when literacy products – texts and documents – move from one society into another in an ever-intensifying flow. What is correct in one society becomes an error in another society; what is perfectly appropriate writing in one place becomes a meaningless sign system in another. Texts may travel easily, but the system of use, value, and function in which they were produced usually does not travel with them (Blommaert 2008: 6).

Critically, however, Blommaert contends that a global standard has emerged, one carrying certain expectations of code, orthography, and narrative form, and which does retain meaning outside of the contexts of its production by virtue of its hegemony. Echoing national projects of standardization, this global standard naturalizes itself, becoming the yardstick against which those texts that cannot retain their meaning beyond the local are found wanting. Blommaert focuses on the complex circumstances of two cases of "grassroots literacy written for globalization, with the explicit purposes of being read by people from outside the community of their composers"—texts which proved incredibly mobile, but necessarily constrained in their intelligibility to precisely the audience to whom they were directed. The naturalized status of the global standard elides the reality that "the prima facie assumption of comprehensibility based on the superficial observation that we now all use the same communication tools—the internet and English, for example—is dramatically wrong," leading to massive misinterpretations of ostensibly transparent texts (ibid.: 24).

I extend Blommaert's notion of grassroots literacy to emerging digital literacies in considering the pressures under which rural and marginalized Ghanaians especially, but

recursively all Ghanaians, are subject to the globally-circulating rhetoric of technology-as-

transformation—and, as I explore further in Chapter Two, found wanting.

Africanist critical history & social theory:

Achilles Mbembe is one of numerous scholars who have observed that, "the

contemporary African experience is not simply that of economic deprivation. Rather, it involves

an economy of desired goods that are known, that may sometimes be seen, that one wants to

enjoy, but to which one will never have material access" (cf. Meyer 1998; Comaroff & Comaroff

1999; Mbembe 2002a: 271; Ferguson, 2006:192; Cole & Durham 2008). This experience is

particularly acute for youth the continent over, who are recursively subordinated and doubly

barred from material access by virtue of their marginal positions both globally and in nation-

states where access to political and economic rights is (or appears to be) largely gerontocratic

(Cole & Durham 2008; Comaroff & Comaroff 1999). While the intensifications of global flows

and dislocations, catalyzed by neoliberal imperatives and exacerbated by mobile technologies,

that have wrought this paradox represent real and consequential changes, they are in many ways

both the mirror and legacy of early sociopolitical and economic shifts set in motion by the

colonial enterprise and the early capitalist impetus underlying it. In efforts to construct

alternative avenues for participation, contemporary African social actors are often reinforcing

ongoing neoliberal capitalist restructuring.

Chalfin (2010), in her ethnographic study of Ghana's Customs apparatus, makes the point

that neoliberalism, built as it is "upon the never fully realized imperatives of imperial and

developmental state building," is shot through with the traces of these myriad incomplete efforts

of national and individual projects of self-fashioning in claims to modernity. Hence, "the status

quo ante here is thus less about a pre-existing order than a situation of multiple macrohistorical

trajectories already existing in an unsettled relation" (Chalfin 2010: 48). Mbembe (2001) in fact

declares this kind of multifaceted indeterminacy characteristic of the postcolony: "As an age, the postcolony encloses multiple durées made up of discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate on and other, and envelope one an other: an entanglement (Mbembe 2001: 14). 'New Ghana' discursive and representational efforts to recuperate Ghanaian cultural heritage in fixing the referent of 'genuine Ghanaian' in particular directions must be seen in light of this indeterminacy, set into a constellation of ongoing efforts by institutions and persons at myriad scales both in and out of the country to, paraphrasing the Comaroffs, 'retool culturally familiar technologies as new means for new ends' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999: 289).

These efforts have both a historical legacy and contemporary counterparts in the continent more broadly, but also specifically in Ghana. As one of numerous historical examples, a number of scholars (Hill 1963; Goody 1971; Mikell 1984; Grier 1992; McCaskie 1995) have traced how the pre-colonial Asante kinship structures came to be restructured and reanimated in the transition to the cash-crop economy and ultimately to British colonial control. Grier (1992) in particular notes that as cash-crop framing expanded, women were obligated by the expansion of alternative patrilocal kinship structures within the broader matrilineal order to work more intensively on their husbands' farms, but could not inherit those farms via matrilineal inheritance. Women and other subordinated groups briefly attempted to seek redress in inheritance rights according to labor inputs instead of via the traditional line of descent in British, rather than local village courts, as the latter were concerned to maintain the move toward intensification of women's uncompensated labor as the status quo (Grier 1992: 325). Ultimately, the British officially condoned a reversion to pre-colonial 'customary law,' in line with these interests to maintain the low cost of cocoa production. Rather than a legitimation of African political and legal structures, the upholding of customary law in this case entailed a reimagining

of 'tradition' in the economic interests and image of colonial authorities and the global order of

which they were metonymic (ibid.:328; Ranger, 1983). Existing structures of obligation and

reciprocity were actively contested and reshaped by interested actors in bids to rearticulate value

in a shifting terrain where the very notion of commodified values were first entering peoples'

worlds. This instance in Ghana's history of a marginalized group seeking alternative means of

access, in ways that ultimately reinforces shifts towards individual accumulation as part of a

wage economy system, in some ways serves as a precedent for more contemporary bids.

Meyer (1998) highlights more contemporary re-articulations of the 'traditional' in her

investigation of the Ghanaian Pentecostal imaginary. She demonstrates how the Pentecostal

exhortation to 'make a complete break with the past' to ensure rupture with kin and the

obligations associated with traditional village life can be seen as a discursive bid for participation

in economic life by those otherwise shut out of the Ghanaian gerontocracy. Shipley (2002, 2013)

similarly suggests the ways of speaking central to hiplife music production and consumption

provide youth with avenues for participation in public and global spheres on their own terms, in

this case by reconfiguring the 'past' through the re-appropriation of traditional speaking norms in

the cosmopolitan genre of hiplife rapping:

> For many alienated urban youth, hip hop bravado re-animated interest in traditions of
> courtly speaking usually ascribed to elders in West African societies. Cultural critic Esi
> Sutherland-Addy argues hiplife gives youth swagger, making them believe that 'they
> have the right to speak in public, whereas traditionally youth are supposed to sit down
> and show respect to their elders' (Shipley 2002: 634-5).

The investigations of emerging registers linked with technologies in both McIntosh (2010) and

Burrell (2012) similarly reveal ways of speaking in contemporary West African contexts that

lend themselves to the remapping of networks of hierarchy and relatedness by enabling

communication in a channel not fully controlled by extant power structures. In spite of the

anxiety of their elders over the possibly dangerous re-entextualizations of 'flying' words sent by

text message, the Kenyan youth of McIntosh's study rely on an emerging codeswitched register of English and Giriama in their SMS communication with friends and clandestine lovers. She argues this bilingual register allows them to project themselves into imagined cosmopolitan future possibilities with 'light' English, without being permanently "weighed down by the stigma or social obligations considered an essential part of 'Giriamaness' and felt to be encapsulated in and invoked by the Giriama language" (McIntosh 2010: 338). In Burrell's (2012) work, Ghanaian youth in urban internet cafes similarly leverage cosmopolitan registers of English and the un-surveilled technology of internet chat rooms and listservs in the enactment of possible future selves. Burrell's internet cafe netizens, in leveraging the possibilities of the internet according to local sensibilities and understandings of technology, represent yet another instance of the structurally marginalized negotiating access through registers that enact new, oppositional conceptions of self.

The emergent literacies and representational practices of the 'New Ghana,' in their resignification of 'traditional' markers of national and cultural pride, can similarly be seen as a bid by youth for alternative articulations of participatory Ghanaian citizenship against what they see as the entrenched bureaucratic and gerontocratic status quo. The proposed project integrates these perspectives on emergent linguistic practices and genres in post-colonial urban Africa with the work of Ghanaian sociolinguists (Obeng 1994, 1997, 2003; Yankah 1995), whose scholarship on prestigious features and genres in Akan (e.g. indirection, reliance on proverbs, etc.) provides a baseline for documenting new technology-induced linguistic registers and ideological shifts in the making.

While this literature suggests that new registers are leveraged quite explicitly because they index new identities and ways of knowing in strategic bids for access, speakers are potentially less aware of the ways in which these strategic bids link up with ongoing historical

57

processes carried through to contemporary neoliberal restructuring. Shipley notes, for instance, the association of hiplife with "the rapid privatization and decentralization of state institutions, and the related valorization of individuated modes of wealth accumulation that overtook state and collective ideas of progress" (2002: 633). For Pentecostals oriented against a 'past' that is implicitly held to represent those structures preventing congregants' ascent, "the Pentecostalist churches offer them a new individualist ethics which matches their aspirations to achieve power and esteem irrespective of age and origin" (Meyer 1998: 320). This individualist ethics, which Meyer observes in church members' narrated desires to live free of familial demands and obligations, are tied to the earliest incursions of capitalism in Ghana and its concomitant reorganizations of structures of land tenure and inheritance. The New Ghana zeitgeist raises the question of the consequences of bids for access in terms of the recalibration of hierarchies, and the actual avenues of possibility for Ghanaians across its myriad socioeconomic and geopolitical divides.

Chapter Overview

Chapter two, *Teaching Tech by Rote*, considers widespread claims about technological transformation in light of pedagogical practices in Ghanaian schools. While many development and tech company outreach programs tout the power of technology to transform the economies of the Global South, few examine local conceptions of hierarchy and knowledge production that are at the center of ICT learning contexts. This chapter first situates contemporary tech-utopian development rhetoric in the centuries-old history of foreign intervention into literacy and development in Ghana. It then presents analysis of grade school ICT classroom interactions in Berekuso to highlight the disconnect between conceptions of the ideal learner and thinker in Ghanaian classrooms and embedded in the design of the laptops used in those classrooms: the

rote pedagogical methods common in classrooms, as well as the core values around deference to elders and authority figures that animate that pedagogy, lie orthogonal to the values of learner-centric, critical thinking-oriented values that inform the design of computer hardware and software imported from the post-Industrial world. Despite New Ghana claims about the kinds of participatory democracy and economic spheres that new technologies will enable, the forms of print and digital literacy necessary to participate in these domains remains exclusive—thus reproducing class hierarchies even as age-graded hierarchies are dismantled.

Chapter three, *The Honor Code,* focuses on the practices through which Ashesi University socializes students into modes of universalist ethical action, timeliness, critical knowledge production, learner-centric pedagogies, and ways of speaking that explicitly challenge the age-graded respect hierarchies of the status quo. The organizing principle of Ashesi's institutional efforts to reshape the habitus of Ghanaian youth into "a generation of ethical, entrepreneurial leaders for Africa" is a belief, shared by many within and beyond Ghana, in the transformational power of technologies to bring about political change and economic development. Many New Ghana participants feel these respect hierarchies, and the corruption they are seen to enable, are at the root of the nation's slow progress. As a means of "taking ownership for their ethical posture," Ashesi students adopted a version of the exam Honor Codes common in US institutions several years ago; upholding the code obligates students to avoid cheating and report fellow students who do. Yet what counts as "cheating" in the Ashesi context is often considered necessary in the contexts of scarcity that pervade Ghana more broadly.

In Chapter four, I trace the many re-entextualizations by which a youtube video of a confrontation between an elder and the young person who mocked him became a national symbol for protesting abuses of power at the top of social and political hierarchies. This example pulls together and re-capitulates the many preceding themes and ideas. Finally, rather than a

conclusion, I propose directions for future work from within my substantial corpus of

dissertation data.

CHAPTER TWO:
Teaching Tech by Rote

Introduction

       In this chapter, I explore the slippage between, on the one hand, globally-circulating

rhetoric about the transformational potential of technologies and their related digital literacies in

the development landscape of the global south, and on the other, the historically-situated

pedagogical routines that organize classroom transmission of knowledge and directly impact the

uptake of digital literacy skills. In Section Two, I trace the long history of foreign interventions

into literacy and development in what is now Ghana, from early colonial efforts to 'civilize'

through English-language literacy to contemporary claims about the inherently transformational

possibilities of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs). I argue that exhortations

around the necessity of ICT skills for national development can be seen as embedded firmly

within that older, ongoing process of disciplining marginalized populations through

standardizing literacies, rather than a new paradigm. I then identify the particular values of this

newest permutation, which I refer to throughout as the ideology of transparent technology, e.g.

the notion that computers and other digital technologies are universally intuitive and can be

plucked out of the context of their design and production and re-embedded elsewhere with the

same effects. The crucial secondary effect of this ideology at the policy and social provisioning

level, I argue, is the erasure of the need to explicitly instruct new users in digital literacy skills.

After all, if context is irrelevant to the uptake and use of ICTs, then no attention to the particulars

of local contexts are necessary—the result being that no effort or emphasis in placed on

providing opportunities for the cultivation of initial literacies in policy or curricula.

       In Section Three, I closely analyze several ICT lessons in a marginalized semi-rural

school in order to demonstrate how the 'global' values of tech transparency as development

practice, embedded in both the post-industrial design of imported computers and in Ghana's ICT policies, are themselves orthogonal to the values of respect hierarchies and bounded transfer of knowledge in Ghanaian classrooms.

Section One:
A Situated History of Literacy & Development in Ghana
Early Colonial Educational Infrastructures

Scholarship on the contemporary Ghanaian educational system often points to its antecedents in centuries-long missionary and colonial intervention (Foster 1962; McWilliam 1964; Agbedor 1994; Abigodun 2000; Barber 2006). Portuguese and Dutch merchants established schools along the coast for their own children as early as the 1400s, but it was not until the British annexation of the then-Gold Coast colony in 1874 that colonial authorities began formal Western-style schools explicitly intended for the edification of locals (Abigodun 2000: 27). This is not to say that Western-style schools for Africans did not exist prior to this period (or indeed that the various communities later geographically bound as 'Ghana' did not have their own routines, strategies, and expectations around knowledge production and learning). The Swiss-German Basel Mission in particular is notable for creating written scripts for numerous Ghanaian languages in its efforts to bring local oral societies quite literally to the Word (Ofosu-Appiah 1975; Abigodun 2000). Basel Missionaries were especially active in establishing schools in the Greater Accra region and contemporary Eastern region in which my research took place, laying a groundwork of interconnections between formal schooling, literacy, and the Protestant ethic around work and worth which persists into the present (Meischer 2006: 31). Colonial authorities in fact relied heavily on extant Basel schools in their varied efforts to improve formal education infrastructure over the next several decades (Abigodun 2000).

Colonial education and literacy

The facts of these formal architectures of print literacy and schooling aimed at Africans themselves, which jointly arose in the colonial era, suggest a major transformation of local ecologies of speaking and learning. These transitions did contribute to major reorganization of then-Gold Coast political economy of language, cementing the power of the English language and both the cachet and possibilities of *written* local languages. Barber et al. (2006) and others point to the ways in which novel social formations and genres such as letter and diary writing were nonetheless taken up in distinctly *local* ways. The links between, for instance, the white-collar literary clubs of the 1920s and earlier Asafo community defense companies (Newell 2006), or the praise song rituals embedded in chiefly funerary rites and later elaborate print obituaries for persons of note (McCaskie 2006), reveal deep continuities in Ghanaian practices of orality and an ongoing emphasis on kin relations. Barber (2006) in fact suggests that, contrary to the assumptions about emergent literacy and the emergence of public sphere put forward by Habermas (1964), Taylor (2005) and Anderson (1991), the Ghanaian experience of early colonial-era literacies was that of collectivizing and externalizing possible selves and roles in an era of profound change (Barber 2006: 8-9). That is, while print literacies made possible new ways of self-imagining, they did *not* produce the kind of civil society made up of internalized self-interested individual selves that emerged in the European enlightenment, but rather allowed a reimagining and reinforcement of extant sociality and kin relations (cf. also Chakrabarty 1992 on parallels to the postcolonial Indian context).

For scholars of situated literacies (Street 1993; Heath 1983; Goodwin 1991; Schieffelin 2000, Ahearn 2003; Collins & Blot 2003), this is of course no surprise. It is worth highlighting the perceived slippage between the Western experiences of literacy and the very different ways in which the introduction of print literacies played out on the continent, precisely because this is

the perspective from which Africa was viewed by the colonial administrators making and enforcing the development policies. In this view, Africa is a space of lack, held up in continual comparison to the developmental trajectory of the European continent's markedly different history, resources, social organization, and cultural preferences. Missionaries and colonial bureaucrats who attempted to expand the infrastructures of formal schooling in Ghana and elsewhere on the continent were essentially operating from the same "Great Divide" discourses that animated their contemporaries in the West. Literacy crusaders in a Western world caught in the throes of the Industrial Revolution pushed the rhetoric that education, and especially literacy, would not only catapult the disadvantaged out of poverty, but effectively reshape the lumpen poor, with their idiosyncratic language practices and heterogeneous values, into a citizenry aligned with, and easily interpellated by, the standard language and national prerogatives of the state (Collins & Blot 2003). Literacy in the colonial context was similarly leveraged as a tool of governmentality (Gupta 2012) reshaping African citizen-subjects away from "pagan" influences and towards "civilized" behavior worthy of participation in the empire. Education, and specifically English literacy skills, was explicitly foregrounded in colonial-era development policies, such as that which then-Governor of Accra, Gordon Guggisberg, set down in 1919:

> We want to give to all Africans the opportunity of both moral and material progress by opening for them the benefits and delights that come from literature, and by equipping them with the knowledge necessary to success in their occupations, no matter how humble (quoted in McWilliam 1964: 48).

Here as elsewhere, literacy is inextricable from the British colonials' patronizing sense of their civilizing mission. In Guggisberg's framing, the "benefits and delights that come from literature" are self-evident, and literacy itself is figured as foundational to providing singular, universal "opportunity" for Ghanaians' personal and national development.

Literacy and Pan-African Development

Foster, writing in the Comparative Educational Review less than a decade after Ghanaian Independence, reflected that the educational reforms undertaken by British colonial authorities at the turn of the 20th century "created new occupational and status roles, access to which was facilitated by the possession of formal education." This also created new forms of inequality in access to shifting conceptions of the good life (Foster 1962: 128). These inequalities were not merely economic. Western formal education "…tended to produce two "worlds", separating the literates from the rest of the community" (Agbedor 1994: 154). This bifurcation of identity was famously lambasted in Kwaw Ansah's classic 1983 film, <u>Heritage Africa</u>, in which a man named 'Kwesi' is sent abroad for education in order to become a high level clerk in the colonial bureaucracy. He returns calling himself 'Quincy,' but over the course of the film undergoes an existential crisis as he continually faces up to the racist colonial logic seeking to de-Africanize him but never allow him full participation in British society.

In mission-run schools in particular, "school children were trained to be citizens of minority Christian communities rather than of the community as a whole" (Agbedor 1994: 154). As early as the turn of the 20th Century, journalist Joseph Casley-Hayford and others among the Ghanaian elite increasingly raised the issue of the "inconsistencies of character" (Kimble 1963: 512–514) which they believed Western-style education, particularly its English-language transmission, produced in African consciousness.

Concerns about the impact of colonial education in undermining and erasure of African forms of knowledge and ways of knowing came to be central to the Pan-African zeitgeist undergirding the burgeoning movement for Independence. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first democratically elected President and a key figure in that movement, took up these issues about the consequences of Western-style education on Africans early on in his writing. The sweeping

educational policies his administration put in place in 1951 and later in 1961 prioritized

Ghanaian languages and local cultural knowledge in schools as an effort to "decolonize the

mind" and push against the African inferiority complex sedimented by centuries of colonial

occupation (Accelerated Development Plan of Education, 1951; 1961 Education Act). Nkrumah

also set up the Ghana Education Trust in an effort to ensure autonomy from foreign funds and

concomitant interventions in curriculum and policy. Yet these efforts largely left intact the

colonial assertion that Western-style education and English-language literacy were prerequisites

to development. Speaking before the Ghana Teachers' Association in 1961, Nkrumah

emphasized this link between education, national development, and civilization, likening

[English language] illiteracy and poverty to diseases to be routed out of the fledgling country:

> The importance of education, especially in developing countries like ours today, cannot
> be over-emphasized. Education is the firmest foundation of all for any national building
> process. It is therefore the cornerstone upon which rests our surest hope to build in Ghana
> a structure of society which will be worthy of a respectable place among the civilized
> nations of the world. It is for this reason that my Government attaches the greatest
> importance to the development of education at all levels. We will spare no efforts to rid
> this country completely of illiteracy, and banish from it, the attendant curses of
> ignorance, poverty, and disease. (Nkrumah, 1961)

Structural adjustment and literacy in the neoliberal development imaginary

The possibility of a truly autochthonous educational system was forestalled by several decades of

economic and political instability, culminating in the collapse of the economy in 1978 (Nugent

1995). The subsequent decades have been marked by massive structural adjustments and

economic deregulation mandated by the IMF and World Bank as conditions of loans. One of the

most serious consequences of these shifts was a strict curtailment of education spending, which

gutted the nation's already fragile educational system and opened the door to decades more

interventions into education and development planning by global aid organizations, the

development arms of various post-industrial nations, and transnational bodies such as the United

Nations and World Health Organization. While this trajectory has played out across the Global South in the last several decades (Mosse 2013), Nugent (1995) notes the way in which Ghana in particular has played the role of the guinea pig for neoliberal development strategies which have then been transported elsewhere.

This has certainly been the case for Ghana's continuing history of post-independence education and literacy reforms. Many of these programs are donor-funded—a full 80% of the Communications budget in 2013, in fact—and therefore designed to speak directly to transnational policy imperatives, such as the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, adherence to which is often pre-condition of continued funding (Government of Ghana, 2013).

Corporate and transnational influence in contemporary Ghanaian educational policy

Print literacy, the focus of centuries of foreign-funded efforts to leverage education as a tool of transformation, has proved to be inadequate to the task on its own (cf. Gupta 2012 on the literate poor). In its place, Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) skills and "global citizenship" have emerged as the latest globally-circulating regimes of governmentality aimed at reimagining the development landscape of the Global South. Though these trends are superficially diverse, they share a core orientation towards notions of individuated exploratory learning and critical thinking as preconditions for prosperous participation in the knowledge economy. Ultimately such claims are not substantially different from turn-of-the-20th-century rhetoric around print literacy as a precondition for 'civilized' participation in the global economy of the time. In both cases, such rhetoric operates as normative and erases the specificity of its own origins.

Ghana's current ICT policy, first drafted in 2003, reflects these globally-circulating imperatives. Numerous transnational institutions, including UNECA (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa), the World Bank, and the UN ICT Taskforce have been involved in the

67

drafting and implementation of various aspects of the policy. The text itself, entitled

"Information and Communications Technology for Accelerated Development (ICT4AD)," rests

on the premise that "Ghana's development process can be accelerated through development,

deployment, and exploitation of ICTs within the economy and society," and that in fact "Ghana's

accelerated development within the emerging information and digital age *will not be possible*

without an ICT-driven development agenda" (8, emphasis added). The document further attests

to "the nation's total commitment to transform Ghana into an *information-rich knowledge-based*

society and economy and to ensure that Ghana and its people *fully participate in the information*

age and enjoy the social, cultural, and economic benefits of the emerging information

revolution" (Ibid. 10, emphasis added). These assertions speak to the de facto assumption in

contemporary development rhetoric that ICTs are inherently transformational and bestow

automatic benefits—indeed that they are "the key drivers for socioeconomic development

worldwide" (Ibid., 7). Such rhetoric almost directly echoes the universally positive consequences

once ascribed to literacy as the silver bullet response to poverty at the turn of the 20th Century.

As many of my research participants have noted, however, the document is so broad and

includes so many goals as to be almost useless as a policy document.

  With the publishing of this policy in 2003, ICT became a core requirement in the national

curriculum, regardless of the fact that the majority of classrooms, then as now, do not have

access to electricity, much less computers on which to learn key digital literacy skills. Partly in

response to critiques of the ICT4AD document, the government released a Ministerial Policy on

ICTs in 2005 (Government of Ghana, 2005). Nevertheless, the past several Ghanaian

administrations have been marked by repeated ill-executed and half-finished programs

purportedly aimed at investing in the future of tech in Ghana. This includes the former President

Mills' (2009-2012) Better Ghana Agenda Laptop Scheme. Roughly based on the OLPC program

that had been attempted but not maintained in the country a decade earlier—with the crucial

difference that the laptops were designed and produced by local software firm RLG. The Better

Ghana Laptop effort has been plagued from the start by reports that a huge proportion of the

machines were either never distributed, or were otherwise diverted from reaching the schools

they were intended for. In early 2013, President Mahama's administration announced it would be

investing several million dollars into a state-of-the-art tech hub dubbed "Hope City" outside the

capital, meant to provide space for local and foreign software companies to realize the "African

Dream" (MyJoyOnline 2013; BBC Africa 2013). Though the money was duly allocated and

ground broken in a lavish ceremony, the beautifully rendered towers have yet to materialize as of

writing, almost four years later.

Increase in private sector involvement

The Ghanaian government's high profile investment in Hope City can be read as an effort

to demonstrate support for a growing sector of the economy. More often than not, however, it

works in the other direction. As Mosse (2013) and others have identified, the private sector is

increasingly involved in development across the global south, taking on an NGO-like role in

provisioning services. Corporate bodies are "setting and implementing agendas...to render

commercial the problem of poverty—that is, to frame it in alignment with corporate agendas

captured in the unintentionally revealing slogan "Make poverty business" (Mosse 2013: 239).

Ghana is no exception in this regard, particularly when it comes to foreign and local private

sector involvement in the nation's emerging ICT4D sector, often quite explicitly as an alternative

to the state's inaction. As one of the few politically-stable, English-speaking democracies in sub-

Saharan Africa, Ghana has become a key site for tech-driven foreign corporate interventions in

development. At the time of research, numerous high profile US-based institutions, including

IBM, General Electric, and Stanford's Graduate School of Business, were actively involved in

projects to reimagine Accra as a 'smart' city, provide greater access to digital technologies, and train would-be tech entrepreneurs, respectively.

Section Two:

Global Governmentality & Disciplining Literacies

Globally-circulating discourses

       Pierre (2012) has argued that continued interventions into post-Independence Ghana's national development have played out largely unchallenged in part because the racialized hierarchies of colonial rule in Ghana were never fully dismantled. Thus the Ghanaian development terrain is particularly vulnerable to what is increasingly referred to in critical development scholarship as "global governmentality." Gupta (2012) discusses the term as an extension of Foucault's theory of regulating populations within the nation-state. In its original formulation, Rose & Miller (2010) argue, governmentality should be centrally considered a matter of discursive knowledge, in which governance is mediated between political entities and the "activities of expertise" carried out through myriad competing "local tactics of education, persuasion, inducement, management, incitement, motivation, and encouragement" (2010: 273). Gupta's reformulation "acknowledges that *transnational* linkages in the movement of ideas, material resources, technologies, and personnel are critical to the care of populations" (2012: 239, emphasis added).

       In the uneven terrain of the global economy, developing nations are subject to transnationally-circulating orientations to poverty and categorizations of "the poor" which privilege European and North American values and development trajectories as the de facto unmarked norm, and which prioritize knowledge and expertise grounded in these spaces. Developing nations with very different situated histories and infrastructures, when held against these norms in much development and foreign aid policy, are almost inevitably found wanting. Considering governmentality as global in its scope therefore highlights the unequal ways in

which knowledge and expertise are valued, and how knowledge and expertise produced in the post-industrial world comes to dominate the policy conversations and agendas of the Global South—through missionization, NGOs, transnational bodies such as the UN, corporate interventions, and so on. In providing a framework to trace this "global to local integration and discipline and technical management of marginal economies, governance and populations [at a level] unprecedented since colonial times," the notion of global governmentality also illuminates the ways in which the same ideologies operate *across* highly industrialized and developing contexts (Ferguson & Gupta 2002: 992). This includes the longstanding and pervasive notion of literacy-as-development from its origins in industrial revolution-era England, to missionary and colonial exhortations about the necessity of literacy for Africans to join the ranks of civilized nations. I argue, in fact, that in line with the expectations of the global knowledge economy, newer forms of technology-as-development are a direct extension of this same globally circulating discourse. Contemporary iterations of such ideologies insist across spaces as diverse and lower-income Rhode Island (cf. Avineri et al 2014) and greater Accra that new technologies are crucial to the regulation and reimagining of the language practices and personhood of marginalized and/or non-standard speaking populations.

Unlike print-literacy-as-development, the linked rhetoric of technology-as-development insists that *digital* literacies need not be taught. Institutions such as the free online course hub Coursera, the One Laptop per Child (OLPC) program, and Sugata Mitra's ongoing Hole in the Wall Project, are major sources of the widespread—and largely unchallenged—assumption that technologies are transparent in their operation regardless of their context of use. The Hole in the Wall Project in particular has drawn much attention (cf. NPR 2013; TED 2013; Times of India 2013) for its claim that children in the most remote and impoverished areas, where teachers are often disinclined to go, can teach themselves how to operate computers at the highest levels and

need no external guidance or instruction to do so (cf. Warschauer 2005 for a much-needed

critical anthropological intervention into the program and its claims.) If indeed technologies such

as laptop computers and web-enabled platforms are transparent in their use and can be taken up

and used anywhere in the world, not only unproblematically but with reliably transformative

consequences, then simply providing access to the technologies themselves is the only critical

pre-requisite to the technologically-fueled development panacea imagined by many

technologists. Consider, for instance, a portion of the mission statement of the One Laptop Per

Child program:

> We aim to provide each child with a rugged, low-cost, low-power, connected laptop. To
> this end, we have designed hardware, content and software for collaborative, joyful, and
> self-empowered learning. With access to this type of tool, children are engaged in their
> own education, and learn, share, and create together. They become connected to each
> other, to the world and to a brighter future. (OLPC Mission 2016)

One can read in the above a naturalization of post-industrial middle class values around learning

and education as the universal ideal. The assumed end user is creative, a self-starter, engaged,

and so on. In fact, most technology produced in the Global North has this kind of assumed user

in mind—on steeped in the kind of learner-centric, critical-thinking-forward pedagogies that

have come to occupy the default position of 'good learning' in post-industrial contexts (cf.

Warschauer & Ames 2010). Certainly if designers assume this is true of all users in all

communities, then it follows that anyone can engage with digital technologies seamlessly,

intuitively, and transparently, and therefore providing tech access alone is a kind of silver bullet.

A small but robust body of scholarship on the 'invisible,' 'unimagined' or 'non-users'

that designers fail to take into account when developing technological interventions pushes

against such assumptions (cf. Woolgar 1991; Wyatt 2003; Hyysalo et al 2016). In the Ghanaian

context specifically, Jenna Burrell's 2012 monograph Invisible Users points to the ways in which

the young marginalized men she followed in the internet cafes of early-2000s Accra were not

accounted for or anticipated in the design of many online spaces, and indeed to a certain extent

the technological infrastructures of desktop computing and internet accessibility itself. In my

own discussions with Ghanaian tech-enthusiasts as well as would-be users eager to digitally

participate, it is clear that users are all too aware of the ways in which they have not been

considered in the design of everything from software relying on unfamiliar American English

metaphors, to websites requiring high bandwidth, to even computer hardware itself with its need

for constant access to reliable grounded electricity and climate control. I frequently heard calls

for "tropically tolerant technology," a term coined by Ghanaian software guru Herman Chinere

Hesse (the 'Bill Gates' of Ghana) to refer to the need for technologies designed by Africans for

the particularities of the contemporary African context, rather than constantly innovating ad-hoc

workarounds to adapt foreign imported technologies built for entirely different environments.

Yet the specifics of the *use* of computers, and the extant skills of local users versus the

assumptions about end-users built into the design of computers, are as strikingly absent from

localized Ghanaian discourse around tech-as-transformation as they are from foreign tech-

enthusiasts invested in the ideology of tech-as-transformation. This is particularly true in

discussions of the classrooms seen as the site of so much future potential. In the many tech meet-

ups, workshops, and conferences I attended over the course of fieldwork, few participants

mentioned the potential problem of low print literacy in English, especially among the poor who

were often the targets of mobile apps, much less the secondary obstacle of digital literacy among,

the bulk of teachers and students who have never seen a computer in person, much less used one,

and indeed among whom English language competence is often quite limited.

In fact when I posed the question to Herman Chinery-Hesse, founder of the prominent

Ghanaian software firm SOFTtribe, of how he accounts for low print and digital literacy rates in

locally-oriented software design, his response was "the [free] market will take care of such gaps

in education" (fieldnotes/recording 2012). He continued by elaborating the ways in which one of SOFTtribe's mobile apps for market women relies on numeric codes and simple icons to track sales. He was neither the first nor last to emphasize that my critical attitude in suggesting literacy could pose a problem for technologically-induced social change was obstructionist and defeatist and had no place in the contemporary Ghanaian zeitgeist.

In spite of the dismissive reactions of many of Ghana's tech enthusiasts, very real questions remain about what digital literacy looks like in Ghana across contexts—not only how it is socialized, but more broadly what we might learn from examining the insistence on *formal* teaching and learning of ICTs in a context where access to computers themselves is quite low, even as mobile computing on phones and small tablets is an increasingly common feature of everyday life.

Thus it bears paying attention to the question: what does the assumed ideal learner/user look like in the globally circulating rhetoric of technology-as-transformation that informs the ICT policy and practice? These values and assumptions are revealed in the use of the technology in ways that lie orthogonal to the values and assumptions around learning, knowledge, and proper behavior that are central in Ghanaian classrooms.

Situated (digital) literacies

Critical literacy scholarship (cf. Heath 1983; Street 1993; Ahearn 1994; Collins & Blot 2003; Schieffelin 2000) has long insisted that literacies must be seen as embedded in specific histories and ideological terrains, and arising from particular contexts of use. While this is useful in countering persistent assumptions about literacy as a universal skillset, it also points to the way in which children and other novices become literate: unavoidably, as steeped in and arising from these contexts of use. Scollon & Scollon (1984) and Goodman (1984) both discuss how children first acquire an understanding of how literacy objects such as books, pen and paper, or

keyboards are used as part of everyday routines, gradually demonstrating their understanding of how these objects are both functional and symbolically meaningful in particular social contexts and for particular social uses. These activities, such as learning to hold a book right side up or "type" a string of characters in a word processor, precede the actual ability of such novices to actually read from the book they are holding or produce correctly spelled words on the screen. In fact, as Scollon & Scollon (1984) point out with reference to their young son's gradual incorporation into the world of words, it is quite possible for a novice to engage meaningfully with a literacy object without yet being able to make the quite extensive leap to parsing iconic representations of ideas in print. While their four-year-old could type the command "run: trilogy" in order to call up his favorite computer game, it was quite some time before he could recognize the word "trilogy" separate from this context on the spine of a book. Goodman calls these pragmatic understandings upon which full literacy stands "initial literacy."

This, then, is precisely the problem that plagues Ghanaian ICT classrooms, given that computers are commonly thought of as being acontextual—pluck them out of one context and embed them in another and they operate in exactly the same way. Following this logic, the Ghana Education Service (GES) ICT syllabus begins right with the functional skills necessary to operate the machine: recognizing the parts of the machine, typing, creating and saving documents, organizing files into folders, and so on (GES 2012). For the majority of students who have never seen a computer before, let alone seen one in use for a particular purpose, this approach leaves untouched a whole host of practical embodied skills that precede the ability to type, not least of which is how you physically orient your body and your attention to particular aspects and features of a computer in order to achieve specific ends. How does one place one's hands on a keyboard? A mouse? How does one move the mouse in such a way as to coordinate the physical object in the world and deictic trajectory of the cursor on the screen? Ghanaian ICT

lessons therefore ultimately represent discursive knowledge of computers absent the practical knowledge undergirding their use.

Section Three:
Ethnographic Encounters with Pedagogy

The pedagogical landscape at Berekuso Basic

The Berekuso Basic school complex is set back from the road at the far southern end of town, and made up of separate blocks of cinderblock classrooms—one for the Basic School and the hɛHeadmistress's office, and across a large expanse of grass where the morning assembly was held, another smaller block for the Junior Secondary classrooms and the former staff break room that came to house the ICT lab. Teachers waiting for their class period often sat and chatted at a table that was set up each morning under a large shade tree near the JSS block. Closer to the road was the Headmistress' rather large house, alongside several simple one-room flats the several teachers and apprentice teachers who lived on-site.

Fig 2.01: Berekuso Basic teachers on break in the courtyard

Fig 2.02: Berekuso Basic compound seen from above. Primary block on the left, Headmistress and teacher housing directly ahead, and Junior Secondary block on the right.

The teachers themselves, a mix of men and women, were all lower-middle class and in their early 30s. With the exception of one of the ICT lecturers from the North and the maths lecturer who was a cousin of the Berekuso head chief and had an official role adjudicating local land disputes, all of teachers (and even the Headmistress herself) were first-language Ewe speakers who had been posted to the Eastern Region despite their minimal-to-average fluency in the local variety, Akuapem Twi. Given that the official language education policy expects all classes above Form Four to be taught entirely in English, this was, on paper, a non-issue. In reality, teachers and students operated in a constant state of translation and register adjustment, as students with minimal English and strong Akuapem Twi skills attempted to make themselves clear to teachers with minimal Akuapem but strong Asante Twi and English skills, and vice versa.

The catchment area of the school includes a wide area of newer developments encroaching on the extensive farmland surrounding Berekuso itself, so as students from town make their way to school along the main drag each morning, they are met by a ribbon of students in identical brown uniforms trailing along the several miles-long dirt road from the other direction, stepping aside for dusty taxis and the large vehicles of Ashesi staff and faculty dipping

and careening over the ruts in the road. While education is technically free at public schools, students are expected to provide their own pens and notebooks for each class and arrive in clean uniforms every day—the cost of which puts even government education beyond the reach of many Berekuso residents. Moreover the Basic school, like many others in rural areas, relies on an extensive array of additional fees to pay for everything from photocopies of exam papers to sports equipment for game days. Students often paid in installments of the equivalent of a few dollars at a time, but were expected to pay their debts in full before the frequent practice and full exams; while the schedule of such exams was never entirely clear to me, I knew it was an exam day if group of dejected students trailed back through the town late in the morning, having been sent home for lack of payment.
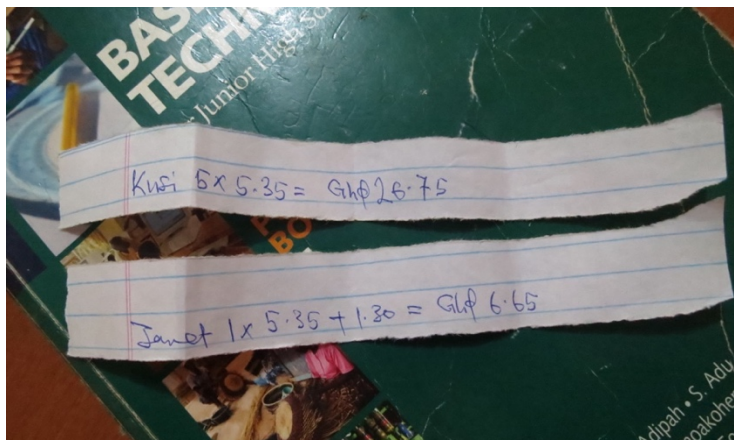
Fig 2.03: Slips of paper noting incidental student fees paid.

Ghana Education Service (GES)-approved textbooks were usually in short supply, such that students often shared textbooks in some classes while in others the teacher would resort to simply dictating notes from the one textbook available. There were few other books in the school; while there was technically a library, it consisted mostly of tattered books culled and donated from libraries in the US, and was kept entirely in the headmistress's office under lock and key.
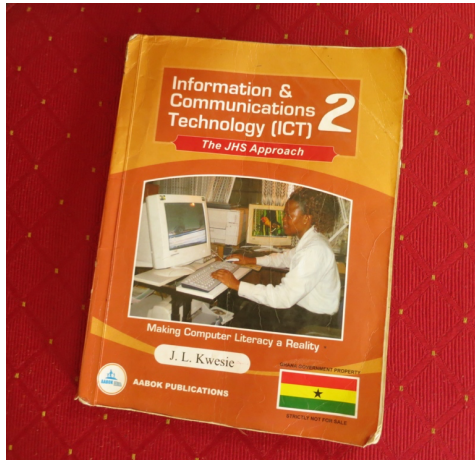
Fig 2.04: GES approved ICT textbook   Fig 2.05: Textbooks kept in a locked cabinet

The circumstances of teaching and learning at Berekuso Basic were contingent at best, and this was true of ICT lessons as well. For one, only one of the Berekuso-based teachers I met at DreamOval's iTeach 2013 ICT teacher training workshop and planned to follow into their classrooms ultimately taught ICT that school year. Instead, a third teacher who lived on-site, Komla, taught the JSS Form 2 ICT classes, while a young woman named Patience commuted three hours from a distant Accra exurb several times a week to teach the Basic ICT classes. The school had an ICT lab nearly a decade prior, but all the computers had been stolen soon after it was set up. The school's new ICT lab—with iron bars over the windows and door to prevent future thefts—had been set up the previous year by GE Africa's Ghana Office (henceforth GE Africa-Gh), who had in turn been tipped off that the school was a corporate responsibility opportunity in the making by Ashesi University.

GE Africa-Gh outfitted the former teachers' break room with fourteen small wooden cubicles facing the two side walls, in the style of the internet cafes of the 1990s and 2000s. While this undoubtedly looked quite handsome in the publicity photos they later took, it was not particularly conducive to learning. Not only were fourteen seats quite inadequate for teaching classes that ranged from forty to eighty students, the partitions between cubicles blocked students

79

from collaborating with each other in Practical sessions and made it difficult to see the teacher's white board at the front of the room.

Fig 2.06: Berekuso Basic ICT Lab, outfitted with laptops and posters from GE Africa

Fig 2.07: Junior secondary students using the ICT lab

GE Africa-Gh also donated eighteen used laptop computers, and thoughtfully loaded Ubuntu, a state-of-the-art open-source Linux-based operating system built by African developers, onto each machine. Alas, the national ICT curriculum and the final exams which draw from it are based on the Windows OS, which looks and functions quite differently. Moreover the laptops themselves were of all different models and makes, many of which were missing sound cards, working keyboards, and other critical functionality. The A/C chargers and mice provided were all different, requiring at least three different types of adapters (not provided by GE) and several extension surge protectors (also not provided) to fit the extant electrical plugs in the room. It took several volunteers from Ashesi's Computer Science program to wipe, re-load, upgrade, and

otherwise attempt to fix the machines, ten of which were functional on any given day even after the student volunteers' extensive efforts. Still worried about the temptation the laptops represented, the headmistress insisted the laptops and their attendant cables be packed up after every class and returned to a locked room in her home—an important safety precaution which nonetheless added considerable wear to the computers' already tenuous functionality. This also essentially meant there were no opportunities for students to engage with computers outside of limited formal instruction.

Fig 2.08: Junior secondary students with the laptops from the ICT lab packed into a DHL box, waiting outside the Headmistress's home.

In spite of all the work put into the lab by the GE, by the volunteers, and by the school itself, the ICT classroom stood unused for over a year because the cables connecting the school to Berekuso's main power line barely carried enough load to power the lightbulbs in the room— when indeed there was electricity at all, given the frequent load-shedding instituted by the government in 2013 and which has intensified into the present. GE declined to contribute towards the purchase of the correct grade of cable to wire the ICT lab or the labor to install it; as most parents were unable to pay the additional fee levied in an attempt to resolve the problem, it was only after a donation from Ashesi and my own quite self-interested personal donation that the lab was finally able to power the donated laptops in January of 2014, when ICT Practicals

began in earnest. Students had continued to be taught the requisite Theoretical ICT lessons in the meantime.

Hierarchy in pedagogy

Ghanaian society is organized by age-graded structures of hierarchy and authority at all levels—not merely in terms of the continued relevance of chieftancy structures in the majority of the country. MPs, supervisors, teachers, parents, older siblings, and so on in positions of seniority expect deference and respect, and the policing of proper displays of deference to the ideas and plans of those in positions of authority is not uncommon. Wayward students or young people who speak back or ask questions are often chastised, "Who are you?", or "You are Too Known!"

Ghana's hierarchical social organization lends itself to rote pedagogical methods that predominate in schools, itself a legacy of the British colonial system. Classroom time is split between 'theory' and 'practicals.' In the former, teachers typically dictate lessons, check students' notes for fidelity to the textbook, and encourage memorization through repetitive prompting routines. While the majority of prompting routines documented across societies are embedded in early language socialization settings, the prompting routines of the Ghanaian classroom share with the diverse routines discussed in Moore's (2011) review of the repetition literature an emphasis on the modeling of correct speech: "Prompting practices provide insights into ideologies about the acquisition of linguistic resources because they highlight which kinds of speech community members believe are important and must be taught as opposed to being learned without explicit instruction" (2011: 213). The very form that Ghanaian prompting routines take, where correct answers are first modeled and then prompted, fill-in-the-blank style, is telling of the kind of narrow fidelity to proper comportment expected of students in classroom settings. Consider the example below from a JSS Form 2 class (roughly equivalent to a U.S. 7th

grade) led by Komla. At the beginning of a Practicals class towards the end of the school year,

Komla is reviewing the steps necessary to create a folder on a desktop, something that had been

discussed previously in a theoretical lesson. As he writes on the board, Komla narrates each step,

first modeling both sides of the rote question and answer format as he goes:

Ex. 1

> K: We will do two (.) procedures.
>   One is what?
>   Copy and paste.
>   And the second one is what?
>   Cut and paste.
>   And the three--third one is what?
>   Renaming.
>   Okay?
>
> All students: Yes.

Having modeled the proper answers, Komla next indicates with the discourse markers 'alright'

and 'now' that the class will move on to practicing those steps. He prompts the students as

follows below, pausing to indicate that this time he expects the students to fill in the proper

answer, and indeed the students respond correctly in chorus. Komla then ratifies their collective

response by repeating it.

Ex. 2

> K: Alright.
>   We're now going to cut,
>   We're going to cut and what? (.)
> All students: Paste
> K: Paste.

Prompting routines of various kinds are universal in the socialization of children and other

novices (Duranti & Ochs 1997: 15; Demuth 1986; Scheiffelin 1990). This particular kind of

repetitive prompting practice in a formal institutional setting is commonly referred to in

scholarship on teacher-student interaction as an IRE sequence: the teacher/expert *Initiates* a

questioning sequence to which students are aware he or she knows the answer; a student provides a possible *Response*; and the teacher then *Evaluates* that response (Mehan 1979; Hellerman 2003; Lee 2007; Moore 2011). Decades of scholarship across educational contexts has identified such sequences as particularly effective for ensuring teacher control of classroom interaction; after all, within such a framework, "it is the teacher who decides who will participate, when students can take a turn, how much they can contribute, and whether their contributions are worthy and appropriate" (Hall & Walsh 2002: 188; cf. also Cadzen 1988; Barnes 1992; Gutierrez 1994). The centrality of this pattern of repetition in Ghanaian pedagogy is thus central in the cultivation and maintenance of hierarchal teacher-student dynamics. This specific phrasing, where a word or phrase is elided and replaced with "what?" (in the falling question intonation of Ghanaian English), to which the speaker's audience is meant to respond with the missing word, in is fact quite widely used as an authoritative rhetorical strategy in other speech events beyond the classroom. I have witnessed it leveraged—usually by older men—as a method of both demonstrating expertise and ensuring audience focus and engagement in settings such as church sermons, public lectures, and debates.

In both theory and practicals, students are sanctioned for asking questions, going 'off script,' adding their opinions or bringing in outside resources to add to what they has been given, or otherwise contradicting a teacher's authority. Many Ghanaians jokingly malign Ghanaian classroom practice as 'chew and pour': students take in what the teacher gives them and regurgitate it back. Knowledge is here conceived as a bounded unit, an object to be passed whole between teacher and student, rather than a malleable co-constructed entity. As will be discussed further below, the general lack of resources results in practicals carried out in the subjunctive, with teachers asking questions about hypothetical directives which students also answer hypothetically. In chemistry classes, for instance, students might be taught the mechanics of

magnesium's reaction with oxygen in rote fashion in their theoretical lesson, and then in the practical lesson the next day, merely engage in a call-and-response review with the teacher about what they might hypothetically do to bring about this reaction were the materials at hand to do so. Thus the scarcity and contingency of resources keeps classroom learning firmly in the realm of discursive knowledge. It is thus not uncommon for students to learn, memorize, and pass exams in such subjects without ever having done the experiment themselves or indeed, in the case of ICT exams, ever having laid eyes on a computer first hand.

The literacy ecologies undergirding pedagogical routines in rural Ghanaian theoretical classes are fundamentally informed both by this scarcity of print materials, and by the simultaneous insistence on texts as the ultimate source of reliable knowledge for the purposes of passing exams. This is not to suggest, however, that the classrooms themselves are inherently or singularly marked by scarcity, as many narratives of the third world insist. Rather, the flow of information in most classes, as the shorthand 'chew and pour' suggests, is organized around the fact that the teacher, as the person at the top of the classroom hierarchy, has the right to control the interpretation and memorization of the texts that are available. Often, this involves teachers dictating directly from textbooks as students take highly standardized notes: red ink and capital letters for headers, underlined with a straight-edge in blue ink, under which the body text of a given section is copied verbatim in blue ink.

Fig. 2.09: Student copying notes from a colleague's notebook to enter into her own notebook later.

If a student misses a class, they are often told exactly how many pages to skip in their notebooks when taking notes for the present class, such that they can go back and fill in the missing notes from classmates with complete fidelity to the original. As Coe (2005) indicates in her thorough examination of contradictions around knowledge and authority in classrooms in the Akuapem region,

> Students in Akuapem schools are learning to articulate and reproduce school knowledge, a knowledge useful primarily in its circulation from the blackboard to notes to exercises to the examination paper. The focus on the reproduction and circulation of words within this closed space renders the knowledge safe and appropriate for young people, without posing a threat to the more deeply respected knowledge of chiefs and elders. (2005: 151-152).

Coe's examination of the reproduction of knowledge in Ghanaian classrooms was focused specifically on the teaching of cultural knowledge that had traditionally been the exclusive purview of elders. And yet I would argue that her description of the way in which school knowledge makes its closed circuit from "blackboard to notes to exercises to the examination paper" holds true for most if not all teaching and learning in Ghanaian classrooms. Local notions of children's readiness to take on certain kinds of knowledge responsibly and the need for elders to maintain epistemic control over knowledge production and circulation are central here, and

provide the rationale for books and computers being kept locked in a back room in most schools, so that students won't 'spoil' them when unsupervised. It is precisely the teacher's role as arbiter and gatekeeper of this circulation of knowledge that puts them in a position of authority vis-a-vis their students.

My research participants often pointed to precisely this kind of non-critical, bounded transfer of unchanged and un-adapted knowledge as the source of incompetence at the highest levels of state bureaucracies charged with the steering of the country. When ill-conceived or outdated ideas are put forward by those in seniority, I was often told, younger workers' suggestions and more novel ideas are rejected out of hand—either because they are seen as threat to the status and authority of those in charge, or because younger workers are not seen as being experienced enough for their ideas to be taken seriously. Similarly, students are frequently punished for incorporating their own ideas or information from other sources into assignments, precisely because such syntheses depart from the script teachers have provided. While I heard about direct examples from students themselves of being marked down for bringing in outside ideas, stories of the archetypal rigid teacher who gives poor grades for exemplary work is in fact invoked most frequently as a way of pitting stereotypes of reactionary ineptitude in Ghana's bureaucracies against the kinds of radically destabilizing progress seen to be inherently attached to digital technologies and the internet. This archetype is so common, in fact, that a high ranking member of the ministry of education leaned on the trope when addressing a group of teachers at an ICT training workshop in September of 2013, in an effort to commend their professional development away from such teaching strategies as critical to the future of the country.

The majority of teachers I surveyed at that event, however, framed 'chew and pour' as a strategy of necessity. In the absence of resources to make practicals possible, teachers insisted, "students won't learn the material otherwise and will be at a disadvantage" (fieldnotes, 2013). In

this context, where even basic school resources like pencils and textbooks are scarce, and teachers are underpaid, devalued in their communities, and poorly supported professionally by the Ghana Education Service—all while expected to cover massive amounts of material in the state syllabi—teachers feel compelled to rely on the 'traditional' routines of repetitive rote learning. As one teacher put it, there is neither time nor space for the kinds of exploratory learning they are well aware are popular in the West; indeed many teachers told me they purposely eschew such methods because they feel students need to know the correct information in order to pass their exams, period.

Interestingly, several teachers also explained that the ICT certification they received in their teacher training colleges were taught by Ghanaian instructors who emphasized that acquiring digital literacy *requires* hands on, learner-centered activities—yet the instructors taught this lesson in the standard rote pedagogical style, an irony that was not lost on the teachers I spoke to. The majority of the teachers indicated that their students do not have access to computers at home *or* at school, and indeed that the majority have not seen a computer before beginning ICT lessons. Their ICT learning thus amounts to being asked to memorize information that essentially has no referent.

Bounded knowledge and the authority of fixed texts

Consider a Primary Two (P2) lesson on keyboards taught by Patience at the beginning of January 2014, before the school's ICT lab was functional. One might assume the kinds of initial literacy required for being able to usefully engage with a computer keyboard might include learning where to place one's hands for ease of typing, or even simply familiarizing oneself with the very notion that pressing certain buttons arranged just so will render visible the corresponding characters on the computer screen above the keyboard, given that typing and writing, while considered analogues, are mechanically quite different. And yet, despite the fact

that the majority of the students in the P2 class had never seen a computer in use before, much less used one themselves, the first question Patience asks her students is, "What do we use a keyboard for? If we want to write on the computer, what will you do?"

But this would assume that learning to *use* a keyboard is the underlying learning objective of this lesson. Attention to the flow of the lesson itself suggests otherwise, namely that the aim is circumscribed by the circulation of discursive knowledge alone. This plays out in at least two dimensions; first, Patience's repeated emphasis on the textbook as the key source of the relevant information, and second, on the constant abstraction of the knowledge-in-play away from practical, embodied ways of knowing.

The lesson begins with a great deal of effort and attention put into ensuring every desk of three students has a copy of the P2 ICT text open to page 48, where the image of a keyboard was rendered in crisp black and white with color coding applied to the three central rows of letters:

Fig. 2.10: Rendering of the image of the keyboard in the Primary ICT textbook

Once the subject of the lesson—typing—has been established, Patience continues in English by asking the students what they see on the keyboard. No response. She reminds them the keyboard in question is on page 48 of the texts in front of them. Still no response. She then emphatically declares for the first of many times, "Look into the book, not into my face!" Perhaps thinking language is the barrier to students' comprehension, Patience then switches into Twi for an

extended questioning sequence in which she reformulates the question "What do you see on the keyboard" again and again in increasingly focused form:

Ex. 3

	Utterance	Focus	Student gaze
01	What do you— what, what do you **see**?	See	At text
02	What do you see over **there**?	There	At teacher
03	Dɛn na wuhu? *What is it you see?*	What	At teacher
04	Wuhu dɛn? *You see what?*	See	At teacher
05	Dɛn na wuhu? *What is it you see?*	What	At teacher
06	Keyboard ne so no, dɛn na wuhu? *On the keyboard, what is it you see?*	Keyboard, What	On 'keyboard,' down to the textbooks
07	What do you see on the **keyboard**?	Keyboard	At the text
08	Neama bɛn na wuho ɛwɔ keyboard ne so bi? *What are some of things you see them on the keyboard?*	What things	Back to teacher
09	Ɛbi ne dɛn? *What are some of them?*	Some things	At teacher
10	Neama bɛn saa na ɛwɔ keyboard ne so? *What things really are on the keyboard?*	What things (really)	At teacher

In doing so, she directs the scope of students' attention into narrower and narrower spaces on the page, using and reformulating various different phrasings with different grammatical and prosodic focus, in an effort to clarify where she wants them to look for the answer. She begins in English, asking the students what they see, with prosodic final emphasis on 'see.' At this point most students are looking down at their shared textbooks, so she attempts to ratify this action by asking "What do you see over there," with an emphasis on 'there'—as in, there where you are already looking. Possibly this English formulation is confusing to students, as most lift their gaze to the teacher at this point, many with knit brows. Patience at this point switches into Twi, fronting the the word *dɛn*, or 'what,' and using the grammatical focus marker *na* to put *dɛn* under focus.

Fig. 2.11: "*What do you see over **there**?*"

Not receiving any uptake from the students, who continue to look at her as she paces around the room attempting to engage students more directly, she reformulates the question with a different focus strategy, instead fronting the verb rather than the object. Still no uptake. She reverts back, in line 05, to the grammatical focus strategy. In line 06, she attempts to elaborate on the 'what' she is referring to. In the first clause of her utterance, she fronts 'keyboard,' asking in a specific locative construction that translates to roughly '*on top of* the keyboard'; in the second clause, she again recycles the formulation of the question which puts 'what' under grammatical

focus. The word 'keyboard' finally triggers the students to look back down at the representation of a keyboard in their textbooks.

Fig. 2.12: "Keyboard ne so no, dɛn na wuhu?"/"*On the keyboard, what is it you see?*"

While they collectively search the page to make sense of the instruction 'on top of the keyboard'—after all, this could be interpreted as *above* the keyboard in the two-dimensional space of the page—Patience translates her line 06 utterance into English, asking with sentence-final prosody, "What do you see on the **keyboard**?" In some ways this translation clarifies the locative confusion of the previous Twi utterance: they are meant to look *on* the keyboard, not *on top/above* it. Having finally gotten the students' consistent attention to the texts where they can search out the answer, Patience now attempts another narrowing of the scope of that attention, asking in line 08:[2]

Neama	*bɛn*	*na*	*wuho*	*ɛwɔ*	*keyboard*	*ne*	*so*	*bi?*
Things	what	FOC	2PL-see	it-LOC	keyboard	DET	on	some/small

In this more complex utterance, the focus is still technically on 'what.' The reset of the clause is replete with more specific qualifications of that 'what'—not just that the 'what' in question is on the keyboard, but that they are quantifiable *things* that are located *on* the keyboard itself, and that

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[2] Interlinear gloss key: FOC=focus marker, 2PL=2nd person plural, LOC=locative, DET=determiner.

92

she only needs to know some of these things. Patience's construction of this utterance is not unlike that of Italian families at the dinner table coaxing children to try new foods by using diminutives (Ochs et al. 1996), only here Patience's aim is to minimize the pressure on students in coming up with a correct response. Unfortunately this is ineffectual, and the majority of students look back to the teacher for further clarification. She attempts repeating the portion of her previous utterance that emphasized the minimal nature of her request—"what are some of them?"—and in increasing frustration asks, "what things are really on the keyboard?"

Having failed after this long sequence of questioning with increasing specificity about the nature of her question and location of the answer, Patience then bookends this sequence by again insisting, this time in Twi, "Don't look at my face, it is in the book!" While this sequence is rich in potential avenues to explore, what I wish to draw attention to here is the great effort required to successfully direct students' attention to a particular aspect of an iconic representation in response to a question. In this extended exercise, we can read (pardon the pun), on the one hand, the disparities in competence in various literacies co-existing within the literacy regime of Berekuso Basic, even before teachers' efforts to teach digital literacy skills. On the other, Patience's insistent efforts to focus students' attention to the text points to the Ghanaian school system's emphasis on the authority of bounded texts to contain school knowledge over students'—or even teachers'—interpretations of that knowledge. This insistence on both the primacy and purported transparency of the text pervades classroom practice.

There are many forms of literacy and knowledge production being socialized here, not least of all the need to attend to texts in particular ways in the course of a class. The students here are orienting to Patience as the source of knowledge, while Patience, a novice teacher herself, is trying to direct them towards the book as the ultimate arbiter of bounded knowledge. Both are orienting to different aspects of the hierarchialized system of knowledge and authority, yet the

students in this class cannot yet control enough situated pre-literacy to orient to and parse specific iconic representations out of the larger crowded field of the page. Even if they were more immersed in the experience and practice of parsing print icons, the teacher orients to knowledge as a bounded textual object to be memorized and that cannot be changed, not something that can be acted upon and possibly changed or explored from different angles.

Having eventually pulled answers such as "spacebar," "numbers," and "ABCD" out of the students, Patience draws students' attention to the way in which the keyboard pictured in their textbook—and on her own laptop, which she has brought along as a kind of teaching aid—organizes the letters into three rows. In the textbook, these rows have been color coded. In an extended sequence, Patience asks students to identify the letters in each row by color, starting with the top. As she does so, she walks around the classroom holding her laptop out in front of her, facing the students:

Ex. 4

1   So letters bɛn ana ɛyɛ blue no?
So what are the letters that are blue?
((tracing her finger back and forth along the top row of letters on her keyboard))

Fig. 2.13: "All these are the blue ones."

2   Wei ninyaa na ɛyɛ blue no.
All these are the blue ones.

94

3   Wahu? Wei ninyaa na ɛyɛ blue no.
     Have you seen? All these are the blue ones.

4   Wei ninyaa na ɛyɛ blue no.
     All these are the blue ones.
     ((pointing to the keyboard on the page in front of a set of three students,
     then back to her keyboard))

Fig. 2.14: Patience points to the textbook, then to her computer

5   Blue no ni.
     That's the blue one.

6   Wohwɛ ɛha a, blue yɛ ɛha.
     When you look here, it's blue here.

7   Wohwe book nimu. Ninyaa wɔ book nimu.
     Look inside the book. All is in the book.

Fig. 2.15: "When you look inside the book and you follow, you will understand."

95

8   Wohwɛ book nimu na wofollow a, wobɛteaseɛ.
      When you look inside the book and you follow, you will understand.

In drawing students' attention to the similarities between the iconic representation of a keyboard

in the textbook and the actual keyboard on her laptop, Patience provides slightly more context

for the disembodied keyboard in the text, possibly even suggesting the metonymic relationship

between the image and the physical computer as a whole comprised of components. Her

reference to the top row of keys on her own entirely black laptop as "the blue ones," (and later to

the middle and bottom rows as "red" and "yellow" respectively), and her ultimate insistence that

it is the color-coded textbook abstraction of the object that deserves their focus ("all is in the

book; when you look inside the book and you follow, you will understand") speaks to overall

learning goals focused on discursive rather than practical knowledge. The physical keyboard and

its embodied use—actual hands on actual keyboards learning the position of the keys as indexes

of particular letters, in the same way that Merleau-Ponty (1962) discusses a blind man learning to

extend his sense of the world to the end of his cane—is explicitly not the focus here (cf. also

Bateson 1972).

As the lesson progresses, the color codes become mnemonic devices for memorizing

which letters are in which rows—the knowledge of which is treated as an end in itself. Having

drawn the connection between her laptop and the textbook image, Patience sets the laptop aside

and asks students to "mention some of the names of the letters" in each colored row. As students

call out "blue" letters, she writes each on the board, separated by a comma. One the row is

complete, she draws students' attention to the fact that the first several letters, "Q, W, E, R, T,

Y" can be pronounced as a word, thus making this the "Qwerty row." The class then continues

with the "red letters," which Patience tells them is also called the "home row." Eventually she

runs out of horizontal space on the chalkboard, and writes the bottommost row of keys, the

"yellow" letters, on a second square of board. The eventual mapping of the textbook image onto the board looked like this:

Ex. 5

Q, W, E, R, T, Y, U, I, O, P   Z, S, C, V, B, N, M

A, S, D, F, G, H, J, K, L

Just as there is no need to clarify that "qwerty" is a particular kind of keyboard which supports a typing style born out of a specific historical moment (cf. Gitelman 2006) or that the "home row" is called thus because it traditionally refers to where the hands return to rest on the keyboard, this representation on the chalkboard does not further students' understandings of the physical act of typing. Certainly in the absence of computers on which to practice such skills, achieving a learning objective of fostering typing skills is more or less futile. Yet as the earlier example of Komla and his Junior High students grapping with the challenge of accommodating the new literacy object of the computer into extant pedagogical routines suggests, the presence or absence of computers did not (at least at the time of research) catalyze a shift in the durative pedagogical and cultural preferences for rote memorization in the classroom, as G.E. Africa and their counterparts had doubtless hoped. Instead, as countless ethnographies tracing the introduction of novel print literacies across myriad contexts have demonstrated, computers and the novel digital literacies they entail are taken up as part of the already-underway reproduction of social life. As such, Patience's teaching strategy of co-constructing a second representation of the keyboard with the class which highlights only the letters in each row of keys (and not what the keys bearing the letters 'do') is in keeping with the broader "chew and pour" pattern of introducing new information and then creating pedagogical opportunities for students to mirror it back.

Classroom routines and the nature of knowledge

Just before this section of talk, each pair of students has taken turns creating a new folder on the desktop of the lab's fourteen computers. At the outset of the transcript below the teacher, Komla, is reviewing the lesson the students have had the day prior in their theory lesson by writing out the steps to cut and paste a document into their new folders. As discussed earlier, Komla narrates each step as he writes, modeling both sides of the rote question and answer format as he does so, and then indicates that the class will move on to practicing the steps he has reviewed.
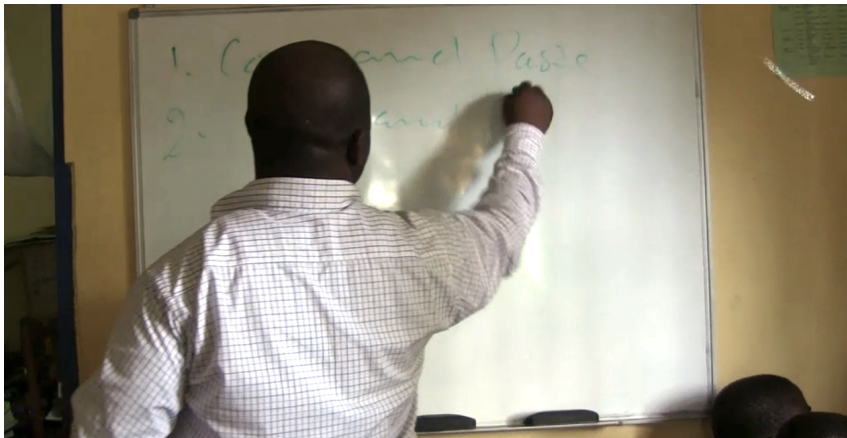
Fig. 2.16: Komla writing out the steps to create a folder on the ICT lab's white board.

He prompts the students to respond with the previously modeled answers, pausing to indicate that this time he expects an answer, and correctly in chorus. Komla then ratifies their collective response by repeating it.

Ex. 6

K: Alright.
                We're now going to cut,
                We're going to cut and what? (.)

All students: Paste
K: Paste.

Rather than direct students to the computers, however, in order to practice cutting and pasting on the machines themselves, the teacher directs the students to a far more routine literacy object—in fact the object the class would return to normally in the absence of the computers for a practical lesson—their notebooks. Having thus oriented their collective attention, he calls on one student, Eman, to read aloud from the dictated notes he had taken down in his notebook the day before, indicating which portion he should read in almost telegraphic fashion:

Ex. 7

> K: In your notebook,
>   Ehhhh, Eman. Eheh, your notebook.
>   The first step.
>   Copy and Paste.
>   We are using the first (.) process.

Possibly because of the absence of a clear verb indicating what he should do, or perhaps because of the potential confusion over which literacy object (computer or notebook) he is meant to attend to, Eman requests confirmation and permissions to read, which he receives:

Ex. 8

> E: (Inaudible) please sir, I may read?
>
> K: Read the first step.
>
> E: 'First method.'
>
> K: Yes.
>
> E: 'Let us assume that the folder you want to copy is located on the desktop, and that the name of the folder is JHS.
>   Right click on the folder for a pop-up menu.'
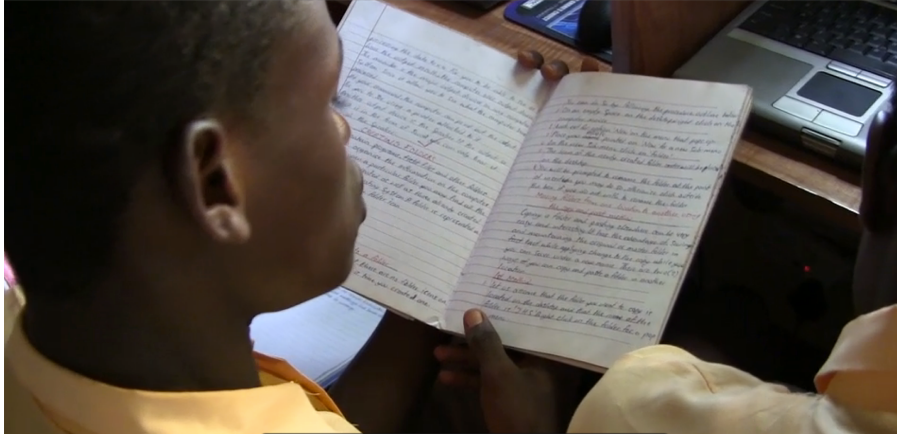
Fig. 2.17: Eman reading aloud the steps to create a folder from his notebook.

As Eman finishes painstakingly reading this first paragraph in his notes, he looks up for confirmation from the teacher as to whether he should continue or not. The teacher then intervenes to issue the next step. At this juncture, confusion again arises as to the teacher's intended referent. Is he merely repeating the process aloud *as if* they were physically going through the steps, and therefore referring to an imaginary folder that exists in the abstract within in the list of proper steps to be repeated and memorized for the final state exams, or is the teacher literally referring to the folders on the desktops of each computer in front of the students?

Ex. 9

K: Alright. (.) Ah, the- the folder you have just created,

All students: Yes.

K: Right click on that folder.
                 Right click on that folder.
                 ((Students look at their notebooks and each other))

                 Your *own* folder you created, right click on *that* folder.
                 Right click!
                 ((Students' heads snap up to look at the screens and reach for the mouse))

Komla continues repeating the instruction with greater and greater firmness and volume until it is clear to all of the students that they are meant to actually carry out an action, rather than the usual

routine of repeating what is asked of them from their notebooks.

Ex. 10

    K: Right click.
                      Right click.
                      Right click on that folder you have just created.

That the students would be reticent to act without absolute clarity about what is being asked of them is illustrated by what happens next. One student in particular is struggling to interpret the unfamiliar instruction 'right click' and is handling the mouse awkwardly. The teacher calls him out and strikes him (corporal punishment being an extremely commonplace disciplinary tactic in Ghanaian schools) for not properly following instructions:

Ex. 11

    K: Prince!

    P: Sir!

    K: Right click! Is that your right click?
                      ((knocks him forcefully on the back of the head))
                      Eh? What is that? Is that right click? Eh? Where are you clicking?
                      Where are you clicking?
                      Bring the cursor to the folder you have created.

Fig. 2.18: "Is that your right click?!"

Komla then repeats this same process with a female student nearby who is also struggling, but at this point the teacher leans in to correct her hand placement on the mouse and direct her to move the cursor towards her folder.

101

Fig. 2.19: Komla modeling how to use the mouse to right-click.

The class continues in a similar fashion from there for another half hour.

The good learner and the new literacy object

Clearly, having this new object and locus of literacy practices without clear new pedagogical models and routines to make sense of them leads to confusion—both because the actual object is present in classroom memorization routines that presume its absence, but also because it is an object that resists the disciplinary expectation of normative Ghanaian classrooms. Used to the spoken repetition of subjunctive actions they are not meant to actually carry out, students have been primed to carefully copy notes, attend to the teacher's prompts based on those notes, and seek the proper answers from their notebooks—one bounded loop of the transfer of knowledge that itself indexes the hierarchical positionings of students and teacher vis-à-vis that knowledge. The language the teacher uses to direct the students to attend to the computers and physically practice the skills sounds, for all intents and purposes, identical to the teacher's prompts within the repetition routines the students are used to which do not require (and in fact actively forestall) the students' active hands-on participation.

Compounding this confusion, a computer is not just any object: as discussed in section one, it is an object that has been designed, literally coded, along implicit but invisibilized ideological assumptions about the end-user and the values and skillsets they should ideally bring to bear on

that object, and the kinds of pedagogical routines into which the object will be embedded.

Visible in this interaction is the juxtaposition of two very different notions of the "good" learner. The good Ghanaian learner is deferential and attentive, a respectful recipient and reproducer of bounded knowledge, who waits for instruction rather than inappropriately taking individual initiative. The "good" learner is presumed both ideal and universal in the design of the machines, as Warschauer and Ames (2010) discuss in their work on the design imperatives embedded in the XO laptop, is a creative, self-starting, active learner, who explores multiple solutions to the same task. These embedded values are fundamentally at odds with the moral underpinnings of the normative Ghanaian pedagogical routine, with its emphasis on the absolute authority of the teacher to initiate student action and the necessity of complete fidelity to the codified steps and rules for carrying out that action.

Coda:

Some months after the ICT lab was finally up and running, GE Africa-Gh sent a two-man delegation with a photographer to see what kind of progress students had made. They led the ICT lesson for the JSS Form 2 class that afternoon, instructing students to open Word and type out a sentence of their own devising. Given how many days ICT lessons had to be cancelled because the power was out or the donated laptops were simply not working properly in the previous months, how little practice each student had with a computer in that scant instructional time, and how uncomfortable and unfamiliar they felt engaging with the keyboard and mouse as a result, it was no surprise to me or to the teachers that students struggled with this seemingly simple instruction. The GE-Africa employees were appalled, and blustered quite a bit about the misuse of their company's generous donation. I found myself perplexed by their reaction: surely, as Ghanaians who had grown up in the country, they would know what kind of learning rote instructional time would allow, especially in an over-enrolled, relatively rural school without

103

reliable electricity or access to a generator? After the lesson was over, I attempted to broach

exactly that topic with the men--but while they were enthusiastic about discussing tech in Ghana

more broadly with me, I could get no foothold on the topic of the particular challenges of rote

pedagogies and practical lessons. They remained convinced that the technology itself should

have been straightforward to learn, and therefore should have produced educational

improvements— the Berekuso Basic students' slow skills development was clearly due to either

the teachers not doing their jobs properly, or to student laziness. If envoys of the world of tech

and development remain so firmly within the mindset of technology-as-transparent and

technology-as-transformation, even in the face of counter-evidence, then it may be a long while

indeed before Ghana sees the kinds of transformations its technologists tout.

CHAPTER THREE:
The Honor Code

Introduction

Speaking before the 8th sophomore class to be inducted into the Ashesi University Honor Code, founder and president Patrick Awuah encouraged his audience, "We must challenge ourselves to be the ones who will change this continent. We will be the beautiful ones that this continent needs and we must have the conviction that we can do it." But who are the 'beautiful ones' to whom Dr. Awuah was referring?

Ayi Kwei Armah's classic Ghanaian novel <u>The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born</u> describes a post-independence landscape of pervading decay and rot, from physical infrastructure fallen into shambles, to the disarray of socialist state architecture where politicians and policemen line their pockets with impunity while ordinary citizens struggle through increasingly grinding poverty. Surrounded by a populace trying to survive and get ahead by any means necessary, Armah's nameless 'everyman' protagonist, a bureaucrat working for the railroad authority, earns the scorn of family and friends alike when he turns down a bribe from a businessman. Repeatedly faced over the course of the novel with the failed promise of independence, and with the re-entrenchment of corrupt power as it continually changes hands but remains consolidated at the top, the Man despairs of ever seeing change in his lifetime. By the end of the novel we learn the title refers to an imagined fictional future generation of 'beautyful' ones who could remain pure in spite of post-independence exigencies and make 'ethical' choices without suffering negative ramifications.

Arma's novel was published in 1968, a scant decade after Ghana became the first African country to wrest independence from colonial powers. Yet his powerful description of how everyday corruption becomes naturalized as an inescapable survival strategy in a context increasing scarcity and stalled development reads as strikingly contemporary. In my own first

experiences in Ghana nearly a decade ago, I sensed a fatalistic resignation to an unchanging status quo and the impossibility of action towards change as a constant palpable presence underlying conversations with friends, colleagues, and strangers alike.

Awuah is not alone in feeling that Ghana is on a precipice of a radical shift. Spurred by recently found oil reserves, the rapid penetration of mobile and internet technologies, and the emergence of tech entrepreneurship as a viable means of support, those same friends and colleagues now excitedly articulate flipped narratives: take pride in the local; produce homegrown innovation so cutting edge that the whole world comes begging. All hail the internet; Africa is the future. The seemingly intractable problems have not disappeared, but the deeply felt resignation, at least among the aspiring middle class, seemed to have vanished. Many refer to the loose consensus of like-minded convergence in digitally-mediated and offline spaces as the 'New Ghana.'

This diffuse assemblage of people, ideas, and on-and-offline spaces is characterized by such ideals as a core belief in the transformative 'horizontalizing' potential of digital technologies, the valorization of youthful initiative and entrepreneurship over enduring top-down hierarchies, an urgent privileging of action over deliberation, and a sense of reclaiming pride in Ghanaian-ness by rejecting resignation to corruption and slow development. In articulating alternative future possibilities for the nation in digitally-mediated spaces driven by these ideals, the denizens of the New Ghana pose a moral challenge to the status quo.

This chapter engages with the New Ghana's moral challenge, from the resignation to the lost promise of independence characterized by The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born to an active taking up of the mantle of the 'beautyful' generation charged with urgent action to catch up to a future already in progress that is in danger of passing them by. Specifically, I trace the ways in which students at Ashesi University, an elite university arguably at the core of the New

Ghana, are socialized into the university Honor Code and its indexes of corruption and transformation. I argue first that in attending to this institutional synchronization, we witness—in response to Appadurai's (2013) call for scholarship attending to the 'future as cultural fact'—the incarnation of future selves and obligations. While I consider students' relative uptake of and resistance to these institutional efforts elsewhere in my larger project, here I wish to draw attention to the shape of the practices themselves as evidence of a particular vision and scale of the future, projected onto contemporary modes of Ghanaian personhood. Ultimately, this ethical transformation involves reframing students' notions of "corruption" and "cheating" away from local logics of strategic necessity to a logic of 'universally' ethical behavior in which context is irrelevant to moral action. In locating the moral gaze in these global corporations outside of Ghana in these global corporations and asking students to internalize this gaze to police themselves and their peers, Ashesi ultimately asks students to suspend their participation in local logics of sociality and support networks—even as they are being groomed as the ethical generation that will transform the continent.

Ashesi University as Proleptic Imaginary

Ashesi University is a computer science and entrepreneurship-focused university just outside of Ghana's capital of Accra. The university was founded in 2005 by Patrick Awuah, a Ghanaian software engineer who left Ghana as a student at the height of the country's economic tumult in the 80s. Awuah was educated at Swarthmore and Stanford and worked for years at Microsoft before feeling compelled to return home in the early 2000s to contribute to the nation. Though the university has only just celebrated its 10-year anniversary, Ashesi and Awuah have already garnered considerable worldwide attention, including Awuah's McArthur Genius Award in 2015 (MacFound.org, 2015).

Working from Awuah's assessment that the core of the country's pervasive problems is an ongoing crisis of leadership, the university is built around the active cultivation of "a new generation of ethical entrepreneurial leaders for Africa" (Ashesi University, 2016). Though he initially explored many possible avenues to addressing this crisis in leadership after his return to Ghana in the early 2000s, Awuah ultimately decided on a university with the logic that the top percentage of people who attend university in Ghana are by default its future leaders. Modeled on his experiences both in Microsoft's intensively de-centralized workspace and as an undergraduate in Swarthmore's immersive critical thinking-focused liberal arts experience, the university is envisioned simultaneously as a U.S. liberal arts institutions and tech start-ups: small, with few initial resources, running on the extreme dedication of the parties involved, wary of codifying and institutionalizing too quickly in order to remain flexible and responsive to emerging needs, and built laterally with an emphasis on informality and equal respect.

Initially, the school was run out of professors' homes in the Ghanaian capital of Accra. When it expanded to its present location just outside the Greater Accra region, the campus was built on schedule and on budget, with no misappropriated funds or bribes to the contractors—practically unheard of in a country where contracting delays and graft associated with building schemes are so commonplace as to be almost expected. Nearly every aspect of the campus, from the initial contracting to the architectural design to its curriculum to its hiring practices, was consciously designed as a radically different moral and aesthetic space from the Ghanaian mainstream. The building itself is designed with open catwalks facing a central courtyard, with the school's impressive library as the centerpiece, to model transparency and the priority of diverse knowledge-gathering, respectively. The terraced courtyard, where all-school town halls are held at the start of every term, was purposely landscaped to echo Swarthmore's well-known amphitheater.

Fig. 3.01: Ashesi's courtyard and library as seen from one of the open-air hallways around the perimeter. Recycling bins are visible at the lower right corner of the image.

The school's elaborate waste-water reclamation and treatment station is regularly held up as a testament to the university's emphasis on sustainability. It is also intended to be a model for what the nation's current water infrastructure could achieve, as well a comment on the public sector's moral failure to meet national needs for safe water. It is currently the only institution in the nation where water is safe to drink straight from the tap, and the only institution in the country with a an official recycling program. Tellingly, the campus is such that visitors frequently exclaim, "It's so beautiful, it's like we're not in Ghana" (fieldnotes, 2013; 2014).

Academic access to this rarified space is itself rarified. In addition to high scores on the West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), students are expected to write admissions essays and undergo a rigorous interview with faculty and deans—a far more demanding process than admission to public universities, which are based on WASSCE scores alone. In addition to aiming for an even ratio of male to female students, the school is continuously recruiting students from beyond Ghana to make the university space increasingly pan-African. While the administration of the school is constantly looking for ways to offer more scholarships and financial aid, the tuition is quite expensive. The founder and staff often talk

about the unusual cost of tuition as a conscious means of emphasizing the value of a good education and modeling the importance of being willing to pay for it.

While other New Ghana spaces implicitly model alternative possibilities for Ghanaian personhood by virtue of their horizontal organizational structures, Ashesi's curriculum, and especially its Honor Code, is explicitly designed to socialize students into branded modes of digitally-mediated, ethical self-representation as a means of transforming the continent (Ashesi, 2010). Students are repeatedly coached *not* to use the honorifics and titles for their professors that they have grown up equating with deference and respect. Awuah, who walks the halls in a zip-up hoodie over his button down shirts and often joins groups of students for lunch, is 'Patrick' to all and sundry.

Fig. 3.02: Patrick Awuah eating lunch with Freshman, left (credit: E. Gwumah), and discussing logistics with Dr. Ayorkor Korsah, professor of Robotics, right.

While faculty at mainstream institutions penalize students if they cannot reproduce the content of their lectures in their assignments (a practice often satirized as "chew and pour"), Ashesi faculty encourage students to incorporate resources from beyond the classroom while maintaining strict expectations around plagiarism. Students are taught to use multiple forms of social media in their coursework and in mandatory workshops, expected to engage in class discussions online and via

the mobile messaging service WhatsApp outside of class time, and exhorted to exhibit "reliability" by cultivating their original perspectives as a coherent personal "brand" across face-to-face and digitally-mediated interactions. Where Ghana is vernacularly viewed as operating on 'Ghana Maybe Time,' a tongue in cheek glossing of the GMT time zone, Ashesi emphasizes the importance of being on time as an international expectation, with a strict rule barring students from class if they are more than five minutes late. While in most of Ghana, the label "too known" (Sumprim 2006) is used to shame and silence, Ashesi actively encourages students to voice their opinions and speak up about their ideas, even and especially to their elders and betters. Students are also held accountable to the *school's* brand.

Fig. 3.03: An Ashesi-branded bookmark reading, "Ashesi: Educating a new generation of leaders for Africa."

At one all-school meeting in 2013, the Awuah cautioned students about using inappropriate language or behaviors when referencing the university in their Twitter posts, reminding them that their ability to leverage the prestige of the Ashesi reputation in their own futures depended on their individual participation in the brand in the present. Such moral expectations mirror the cohesive, mobile, and flexible neoliberal personae Gershon (2014) argues have become central to the hiring practices of US corporations. Indeed, as Ashesi students are being cultivated as "the

111

next generations of ethical entrepreneurial leaders" who will transform the continent, they are increasingly recruited by transnational corporations such as Goldman Sachs or General Electric, rather than embedding themselves in the complexities of navigating enduring local hierarchies with a "too known" mindset.

The Honor Code

I was drawn to Ashesi as a locus where digital literacies were being actively socialized as a core component of cultivating the technologically-savvy, mobile denizens of the 'New Ghana.' It quickly became clear, however, that Ashesi's goal of "cultivating ethical entrepreneurial leaders for Africa" entails not only the conscious design of the spaces in which learning occurs, but an intensive process of remaking moral personhood at multiple scales of audience and obligation. This process of refashioning involves myriad, sometimes competing, practices of socialization into diverse skillsets and ethical modes of being in the world, as illustrated by the school's widely posted learning goals, which include critical thinking, multimodal communication skills, and "effective and flexible" technological competence:
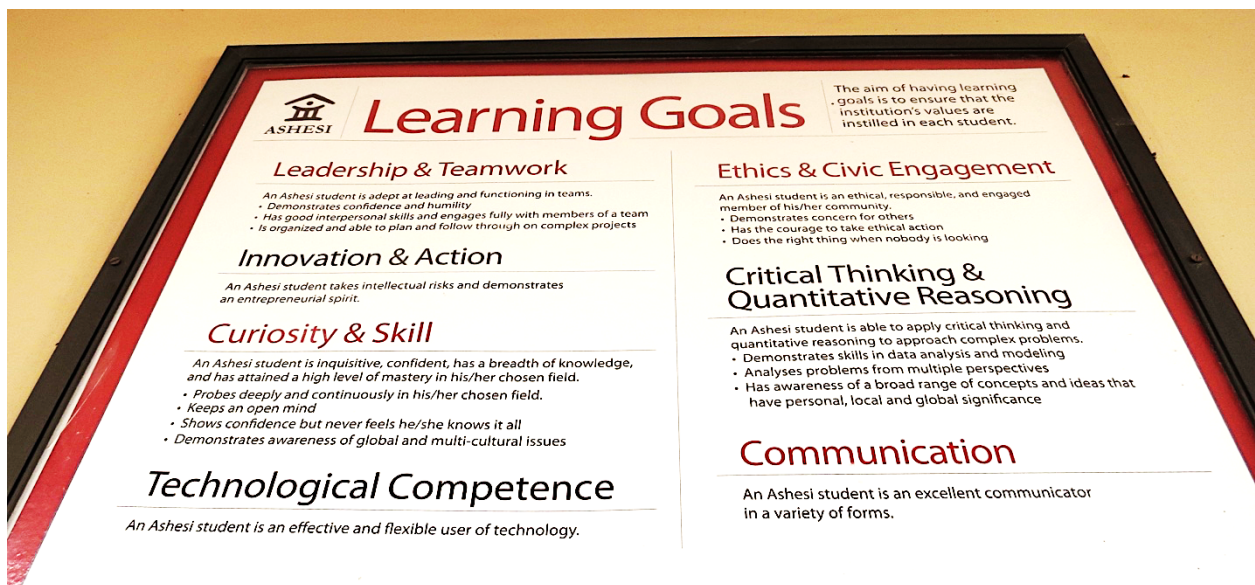

Fig. 3.04: The Ashesi learning goals, which are framed and posted in every classroom on campus.

The core of Ashesi's transformational efforts lies in its Honor Code. At its simplest, the Honor Code is a vow students take to not cheat during Ashesi's infamously proctor-less exams (Ashesi 2010) and to actively report other students who do. When the Honor Code is discussed, however, it is always embedded in a broader future-oriented narrative that hinges on moral values of trust, reputation, and branding located *beyond* the classroom. Students are repeatedly instructed by older students, faculty, and alumni that to join the Honor Code is to take part in the legacy of the established Ashesi 'brand' of intensive trustworthiness. If they embody the ethical brand in their actions *and* mediated self-representations, they will be capable of transforming their future (presumed corrupt) Ghanaian colleagues by example. The central aim of the university, after all, is to create ethical individual leaders who can be plugged into a corrupt system and transform it from the inside out. Students are told that the Ashesi brand will be their calling card to employment with prestigious transnational corporate entities who would not, it is implied, ordinarily trust the scruples of an African employee.

The pledge at the core of Ashesi's Honor Code is based closely on that of US Military Academy, "A cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do," (USMA, 2016), which is itself modeled on the earliest academic honor code in the American university system, from the College of William & Mary in 1736:

> "As a member of the William and Mary community, I pledge on my honor not to lie, cheat, or steal, either in my academic or personal life. I understand that such acts violate the Honor Code and undermine the community of trust, of which we are all stewards" (wm.edu, 2016).

While Awuah initially suggested the idea of an Honor Code to the student body, the process of creating it and setting it into action was a collaborative effort involving students, faculty, and staff:
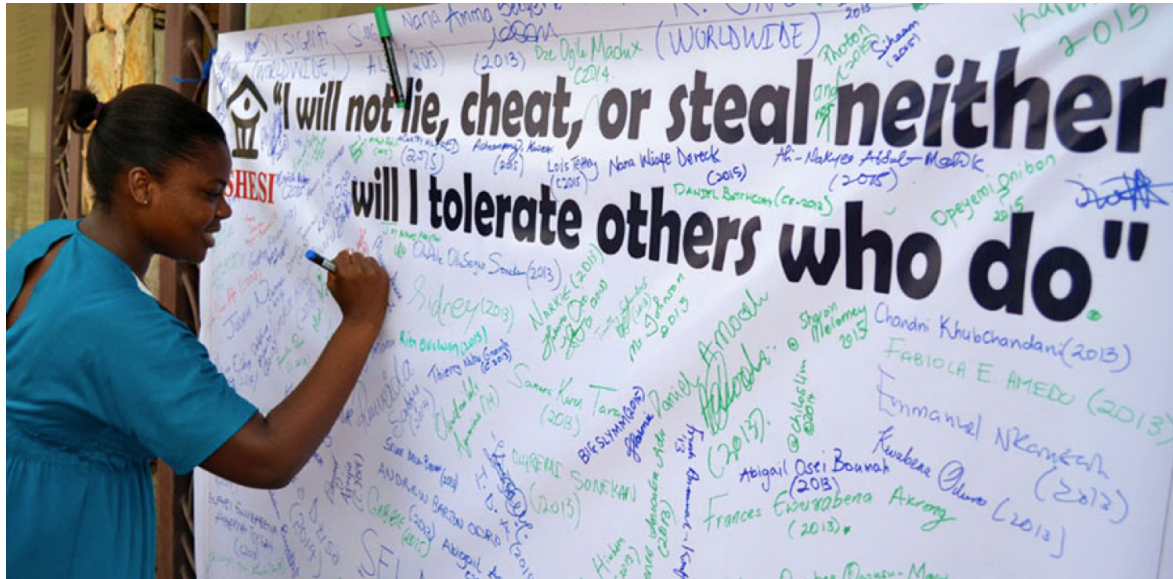
Fig. 3.05: A student signing a banner emblazoned with the Ashesi Honor Code (credit: E. Gwumah).

> This year we challenged our students to craft an honor code themselves. There's a very vibrant debate going on on campus now over whether they should have an honor code, and if so, what it should look like. One of the students asked a question that just warmed my heart. Can we create a perfect society? Her understanding that a student-crafted honor code constitutes a reach towards perfection is incredible. Now, we cannot achieve perfection, but if we reach for it, then we can achieve excellence. I don't know ultimately what they will do. I don't know whether they will decide to have this honor code. But the conversation they're having now—about what their good society should look like, what their excellent society should look like, is a really good thing (Awuah, 2008).

Here, as elsewhere in outward-facing discussions of the Honor Code as a central feature of the

Ashesi experience, it is nearly always characterized as a student-driven effort born of the very

first Ashesi cohort's desire to intensify their commitment to building a community of trust by

pledging not to cheat, "even when no one is looking." In US-based media outlets such as CNN

Awuah frequently describes the Honor Code thus:

> Students take ownership for their ethical posture on campus…
> It's huge.
> And it's, I think it shocked a lot of people in Ghana when this happened.
> But it's working here.
> And it's phenomenal.
> (Duthiers & Ellis, 2013)

114

The framing of the Honor Code as a matter of "taking ownership for ethical posture" for a foreign audience, juxtaposed with the acknowledgement that students choosing to take exams without proctors in the context of such intensive self-and-peer policing "shocked a lot of people in Ghana" is telling. The naturalization of cheating as a strategy of survival in Ghana is such that, in fact, the National Accreditation Board (NAB) threatened to revoke the school's charter in 2010 once they learned of the proctor-less exams, contending that no Ghanaian student could possibly withstand such temptation. Then current and past students flooded the NAB offices with letters attesting to the legitimacy of students' ethical intentions and actions, claiming they would rather lose their degrees than see Ashesi's ethical community diminished by the removal of the Honor Code (Ashesi, 2010b). This fight with the NAB is frequently fronted both in outward-facing development efforts and campus visits, and in encouraging students to join the Honor Code, as a means of highlighting the ethical exceptionalism and self-made possibilities of the Ashesi community (fieldnotes, 2013).

Students are introduced to the idea of the Honor Code as freshmen. Rather than being automatically inducted into the Code by virtue of admittance to the university, each cohort is expected to deliberate, debate, and vote as a class whether or not they will collectively take the oath and join the honor code in their sophomore year. This process of debate was quite consciously built into the Honor Code system as a means of ensuring students are critically engaged in "taking ownership for their ethical posture on campus" (Ashesi 2010; Duthiers and Ellis 2013). If a two-thirds majority of the class votes to join the Honor Code, the entire class is inducted into the Code via a ceremony run by the student representatives to the judicial committee. The class repeats the following vow collectively, then individually signs onto a document stating the same:

On my honor as a student of Ashesi University College, I [name] pledge to uphold all the standards of this institution.
I will not lie, steal, cheat, nor attempt to deceive; neither will I tolerate others who do so.
I pledge to abide by the Ashesi Honor Code.
I promise to hold others and myself to this pledge, and to honor this duty,
So help me God.

Fig. 3.06: Class of 2016 students signing next to their names during their sophomore year Honor Code Vow ceremony (credit: E. Gwumah).

From this point forward in all exams, students sign a piece of paper which they turn in with their exam papers indicating that they have not cheated or witnessed any cheating in the absence of proctors. Failure to sign the vow usually indicates that a student has seen untoward behavior and wishes to disclose it privately to the instructor.

I pledge on my honour that during this examination I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance, nor have I seen any violations of the Exam Code of Conduct.

Signature: _____

Name: _____

[ ] I have intentionally not signed the pledge (check only if appropriate)

I have personally witnessed the following Examination Honour Code violations or obstructions (optional):

Fig. 3.07: A sample of what the exam pledge looks like, from the student handbook.

In all of these symbolic traces, Ashesi students are quite literally re-inscribing their

internalization of the moral gaze of the institution—one which is significantly more aligned with

globally circulating perspectives on what 'counts' as corruption and ethical action than local

understandings.

Whither Corruption?

What is ethical behavior? What counts as "corruption" or "cheating," and what are

normative, strategic everyday actions necessitated by context? Scholars of critical development

point to the global shift towards neoliberal economics underlying the increasing criminalization

and pathologization of everyday acts of "corruption" targeted at developing nations, while these

same economic policies of deregulating and opening markets make possible new forms of

corruption at larger scales within and beyond the Global South (Bayart et al. 1999; Hasty 2005).

The resultant "global apparatus of anticorruption," including international NGOs and

transnational bodies such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the

discourses they produce and circulate, typically characterize corruption as the selfish actions of

individuals in a vacuum of public sanction, and continue to hold such actions to blame for stalled

development.

As numerous ethnographers of corruption (cf. Bayart 1993; Hansen 1995; Hasty 2005;

Larmour 1997; Olivier de Sardan 1999; Mbembe 2001; Rosen 2002; Chalfin 2010) have pointed

out corruption is inherent in the social order. "The forms of desire that fuel corruption are not

merely selfish and private, but profoundly social, shaped by larger sociocultural notions of

power, privilege, and responsibility," notes Hasty (2005: 271). For Ghanaians specifically,

"corruption is not about individual alienation and withdrawal from social relations of trust but,

rather, about an intensification of contact with the vital flows coursing through the political

body" (Ibid., 274). Absenting oneself from participation in these flows is instead the antisocial choice in this context. Brenda Chalfin's (2010) ethnography of Customs agents at the Ghana/Togo border provides a particularly telling example. She describes two customs agents working in a special fraud investigation unit, one of who takes his job so seriously as to decline offers of soft drinks and food made to him on visits to importers and private homes, lest these offers be construed as bribes for his good favor in investigations. He even goes so far as to partially isolate himself outside of work, in order to avoid any future conflict of interest among friends or extended kin. His colleague, meanwhile, has no such qualms—in part because he sees these offers of food and drink as necessary supplements to his meager state income. Despite the first officer's diligence, he is far less successful and effective in his work than the more gregarious and pragmatic officer, precisely because his refusal of these offers of sociality and social isolation make him suspect in the eyes of precisely those people whom he needs to be most forthcoming and honest. Such activities are not limited to customs officers, or even to politicians intimately tied to instances of high level fraud and corruption: participation in the "politics of the belly" (Bayart 1993) has been so thoroughly naturalized in everyday life as to be expected of everyone. Hasty (2005) highlights how even the Director of Ghana's Serious Fraud Office notes, "We appear to have accepted as a given that one has to 'chop' at one's workplace. The meaning attached to this idiom is that apart from your salary and benefits, it is normal for you to engage in practices that can bring you some financial or material gain…" (Sapati 1999:8, cited in Hasty 2005: 276). What Sapati does not explicitly acknowledge in his denunciation of such practices, however, is how Ghanaians have accepted "chopping" at one's workplace as a given precisely because to do otherwise in the context of Ghana's ongoing economic precocity and vast socioeconomic inequality would be to risk material and physical wellbeing for the majority of citizens.

In being 'sold' on the honor code in freshman and sophomore year encounters, students are repeatedly asked to equate cheating on exams with precisely these modes of "cheating" that have long been naturalized as survival strategies in everyday contexts of scarcity. In many ways, the problem of cheating on exams is the perfect analogy to the challenges of blurred ethical action in Ghana more broadly. As was discussed in Chapter Two, knowledge is treated as a bounded object in Ghanaian classrooms, and classroom pedagogy frequently involves "chew and pour," or the circulation of unchanged notes directly from teacher and/or textbook to chalk board to student notebooks to exams. In such a context, the copying of notes or homework is not problematic; scarcity of textbooks in fact makes the dictation and copying of notes necessary, and moreover the knowledge belongs to no one and is not being processed or synthesized by individual students in ways that are later subject to individual evaluation. The central concern is rather that of memorization. In such a context, copying notes is hardly "cheating," and indeed given that many public schools are plagued by high levels of teacher absenteeism (itself brought on by near-constant owed back-wages), copying on an exam is often the only way for students to collaboratively offset the partial knowledge they have been given in order to pass and move on in life. Within and beyond the classroom, reliance on and reciprocity within one's social network is a necessary resource in a context of endemic vulnerability and lack (Bayart 1993; Chalfin 2010; Hasty 2005).

In person-centered interviews, numerous Ashesi students related stories of their own struggles with trying to avoid copying and cheating in the midst of situations of scarce resources and teacher time in primary school. One student refused to pay his secondary school teacher for extra prep sessions outside of the math class from which the teacher was routinely absent, and was the only one in his class not to pass a crucial exam; several others had refused to allow their peers to copy from their papers during exams after years of being the over-achievers on whom

the rest of their classmates relied for answers. Like the nameless protagonist of <u>The Beautyful</u> <u>Ones…</u>, they suffered the sanction of their peers and received punishment, in this case poor grades, for taking the figurative high road.

In part, students willingly offered up such stories, because they fit into the master narrative of ethical leadership into which they have been socialized at Ashesi. Far more grudging were students' admissions of having once considered commonplace and unproblematic the actions that they now view as "cheating." This phenomenological shift in perspective is all the more remarkable considering how long the activities glossed as "corrupt" in globally circulating anticorruption discourses have been understood as core to ethical Ghanaian sociality. Wilks (1975), Owusu (1996), and others have shown that private accumulation through involvement with the state political apparatus was considered the highest form of virtuous sociality and status in pre-colonial times. In the operation of the Asante nation, the features of which were largely replicated in other neighboring groups within the boundaries of modern-day Ghana (Wilks 1975), titles and other avenues towards status and wealth could *only* come through the state. Nugent (1995) argues convincingly that this linkage between individual involvement in state politics and private accumulation was largely undisrupted in the colonial period, even as the social structures that once rationalized and supported it were dismantled. Yet the vicissitudes of Ghana's post-independence economic turmoil simultaneously sedimented the necessity of connections to state resources for status, power, and survival, and served to render such accumulation highly suspect—especially as the circumstances of the political elite moved further and further from that of the increasingly desperate populace (Nugent 1995: 32; Chalfin 2010: 133). Many young people locked out of opportunities by virtue of their youth and lack of connections, while those at the top illegally mine the privileges of their positions, see the Ghanaian preference for deference to parents, chiefs, elders, and other authority figures as

holding back not only their own material advancement, but, in enabling graft, that of the country as a whole.

In positioning itself against local practices of corruption both by aligning itself against the state (and the public sector more broadly) as the ultimate site of corrupt practices and extracting ethics from the exigencies of Ghanaian everyday life by attesting to universal norms of right and wrong, Ashesi is situating its moral code as firmly outside of the local. Indeed Ashesi, with its honor code, becomes explicitly constructed as attractive to, those neoliberal transnational institutions framing and criminalizing local practices as 'corrupt' rather than deeply social and informed by deeply rooted local logics of survival and success. This chapter's focus is on Ashesi's conscious move of uprooting from the local norms and reorienting to a globally circulating standard.

Debate as Socialization

Given how dramatically its tenets depart from the Ghanaian status quo, how is socialization into the Honor Code achieved on the ground? In what follows, I provide a longitudinal snapshot of this process, first analyzing the vehement rejection of the central requirements of the Honor Code by incoming freshman still rooted in the logics of scarcity and reciprocity, and then examining the ways in which these qualms shift after a year's worth of experience in Ashesi's rarefied community of trust. I suggest Honor Code socialization transpires through in three main practices: 1) modeling the kinds of thinking and debating that are central to the brand of personhood valued on campus; 2) privileging a hip, informal US-inflected register of inclusion, exceptionalism, and distinction; and 3) invoking the shame of being cast as inadequate to participate on the global stage due to Africa's reputation as a site of moral turpitude.

121

Fig. 3.08: Members of the class of 2017 posing for a photo on the last day of their freshman orientation.

At the end of day two of four long days of orientation for the incoming freshman class of 2017,

several student officers of the Ashesi Student Council (ASC), held an information session for the

entire freshman class to introduce them to the history and rationale of the Honor Code. The

session was led by the senior student occupying the office of Judicial and Electoral Chairperson

(JEC), an elected student representative post on the university's Academic Judicial Council

(AJC), which adjudicates cases of academic dishonesty and other campus infractions.

After nearly forty minutes of trying to convince the increasingly skeptical entering

students of the value and importance of the honor code, Daniel, the JEC, gives a real life

example of what he suggests is an exceptional case of the honor code succeeding at Ashesi. In

this anecdote, a student in his cohort not only reported a classmate for cheating during an exam,

per the expectations of the honor code, but also forfeited her anonymity by emailing the entire

class to share that she had reported him and expected anyone else who had also seen the

student's actions to also come forward. Though Daniel told the story in an effort to highlight her

actions as courageous and the precisely the kind of 'ordinary ethical' (Lambek 2010) behavior that the Ashesi community cultivates—the prioritizing of institutional integrity and transparency over the well-being of one's core social network—the freshmen students had an entirely different reaction. Perhaps imagining the potentially significant social consequences if a hypothetical student were to tell on a classmate at his high school, one student calls out, "Has she recovered?" to the uproarious collective laughter of the rest of the freshman. In the midst of their laughter, Daniel attempts to reframe the students' reaction:

Ex. 1

01	Look, guys--
02	she is,
03	I know what expect is, I know what you expect is this um,
04	if I tell on my friend, and everyone knows I've told on my friend, um
05	everyone is going to look at me as--
06	X: SNITCH!
07	D: the snitch.
08	I'll tell you, I'll tell you a few things about snitches.
09	I'll tell you a few things about snitches.
10	X: ((giggles))
11	D: People secretly respect snitches.
12	X: ((no:::::::/laughter))
13	I'll tell you that,
14	look,
15	look that girl I'm talking about is respected so much right now,
16	people respect her because she had the courage to come up and say this.
17	but guys,
18	honestly and seriously,
19	who would you rather have around you,
20	would you rather have someone who has the courage to tell on their friends,
21	or would you rather have someone who would cover up for their friend?

22   X: ((cover up! B, B! laughter))

23   D: Alright, alright, scenario.
24   Guys.

Of all the moments of pushback by the freshmen during this hour-plus long session, this exchange best illustrates the incongruous moral stances between the incoming freshmen and the thoroughly socialized Ashesi students. At the outset, Daniel attempts to acknowledge the normative glossing of the girl's actions in the 'old' paradigm that holds in the Ghanaian school system. But in line 05, he isn't even able to finish his sentence before the entire room resoundingly finishes it for him: "SNITCH!" This shared reaction is so clearly obvious and immutable to the students—what could a person who tells on their friends possibly be, but a snitch? The vociferousness of their collective response suggests these things are commensurate from their perspective. Still attempting to reposition their moral stance on those who tell on friends, Daniel at first adopts their terminology, trying unsuccessfully to posit that "people secretly respect snitches"—a claim that the entire room once again unanimously rejects with laughter and emphatic calls of "no:::::." In making this claim, Daniel is attempting to persuade the students to admit to what he is suggesting is a core truth—that 'snitches' might be publicly derided, but everyone in their heart of hearts, actually admires them. Though he does not get positive uptake, Daniel persists in lines 15-16, claiming that the girl is respected at Ashesi for her actions and glossing her act of reporting not as the unethical betrayal encoded in the label 'snitch,' but as an act of courage. (At the same time Daniel undermines the claim that such courage is praiseworthy, by repeating the disparaging term "snitch," whose entailments include losing peer support and resources for success.) Still pursuing the dual logic that snitches are courageous and secretly respected, Daniel then asks, "But guys, seriously and honestly, who would you rather have around you—would you rather have someone who has the courage to tell

124

on their friends, or would you rather have someone who would cover up for their friend?" In telling them to be honest and serious in their consideration of the question, Daniel implicitly directs students to define an Ashesi-attuned internal self that responds to a higher ideal. Daniel's question exhorts his audience to admit that having a 'courageous' friend tell on you is ethically superior in the contemporary global tech and knowledge economy. A number of assumptions are packed into this framing: Ashesi students need to wrestle with and discard moral attitudes and practices that conflict with Ashesi values, and that these values correspond with the students' "honest" and "sincere" inner sentiments. Student leaders like Daniel imply that covering for a friend should be seen as the universally reprehensible act of hiding unethical behavior, not as the intimate and particular act of ratifying a bond through mutually beneficial reciprocal behavior. The freshman body, however, unanimously rejects the these underlying moral assumptions, loudly signaling their preference for the friend who would cover for them. Their laughter throughout this stretch, but especially in response to Daniel's question, frames the very idea of reinterpreting snitching as a positive as laughable and unrealistic.

Intervening socialization

In the intervening year between being introduced to the Honor Code and voting to join it, students are subject to intensive socialization around timeliness, trust, transparency, and above all the crafting of a coherent, transparent "brand" across face-to-face and mediated contexts. In the course of my participant observations, I heard students be reminded about and coached into self-branding in their freshman orientation, in mandatory social media workshops held outside of class time, in more than one invited speaker series, during Town Hall meetings, and in their writing and communication-focused courses—and in the course of discussions about the role of the Honor Code in guiding student self-representation across mediated contexts and offline settings.

Fig. 3.09: Posters from around the campus reminding students to be responsible about timeliness and time management.

Fig. 3.10: Ezra leading a workshop on appropriate Twitter use for incoming freshmen.

In the spirit of the cosmopolitan expectations of Ashesi students as critically engaged thinkers, the then-sophomore class gathered in a classroom on a mild October evening in 2013 to hear Ezra, a well-liked alumni-cum-staff member from the Class of 2010, speak about the honor code, followed by a somewhat formal Q&A. Ezra's focus was on the honor code as a core feature of students' ability to leverage the Ashesi brand in their post-graduate employment:

Ex. 2

> Without even me saying a word,
> all [an employer] has to know is I'm from Ashesi,
> and I have trust.
> Because if they knew the Ashesi brand,
> or the Ashesi alum,
> or the Ashesi student,
> is one they could trust.

>And for me that's a big big thing about the honor code.
>It's just trust.
>The idea that anybody anywhere can just automatically see me and say,
>I trust these guys...
>Right? That's where we need to start.

Ezra extends the argument made by the University's founder elsewhere that students have the ethical obligation to take responsibility for their actions in service of the larger collectivity. In Ezra's moral logic, if the students reinforce the Ashesi brand (e.g., through positive self-representations in the New Ghana mode), they ensure continued prestige for all the other students, staff, and alumni that rely on the brand's exchange value in their own lives and careers.

Ezra's discourse represents a recursive mode of market-oriented nation-branding (Aronczyk 2013) on an intimate scale: positive, trustworthy, and 'reliable' self-branding as a means of identifying with and maintaining a corporate brand. His speech is a not-so-implicit analogy for the possibility of such self-branding as the means of re-branding Africa itself as a corporate body worthy of trust and praise, rather than a bastion of corruption. Ezra explicitly highlights a connection between students participating in the Ashesi brand and their ability to perform as unmarked, mobile labor: individuals that "anyone anywhere" can trust purely on the basis of their branded associations. To adopt the moral obligations of the Honor Code within the hyper-competent, tech-savvy Ashesi context, in other words, is to perform an exclusive, personal branded identity of The-Africans-You-Can-Trust for the benefit of audiences beyond Ghana and the continent.

Yet, in locating the moral gaze outside of Ghana in global corporations and asking students to internalize this gaze to police themselves and their peers within and beyond the classroom, Ezra (and the university more broadly) also ratifies problematic foreign stereotypes of Africans as corrupt fraudsters, thus re-entrenching the racialized colonial moral hierarchies that

Pierre (2013) and others have argueed were never fully dismantled at Ghana's independence in 1957. Such double-bind discursive consciousness is hardly limited to Ghana: writing of his experiences in returning to Guinea in the mid-1990s, Manthia Diawara incisively captures the false choice between staying trapped in Afro-pessimism on the continent, or guiltily orienting outside for opportunity. "One also tends to feel," he writes of the latter, "that success in life depends on working with the same devil which thrives on racial superiority and which excludes the majority of one's brothers and sisters from participating in history" (Diawara 2000: 42).

Sophomoric Qualms

What began as muted pushback by several students in the Q&A session after Ezra's extended monologue spilled out of the classroom into an ongoing informal debate with a smaller handful of students, some avidly pro-honor code and some ambivalent.

Athough Ashesi freshman are united in their resistance to the premises underlying the honor code, the sophomore stances towards the honor code, in contrast, are markedly more diverse. A minority of students raise qualms, but their qualms have shifted from those of the freshman students. Moreover, they couch these qualms in concerted efforts towards alignment and affiliation both interactionally and with the Ashesi mission more broadly. This complicated position, attempting to disagree while displaying agreement and alignment with the Ashesi ethos, shows up in marked disfluencies in these students' attempt to simultaneously occupy the role of the ideal student who questions and debates and resist the enormous concerted pressure to conform to the clear institutional expectation of joining the honor code. Unlike the freshman experience of complete peer unity against the honor code, those students with ongoing concerns find themselves under pressure not only from those students officially representing the institutional position on the honor code, but from their own peers—mirroring, in fact,

expectations embedded in the honor code itself that students will hold each other accountable to a common value, rather than maintain peer solidarity for its own sake.

All of these trends are particularly well illustrated in the following excerpt from the informal spillover debate below. While their colleagues drifted off to prayer sessions and group project meetings that would last well into the night, I joined six students and Ezra, and listened in the gathering hilltop fog while they pushed back and forth over what the honor code actually means in practice and what their obligation to each other ought to be. At the time I was struck by both the intensity of their commitment to the institutional expectation to debate and deliberate over questions of virtue and the ideal society, and by how little Ezra, as an alumnus, seemed able to affiliate with the positionality of the students with qualms—a position he surely occupied before being fully integrated into the Ashesi mindset and worldview. In addition to these features, what comes through even more clearly in a close reading of the transcript is how much student effort towards alignment with Ezra is present in this interaction. Pro-code students actively align with Ezra and his institutional perspective against those students who remain ambivalent; ambivalent students themselves take pains to enact great effort toward alignment in the face of this pressure to conform to community norms, even in the midst of their persistent disquiet. These concerted efforts towards alignment themselves indicate that a major ethical shift has taken place among members of the sophomore class.

Ex. 3

01	Ezra:	I- I- I remember you had a problem with losing friends, right?
		((To Simone))
02	X:	((laughter))
03	Simone:	.hhhh ye:::s he::y
04	Tolu:	[But why— why would you want to be the friend of—
05	Ezra:	['I won't report on my friend'
06	Victoria:	Exactly! .hhhh (honey/I mean)
07	Ezra:	But if someone is really your friend,
08		Would they sit by you in an exam room and put you in that situation,=

09	Simone:	That's a good point
10	Ezra:	=where you have to question yourself, right?
11		And say, should I report this guy, he's my friend—
12		If someone is really your friend,
13		If they were thinking about you,
14		Would they put you in that situation?

Here Ezra recalls that in prior conversations about the honor code, Simone expressed hesitation about signing on because she was concerned that the obligation to report cheaters would result in conflicts with (cheating) friends. Ezra even quotes her speech directly in line 05, "I won't report on my friend." He then makes the argument that her concerns were outweighed, when considering that the friend was not "really your friend" if he places you in a moral predicament by cheating right next to you. That person is not a friend worth having. In this line of reasoning, a good friend is someone who would never ask a friend to cover for them— and specifically, who wouldn't put a friend in the emotionally painful position of having to 'question yourself' and weigh the friendship against doing the 'right' thing.

Remarkably, unlike the freshman class's strong and immediate consensus that a good friend is a friend who covers for you, here not one but two fellow Ashesi students pre-align with Ezra's ultimate assertion that friends who ask you to cover for them are not friends worth having. As soon as he raises Simone's past worries about losing friends over honor code obligations, Tolu anticipates Ezra's argument by interjecting, "but why would you want to be the friend of [someone who would ask you to cover]." Implying that this is normative logic around who and what constitutes a good friend, Victoria immediately affiliates with Tolu, 'Exactly! .hhhh'. In fact, both Victoria's laughter token, and the immediate, knowing laughter of all participants after Ezra raises Simone's past concerns (including, reluctantly, Simone herself in line 03), coalesce to suggest that worrying about losing friends who persist in behavior deemed unethical at Ashesi (but which is both normative and perhaps even necessary elsewhere in Ghana!) is itself

laughable. Such peer pressure in colluding with the institutional efforts toward socialization in favor of the honor code suggests a significant, if incomplete, transformation of the sophomore class from the freshman position of total unified rejection of the premise of the honor code itself. Recall that the freshman reaction when faced with the question of whether they would prefer a friend who reports or a friend who covers was also a surge of laughter: but in their case, it was at the preposterousness of the notion of preferring a friend who would rat you out. While these observations are cross-sectional rather than purely longitudinal, they suggest that in the space of just a year, the majority of these sophomore students have moved from the normative Ghanaian position of deriding the idea that a good friend reports cheaters, to the opposite: outright laughter at anyone who persists in thinking a good friend (and, by proxy, a good person and good citizen) is one who covers for those who cheat.

This dramatic shift in ethical stances is visible in Simone's own disfluency in standing up for her position in the face of sustained social pressure to conform. Ironically, social pressure makes it extremely difficult and uncomfortable for her to enact the ideal Ashesi student, who is honest about conflicting feelings even in the face of disagreement or potential social sanctions:

Ex. 4

Simone:	Knowing me, anyway,
	Wh- like when the thing comes up and I see
	'yes or no d'you wanna be on the honor code'
	I'll probably vote yes,
	Just because of the fact that,
	>I'm a goodie goodie two shoes type of person.<
	But, I- I seriously want to argue w::hy I should not be on the honor code
	'Cause I really wanna look at it from both sides
	>I get it, I get—<
Ezra:	Why should you <u>not</u> be on the honor code?
Simone:	I just— I don't know! I fe—! .hhhh
	I feel like we don't need to have like—

Simone's conflictual comments about the relative need for friends to police each other are pre-empted by Ezra. Her extended turn up until then, itself a kind of acquiescence that she will "probably vote yes" regardless, is shot through with false starts and repairs, uncomfortable laughter, and frequent fast speech when admitting she's a "goodie goodie two shoes" and again when trying to hold the floor with an attempt to placate her antagonists by saying she "gets" their position.

Preliminary Conclusions and Future Directions

Crucially, this transformation, and the argument behind it, presumes a social landscape where reciprocity in 'covering' for friends is not the very currency of social bonds—and in doing so, both naturalizes the Ashesi community's proleptic efforts at realizing such a social landscape, and negates the reality that in much of Ghana, the creation and maintenance of friendships and strategic alliances through favors and gifts is very much the norm. Indeed as the ethnographic anecdote of the two Customs officials with markedly different orientations to their institutional roles illustrates, the idea that a person would act in the interests of an entity not only outside of but also exclusive of, one's immediate network of social support is still very much subject to suspicion.

Ashesi students are not ignorant of this reality. While they take great pains to demonstrate alignment with the directives of the Honor Code in 'on-record' settings, off the record there is a casual understanding that in order to meet Ashesi's exacting GPA standards in order to stay enrolled, reliance on friends and peers for notes and homework assignments is all but impossible to avoid. While they articulate the 'right' answers in role-playing scenarios of how one might engage with and challenge an elder or authority figure on critical issues, few believe that outside of Ashesi's rarefied walls such efforts will be met with anything but negative sanction. Indeed,

while Ashesi graduates are by and large incredibly successful and are extremely well-represented across Ghana's private sector, I often heard rumors about alumni being called out, demoted, and even fired for exhibiting their "too known" attitudes in the workplace. The ethical entrepreneurial Ashesi student is, in effect, being groomed to occupy a society that does not yet exist—at least not beyond the walls of the university.

Imagining and enacting social change of this kind of scale and scope can hardly be represented in the kind of richly detailed snapshot which ethnographic research allows. Ghana is still in throes of the precarious New Ghana moment wherein what is means to be Ghanaian, and to be a moral participant in social and political life is still being openly contested. The students whom I followed in their sophomore debate struggle with the Honor Code did in fact vote to join—and as of the time of writing have just graduated and are entering the workforce for the first time to test their fledging ethical wings in the buffeting winds of complex contemporary realities. Going forward, I plan to follow up with these students to see how their perspectives on the Honor Code as a means of cultivating a particular kind of ethical muscle have been tested and changed in the intervening years.

CHAPTER FOUR:
"Who Said Tweaa?!": The Digital Subversion of Ghanaian Hierarchies

Introduction

"I respect a young entrepreneur more than a politician stealing his country's wealth. I am the

NEW GHANA."

This adamant assertion, in white font emblazoned on stark black background with a tiny

Ghanaian flag at the bottom right, was one of innumerable such declarations circulating on

Facebook as I began preliminary fieldwork exploring the socialization of digital literacies in

Ghana in the summer of 2013. These sentiments, problematizing longstanding arrangements of

political power while locating the moral center of patriotism in youthful contributions to the

economy, were also the undercurrent to nearly every conversation I had or overheard with

anyone under forty for months to come. Less a movement than a diffuse zeitgeist, the New

Ghana' is the loose consensus of many contemporary youth in Ghana around the urgent need for

a change in the status quo of rigid age-graded status hierarchies which organize all realms of

social and political life. Young people point specifically to this deeply rooted preference for

unquestioning deference to parents, chiefs, elders, and other authority figures as holding back not

only their own material advancement, but that of the country as a whole—especially when it

comes to what many gloss as the grossly unaccountable public sector, rife with graft, nepotism,

and other abuses of power.

New Ghana condemnation of those at the top of Ghana's hierarchies for engaging in

practices which allow them to consolidate and maintain power, wealth, and authority at the

expense of the collective good, are hardly new. What marks a departure is the way in which the

particular affordances of new media allow the many self-styled social media entrepreneurs

among today's youth to not only distance themselves from corrupt politics and the problematic

forms of accumulation mired in local networks, but to attempt to actualize aspirational

alternatives. Indeed, at the core of the New Ghana ethos is a belief in the transformational power

of digital technologies. Contemporary Ghanaian youth across class and geopolitical divides are

drawn to digitally-mediated communication precisely because they see it as affording

possibilities for horizontal collaboration and direct participation in social change otherwise

closed to them. Not unlike the "emergence of new, hybrid forms of discourse under rapidly

changing colonial conditions" (Duranti 2009: 223) which Hanks (1987) traces historically among

the Maya, here "the orienting frameworks" of Ghanaians' sedimented historical consciousness

around hierarchy and exploitation on the one hand, and the emergent media ideologies of social

media spaces as egalitarian on the other, "become resources for the shaping of new discursive

practice" (Bauman & Briggs: 1992). Social media platforms have become collaborative safe

spaces in which young people network to collectively imagine and enact alternative possibilities

for themselves and the nation. In the process, however, they produce generational tensions over

hierarchy and moral authority that are nothing short of a national identity crisis. Who is the

authentic Ghanaian citizen—the person who upholds enduring cultural expectations around

hierarchy, deference, and respect, or the person who critiques them? Who is the moral subject of

the nation-state—the conservative bearers of structure, order, and tradition, or those who would

upend the structure in the name of long-stalled progress?

Aims

In this chapter, I examine the efficacy and limits of the New Ghana horizontal ideology in

dynamic tension with its broader context of sedimented historical consciousness, through the

lens of an online contestation of local hierarchies: a YouTube video of a verbal challenge from a

young man interrupting the formal speech of an older politician that went viral in early 2014. As

this video was taken up and 'remixed' in innumerable secondary memes, it rapidly spilled over

135

and across face-to-face, digitally-mediated, public, and private modalities—leading to a ban on phrases from the video in parliament, a re-enactment during the President's annual State of the Nation address, and even several mentions in international press outlets. Most tellingly, however, this rapid re-embedding of the video across contexts led to what appears (two years later at the time of writing) to be an enduring shift in the vocabulary of protest in Ghana. Zygmunt Bauman suggests that in late modernity, "statistically insignificant phenomena may prove to be decisive" (1992: 192). Given the active avoidance and resignation around politics that characterizes those generations who came of age amidst the violent social upheaval of the immediate post-Independence period (Nugent 1995; Meyer 1998), the fact of a single YouTube video catalyzing active online and offline protest would appear nothing short of extraordinary.

In what follows, I have three aims.

In the first, using the theoretical frames of *entextualization* and *indexicality*, I trace how the interaction between situated moments of uptake in the public sphere and the ongoing uptake and remixing of this video across mediated modes allowed a significant shift in meaning around the Twi word *tweaa*, a term in the central exchange in the video. As the main protagonist of the video, an older male politician, is speaking at a formal event, he is interrupted by an anonymous young audience member who calls out, "Tweaa!", a casual Twi interjection indicating displeasure, disgust, or frustration. One would normally only use such a term in a casual context among intimates—certainly not in a formal civic context where the appropriate language is English. Thus the politician interprets this breach of etiquette as an insult and direct challenge to his authority to speak, and calls back to the anonymous young man, "Are you my co-equal?"—in other words, *How dare you interrupt me in such a way when you are so clearly my subordinate?*

In the subsequent uptake and re-articulation of this video in other contexts, *tweaa* in particular was foregrounded, abstracted, and then re-embedded in memes and parodies that

explicitly took on the subjectivity of the irreverent audience member's critique of the politician. This process, known as de- and re-entextualization (cf. Bauman & Briggs 1990; Silverstein & Urban 1996), is that "of rendering text extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit—a text—that can be lifted out of its interactional setting" in spite of all the "anchoring counterforces" which tie the situated meanings of particular linguistic utterances to the specific contexts of their production, and then re-embedding that unit in a new context. The meaning of the unit, as an "intersection of textual surfaces rather than a fixed point of meaning" is necessarily altered and transformed as it is re-entextualized (Bauman & Briggs 1992: 146; Bakhtin 1981).

I examine this instance as a case study of how verbal performances become digitally-mediated "textual projectiles": textual objects in themselves which can rapidly move and acquire new meanings across settings, time, and space (Rampton 2009). I argue that following the oscillation between the Ghanaian public's on-and-offline engagement with tweaa after the rapid circulation of the video allows us to witness the transformation of the term from a casual Twi-language interjection, to one that indexes a condensed articulation of protest from a powerless position in an asymmetrical power relationship. In its transformation, tweaa's new meaning is rendered transparent across language boundaries. This profound indexical shift allowed tweaa's use as a key resource in protests that continue to spill across the blurred boundary of on and offline interactions across Ghana. Put another way, longitudinally following the rapid re-entextualizations of tweaa across modalities allows us to trace the multiple transformations of meaning that link public sector sloth, status, abuse of power, and corruption with hierarchies— such that using tweaa to criticize hierarchy (via the very digitally-mediated contexts that themselves index opposition to hierarchies) is to question the Ghanaian status quo entire.

Secondly, I examine the limits of the rhetoric of technological transformations in this New

Ghana moment (Bauman & Briggs 2001: 148). Lastly, by looking at a case study of a digitally-mediated phenomenon unfolding in time, in interaction with and embedded in events in the world—rather than as isolated mediated practices out of context—I hope to draw attention to the need for scholarship on digital praxis that moves from "the *production* of language and text *within* specific settings, to the *projection* of language and text *across* settings" (Rampton 2009: 707). At this stage in the nascent history of multidisciplinary inquiry into the internet and its attendant contexts and ideologies, we have ample examples of the production of particular digital practices within specific settings (cf. Boellestorff 2008; Newon 2011; Thurlow & Poff 2013). I wish to highlight the volatility and richness that is captured when we look at the projection of language and text *across* mediated settings, and specifically at the way in which meanings coalesce, are challenged, remixed and altered, and taken up across embedded media ecologies. Not unlike the work of Mbembe (2001) and Jackson (2008) in tracing the dialectic between genres of political speech and critical political cartooning in Cameroon and Madagascar over the longue durée, examining digital practices as both embedded in the complex dynamics of social actor's ongoing everyday lives and as continually contested and reformulated provides a much richer sense not only of what people are doing and why it matters to them, but of the limits of the ideologies of self-fashioning that so often attend new media. Critically, it also clarifies that what may look like a global practice is in fact inflected and transected by desires, motivations, situated communicative norms, sociopolitical exigencies, and personal trajectories that cannot possibly be collapsed to either a local or global scale. I believe this is particularly necessary work in contexts *outside* of the post-industrial economic centers of both technological design and bulk of research into informal digital learning and practice (eg., Ito et al. 2010), lest we fall victim as scholars to the pervading lay sense of the internet as a monolithic context unto itself, free of the sedimented local histories and norms that animate users' practices and meaning-making.

The *Tweaa* Video

The event shown in the clip in the question was later identified by news outlets as a year-end *durbar*, or festival event, at a hospital just outside of the regional capital of Kumasi. The participation framework for durbars is such that participants are usually seated around a central open area in either a 'U' or square shape under canopies. Not all participants are equal; there is typically a tent set aside for important and honored personages such as local chiefs and their retinue or other such dignitaries, and it is typically towards such dignitaries that speeches are addressed. The central space created by the ringed tents is where various speakers and performers hold court. The expected participation framework also demands only one speaker hold the floor at one time, at the invitation of the emcee, and often according to a formal printed agenda with opening prayers, initial remarks, multiple speeches by invited guests, and so on.

It is in such a context that the video clip opens on an older man dressed in the short-sleeved suit that is the preferred uniform of older male politicians and civil servants. This man was later identified as Gabriel Barima, who was at the time a District Chief Executive for the Ahafo Ano South District outside of Kumasi. Barima is speaking into a microphone, and framed by elaborate streamers and bunting. He is, in fact, in the midst of empathically declaiming his own privileged right to speak and be respectfully listened to by everyone, a sentiment that earns him hoots and applause from the audience. Though his actual position in government is not particularly grand—a DCE is a low-ranking political appointee roughly comparable to the mayor of a county in the North American context—he appears to be rhetorically performing authority to the satisfaction of those in attendance.

And yet, as he resumes speaking after a brief pause to allow applause, he is interrupted by a call of "Tweaa!" from a young male voice somewhere to Barima's left, off-screen. For a younger, unknown, and un-titled person to lob a public declaration of disappointment, disapproval, and

139

disgust at the actions and speech of an older person who has been unilaterally granted the right to the floor is a brazen act indeed. This breach of etiquette poses a direct challenge to both the legitimacy of Barima's authority and rights to speak, as well as the deeply entrenched system of age-and-status-graded respect hierarchies that undergird those rights. Recognizing the challenge for what it is, Barima immediately stops and calls for the person who would dare breach the expected order so blatantly to reveal and explain himself.

It should be noted that though English is Ghana's only official language, it remains inaccessible to the majority. Twi, by contrast, is spoken by upwards of 70% of the population as either a first or second language (Kropp-Dakubu 1997). Since an analysis of the subtleties and ramifications of Barima's Twi-English codeswitching is beyond the scope of this chapter, his Twi utterances will appear translated in italics. I have not, however, translated the word that is the focus of the chapter: *tweaa,* the term the audience member calls out to the Barima. In the transcript below, Barima is represented by 'GB,' and his anonymous challenger by 'HW,' for Hospital Worker.

Ex. 1

[00:00:14.22]	GB	*That is why,*
[00:00:16.00]	HW:	*Tweaa::::*
	GB:	*It is not that--*
[00:00:17.05]	GB:	*Who said tweaa?*
[00:00:18.30]		*Eh, are you insulting me?*
		Are you insulting me?
[00:00:21.30]	HW:	*No*
[00:00:22.30]	GB:	*Who is it who called tweaa?*
[00:00:24.20]	GB:	*Tweaa means what?*
[00:00:26.00]	GB:	What do you mean by tweaa?
[00:00:28.00]	GB:	What do you mean by tweaa?!
[00:00:29.15]	((audience))	*Patience*
[00:00:30.14]	GB:	*Patience means what?*
[00:00:31.20]	GB:	You sit somewhere, behave like
[00:00:33.16]		you are talking to your co-equal.
[00:00:35.15]	GB:	Am I your co-equal?

Fig. 4.01: "Who said tweaa? Are you insulting me?"

Barima is ultimately so enraged by this breach that he storms off, refusing to finish his remarks despite an organizer's earnest efforts to placate him. The shot jumps to him angrily returning to chastise the anonymous audience member. In an effort to further put the young man in his place, Barima asks, "If you are a hospital worker, who are you? Why do you have to behave in this manner?" Against the challenge to Barima's power and moral authority contained implicitly in the call of "tweaa," these repeated hypothetical questions reposition Barima not as the embattled elder facing down a challenge from a subordinate, but as a patriarch rightfully engaging in an act of discipline. These rhetorical questions, in fact, effectively force the challenger to acknowledge and answer for his own insubordination by virtue of their clearly understood intended answers.

The video ends as Barima storms off at last towards the row of large four-wheel drive vehicles parked behind the durbar grounds, supporters and staff in tow. The video then cuts to the bewildered audience, some craning to see his retreat—including the local chief in attendance, whose own authority outranks Barima's, and who had every right to be more outraged at him for walking out.

The Trajectory of a Meme

Early iterations

Though it is unclear exactly when the durbar took place, the clip itself was initially posted on YouTube at the end of January 2014. The video exploded onto the national consciousness, spawning hundreds of secondary memes that "foregrounded and re-entextualized" both the term

141

tweaa and the hierarchically positioned question "Are you my co-equal" (Bauman & Briggs 1992) in no fewer than four parody songs, numerous sketch comedy skits, innumerable humorous images, and, of course, a hashtag. This viral phenomenon leaked irrepressibly into offline interactions. For weeks, it was impossible to go anywhere without hearing people laughingly calling out, "Tweaa!"; "Hey, are you my co-equal?!" Given Ghana's culture of shared and collective media consumption, with extended and fictive kin often making use of the same devices, it's not a stretch to say the majority of the country had seen the video and some of its related re-entextualizations within days.

The interaction captured on the video—an elder shutting down a challenge to his authority—is in some ways quite commonplace for Ghana. The captivating nature of the clip lay in its excess: the absolutely brazen act of the anonymous youth who dared to do what so many young people would love to do—and have probably done at smaller scales, to an older sibling, parent, or teacher, for instance—in a highly public, visible way, and the over-the-top hilarity of the politician's ranting response. The bulk of the secondary memes that initially circulated were primarily referential, using these interactional excesses as the foundation of additional humor, such as cleverly photoshopped advertisements for imaginary products such as alcoholic "Tweaa Bitters" (tagline: 'Drink and discover your co-equal') or hypothetical films in the style of locally-produced multi-part salvation-themed movies with titles like "Who Said Tweaa? 1 & 2," featuring Barima as the main character facing off between an aggressive young man and a supplicant pastor (characters prototypical of the genre), with the interaction in the clip reframed as the movie's tagline: "Know whom you say TWEAA to, you may not be a co-equal." Others drew on the global 'meme' style, combining salient images with text rendered in 'Impact' font in white bordered in black. Many of these early iterations played on the original meaning of *tweaa* as mere disapproval, such as a meme featuring Will Smith and Jada Pinkett-Smith in a cozy pose

142

with the words, "This could be us but your dad said tweeeaa!" over the image. The version of

this meme located on Instagram, originally posted February 15, 2014, additionally features the

caption, "Lol, Ghanaians will relate"—speaking both to the "bivalent" interplay (Woolard 1998)

of audiences referenced by locally-relevant content framed in a highly salient global style meant

to circulate beyond the local—and the hashtags "#tweaa #tweaaa #tweaaaaaaaaa"—reproducing

in written and visual form the phonological patterning in spoken Twi whereby elongated vowels

and reduplication indicate emphasis (Kweku-Osam et al 2008).

Fig. 4.02: A collection of publicly available tweaa *memes collected from across social media platforms*

Youth Positionality: participating in online cosmopolitanisms

Early on, a shift in the meaning of *tweaa* had clearly already begun to take place. This was likely

originated by the asymmetry of the participants in the video itself. While the politician and the

youthful audience member disagreed about who had the moral authority to speak, their actions in the interaction clearly demonstrate a shared alignment to the meaning behind the call of "tweaa" in the moment: as a direct challenge from a someone in a *lower* position in hierarchies of power, respect, and status. This asymmetrical positionality was elaborated upon by the ironic and disenfranchised youthful stance of the majority of online memes, even in their earliest iterations.

The trio of examples below, for instance, all play on the popular meme derived from the WWII-era British propaganda poster "Keep Calm and Carry On." While this morale-bolstering message was originally crafted by the official mouthpiece of the British government—a bastion of officialdom and authority if there ever was one—in the event of German occupation, the global iterations of the meme typically operate by ironically rearticulating ways to maintain morale and feelings of solidarity in the face of far more quotidian onslaughts. For instance, the joking "Keep Calm and Carry Yarn" is a popular message of solidarity among knitters.

In foregrounding the lexical *content* of the young audience member's interjection and re-entextualizing it in a new context, the meaning and intent of that original interjection—a challenge to authority—is *also* put under focus and carried forward into the new context. With these indexical associations of *tweaa* centrally re-embedded in the context of a meme associated with bolstering morale, the Ghanaian versions of the "Keep Calm" meme below can be read as messages of solidarity from peers, exhorting youth addressees to maintain morale by challenging incompetents in positions of authority, or possibly even hierarchy more broadly. That is, they are articulated in solidarity with those who might wish to contest age-graded hierarchies of authority, thus interpellating youth as moral actors under siege who must respond to their circumstances appropriately—by keeping calm and calling out abuses of power.

Fig. 4.03: A trio of tweaa *memes playing off of WWII-era propaganda.*

In another early re-embedding of the interaction between Barima and the anonymous youth, the Ghanaian hiplife band Gallaxy's song "Tweaa" also foregrounded the central moment of the faceoff—"Tweaa!" "Are you my co-equal?"—in the lyrics. In the accompanying music video, which was distributed and shared primarily online and by mobile phone, the band are part of a secondary school class led by an over-the-top parody of the worst stereotypes of Ghanaian public school teachers.

Fig. 4.04: A still of the defensive teacher from the Gallaxxy "Tweaa" music video.

Quick to anger, barely competent in English, and clearly ill-informed, the teacher introduces the topic for the day by badly mangling the pronunciation. When a student raises his hand and suggests a correction, the teacher shouts at him to shut up, then proceeds to lecture the students

145

on the points of his superiority, telling them in Twi how he has schooled in the UK and will soon

be traveling to the United States. As the teacher continues his bombastic defensiveness in

reaction to this challenge to his position as head of the class, a student from the back of the room

calls, "Tweaa!" and the room erupts in laughter, cueing the start of the song.

Fig. 4.05: Two tweaa *memes which also make the link between power asymmetries and Ghanaian classroom experiences.*

This music video is a marvelous representation of the layering of shared assumptions

about corrupt and incompetent power that predated the original *tweaa* YouTube clip and served

as the basis for many peoples' interpretation of it. Many in Ghana are quick to make

comparisons between the kinds of exploitation of power and authority that are seen to take place

throughout the government and public sector, and the ideological underpinnings of the "chew

and pour" method of rote pedagogy pervasive in Ghanaian public schools. In both the public

sector and public school contexts, suggestions and ideas from the younger and less experienced

are almost always seen as a threat to the power and authority of the person at the top, and quickly

shut down. As discussed in Chapter Three, many of my college-aged interviewees had stories of

incorporating outside resources and literature into a paper, only to be given a failing grade for

not synthesizing and replicating the teacher's lecture notes exactly. Thus, the explicit connection

the Gallaxxy music video draws between the original interaction of a young person publicly

challenging a politician, and the far more commonplace instance of a student challenging a teacher, is utterly logical and recognizable in the Ghanaian experience. In valorizing the student challenger, the music video not only casts implicit aspersions back onto Barima and his relative competence and right to hold a position of authority, but critiques Ghana's endemic lack of qualified teachers and their tendency to ignore or actively deride the knowledge their students might already have.

This video, too, is created and deployed from the perspective of youth poking fun at the overly rigid structures that define and organize their present and future possibilities. This is hardly an accident: online platforms are seen as safe spaces for building and enacting alternatives to these rigid hierarchies. Among my upwardly mobile digitally-savvy research participants, it was not uncommon for the bulk of their socializing to take place online, and for their key life experiences—locating resources to further their projects, locating pivotal job opportunities or collaborative partners—to have taken place through interactions with faraway strangers over Twitter and Facebook (cf. Burrell 2012 for similar patterns in urban centers). They frequently pointed to the impossibility of furthering their dreams and projects in Ghana's often defeatist environment, citing the many teachers and other authority figures who told them they were being "too known," that is, presumptuous and inappropriately opinionated. The viral circulation of these images in the very circuits and networks seen to support the youth position is therefore highly consequential.

George (2014) discusses the vitality of memes in Serbian online spaces as operating within a similar niche. Faced with the reductive political choices of either aligning with the narrow provincialism of extreme nationalists or the globalizing abdication of economic sovereignty expected by the EU, youth in Belgrade express their fundamental ambivalence towards these choices by creating and circulating 'bivalent' jokes and memes online. Decoding

147

the online jokes requires knowledge of multiple Serbian scripts *and* English, calling to mind

McIntosh's "vaguely-imagined wider world of cosmopolitan interlocutors" (2010: 343). Not

unlike their Serbian counterparts, Ghanaian youth engaging in the production and circulation of

the *tweaa* memes are cultivating an ironic, playful, and yet deeply invested and critical stance on

the local, in part by leveraging and laminating global signifiers—in other words,

cosmopolitanism:

> Cosmopolitanism does not imply that one does not have country or a homeland, but one
> has to have a certain reflexive distance from that homeland. Cosmopolitan virtue requires
> Socratic irony, by which one can achieve some distance from the polity. The principal
> cosmopolitan virtue is irony, because the understanding of other cultures is assisted by an
> intellectual distance from one's own national or local culture (Turner 2002: 57).

Operating on a logic of remixed authorship that itself subverts the top-heavy consolidation of

"chew-and-pour" knowledge production in Ghanaian society, these memes destabilize and

cultivate ironic distance from local hierarchies. In doing so, they further afford Ghanaian youth

opportunities to index cosmopolitan identities strongly identified with the alternative possibilities

that online spaces themselves are seen foster. It is no mistake, then, that a critique of hierarchy

and authority became so wildly popular in a context that supports the very ideological

foundations of the critique.

Solidifying the meaning by moving offline

These positions were then further solidified by the uptake of the phrases in public

contestations between political opponents. Indeed the popular spread of *tweaa* even reached to

parliament, where politicians quickly realized the possibilities of a term-in-flux that lodges a

legitimate complaint, and immediately veils that complaint in the ironic veneer of plausible

deniability. The use of *tweaa* to call out opposition in debates on the floor of parliament became

so frequent and distracting, in fact, that it was officially banned in the House of Parliament on

February 18, mere weeks after the video first appeared. Yet even the MP who petitioned the

Speaker of the House for the phrase to be banned did so in a spirit of ironic play, riffing verbally

on an image that had circulated online of a teacher instructing students in conjugating "tweaa" on

the blackboard as if it were a verb—to *tweaa* someone, to challenge someone. In taking this

thread of online response to Barima's behavior onto the literal floor of legitimate political

speech, the MP inadvertently furthered the ratification of the word's ongoing shift away from its

original meaning as a generic interjection of disapproval and towards its expansion as both an

interjection and a verb that quite clearly indexes power asymmetry and moral challenge:

Ex. 2
"If you do not declare tweaa unparliamentary,
we'll be heading towards a situation where—
Because last week, people tweaaed
Today, they are tweaaing!
Tomorrow they will tweaa!"

Fig. 4.06: Screenshot of the parliamentary proceedings during which Tweaa was banned.

In semi-jokingly conjugating *tweaa* in his complaint about the use of the term itself, the MP

further sediments the linkage of the use of *tweaa* in the ür-interaction as a means of protesting

Barima's speech, and future iterations of the term as an index of the act of challenging a person's
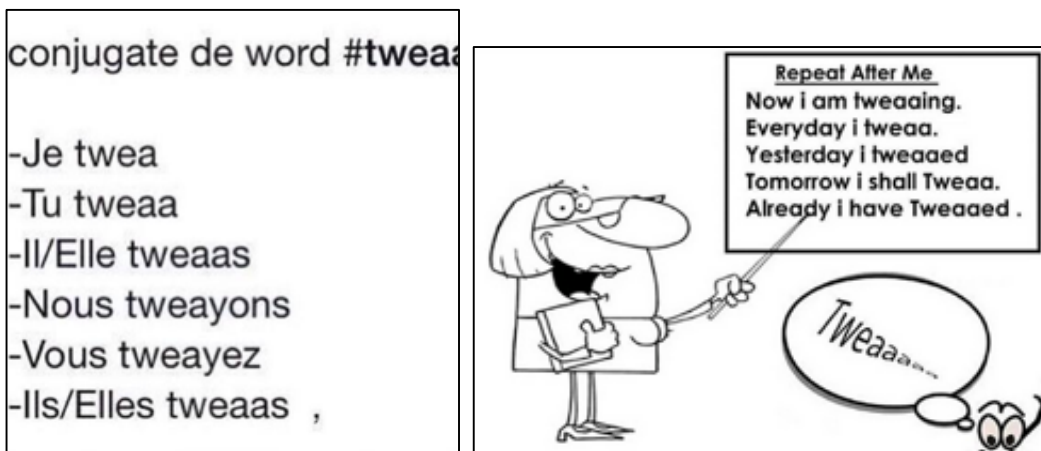
right to speak generally.

Fig. 4.07: Tweaa *memes playing with the idea of* tweaa *as a verb.*

On February 28, only a week after the parliamentary ban went into effect, opposition members repeatedly called out "Tweaa!" during President Mahama's annual State of the Nation address in an effort to interrupt his speech and voice criticism of the administration. The President himself, in a recapitulation of Barima's original attempt to re-assert his authority against the younger man's interruption, jokingly called back "Hey, who said 'tweaa?' Am I your co-equal?" on live TV. While received with laughter and applause from the floor, this referencing of the more powerful position of the politician in the video vis-à-vis the relatively powerless audience member was also clearly meant to put the opposition members in their place and reassert the authority of the office of President—and, once more, very visibly sedimented the emerging meaning of the term as a challenge to authority.

Fig. 4.08: Screencaps of President Mahama laughingly calling back to opposition members who said "tweaa" during his State of the Nation Address, left, and MPs literally crying with laughter, right.

By ratifying the term as a challenge by participating in a public re-enactment of the original stand-off, President Mahama also opened himself to the same criticisms of the abuse of authority as the position of power he sought to index in shutting the challenge down. Having flouted the parliamentary ban, he gave his detractors (many of which I 'overheard' both online and in shared taxis) proof that he felt himself to be above the law, inadvertently reinvigorating pre-existing claims that the ruling party was siphoning public funds for personal profit even more aggressively than its predecessor.

150

At this point, however, the fervor of local reporting had already reached the attention of international outfits like Al Jazeera (21 February) and the BBC (19 February). Ebo Quansah, veteran journalist and longtime editor of Ghanaian weekly <u>The Chronicle</u>, ran an op-ed under the title, "Ghana: The state of the nation? Tweaa"—situating himself as 'tweaa-ing' Ghana itself. After centuries of tumult in the path towards democratic self-governance, *local* critical [ironic, veiled] attention to how politicians comport themselves is hardly a new phenomenon in Ghana. But for a country with such a keen collective national longing to be a serious player in global politics, *international* attention to a politician's outburst gone viral was a profound embarrassment. This increased attention, combined with ongoing remixing of *tweaa* in mediated settings, led the president to remove Barima from his post several days later, immediately before the 6 March Independence Day celebrations that would have given Barima a public platform.

Economic incompetence: tweaa *as protest online*

As the spring deepened into summer, a cascade of unfortunate state economic policy decisions kept *tweaa* on the lips of millions of frustrated and struggling Ghanaians. Ghana's currency, the cedi, had been inching lower in value since the previous January, leading to a series of largely ineffectual efforts to shore up the economy. Indeed it seemed to many around me—from the economist I sometimes shared a table with at lunch Ashesi, to the drivers of the shared taxis plying the road from the university to nearby towns—that the government did not have *any* economic policy in place at all. Months earlier, in the absence of a formal explanation from the governing National Democratic Congress (NDC) administration, Anita Desooso, the National Women's Organiser of the NDC, offered the reasoning on a live radio program that the cause of the cedi's rapid depreciation lay with men practicing juju with dwarves in the foothills outside of the capital of Accra. Both the economist and the taxi drivers found this "juju dwarf" logic both baffling and an embarrassment to the NDC. Editorial cartoonists seemed to agree: The Black

Narrator, a young cartoonist whose Facebook posts were occasionally picked up by the main daily newspaper The Daily Graphic, depicted Desooso shaking her fists and crying out "Heyyy!" as small goblin-like creatures gleefully made a mess of bills spilling out of a large bag marked 'cedi'; another showed a personified 'cedi,' standing stunted and angry next to the tall, robust figures of the dollar and euro, sulkily calling out 'tweaa!' to a prominent pastor encouraging him to grow. These images, too, circulated widely online.

In an effort to retain funds in the economy, the national bank instituted a ban on major transactions and savings held in foreign currencies, which went into effect in February of 2014 just as the *tweaa* YouTube clip was taking off. In spite of these and other efforts, the cedi went into a precipitous freefall that April, nearly tripling the price of basic goods and services. In response to public outcry, the government quickly introduced fuel subsidies, but was ultimately unable to sustain payments to the country's conglomerate of Bulk Oil Distributors. This led to country-wide fuel shortages throughout the summer. Those waiting in long lines at petrol stations anxiously recalled memories of the dire shortages and dangerous black markets of the 1970s and 1980s; rumors sparked and spread about stations with petrol, or those that whose supply was nearly out, leading to periodic panics and hoarding. Police were posted at petrol stations to ensure order.

Meanwhile, ongoing problems caused by the country's aging electricity grid were brought to a head by additional state debts to the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG); unable to meet demand, ECG announced a rolling blackout schedule in early June. Towards the end of the month, outrage erupted once more when, towards the start of the World Cup in Brazil, the Ghana national team demanded their promised Players' Fees from the government before taking the field. Despite its debts, the dwindling access to food, transport, water, and electricity by the average citizen, *and* the ban on carrying out transactions in foreign currency, the government

flew several million U.S. dollars in cash to the players in Brazil. Facing even greater budget shortfalls, the government was then forced to revoke the fuel subsidy in mid-July, and prices soared. Shared taxi conversations—always a reliable ethnographic gauge of the political atmosphere—were the most vociferous I'd ever experienced. Drivers and passengers hashed and rehashed the fare, the cost of oil, the cost of tomatoes at the local market, the statistics on the massive proportion of their wages Ghanaians spent on food and transport compared to other countries, and most of all the arrogance of the footballers—most of whom lived most of the year abroad playing for European teams—to demand their money in such a way, and the utter incompetence of the government not only to acquiesce when the country was in such dire straits, but to do so in such an internationally visible and therefore acutely embarrassing way. It felt as if the collective capacity for sustained outrage was reaching a tremulous peak.

In the midst of these ongoing events, *tweaa* was repeatedly leveraged in everyday conversation and online as shorthand for this collective outrage. In this period, however, the new meaning of *tweaa* as a challenge from below was condensed further by the increasingly widespread use of *tweaa* as a hashtag. Appended to images and utterances alike, #tweaa effectively rendered the content of the post critical commentary on the contemporary state of affairs.

When the rolling blackouts began in June, hundreds of thousands of Ghanaians without power took to their dying phones to tweet their displeasure at ECG. The social media spokesperson responded via the ECG twitter handle, "Even the sun doesn't light the whole earth at the same time so who are you to curse and insult us? If your time is up, y3b3fa wo light," which translates to, "If your time is up, we will 'off' your light," or shut off your electricity. Here the /ɛ/ vowel is rendered with the numeral 3, a common workaround for phone and computer keyboards without the requisite symbols to write in Twi. This tweet was not only widely re-

tweeted, but captured as screenshot and circulated on other platforms, including WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. Without fail, posters laminated the incendiary message with their commentary by tagging the posts with the hashtag #tweaa—effectively calling out ECG, a powerful monopoly and state institution, from the position of the aggrieved populace. The hashtag was readily applied elsewhere, such as this particularly effective tweet from June 27, which reads "See the cedi against the dollar, ah too bad. Meanwhile he sits in that flagstaff house while pple [sic] struggle for petrol. #tweaa"—directly calling out the President (who resides at Flagstaff House) for resting on his power and privilege while his policies deepened inequalities. Others appended #tweaa to images from the world cup, such as that of fans sent to Brazil by the government to support the national team but forced by lack of sufficient funds to sleep in the streets.

Fig. 4.09: Football fans sleeping in the streets in Brazil

Fig. 4.10: ECG's tweet at its disparagers

Running through all of this hashtag commentary was an implicit—and sometimes quite explicit—moral condemnation of state policies and actions. With each iteration, tweaa's meaning was further sedimented as the expression of a powerless populace not merely challenging what they saw as the arrogance and incompetence of power consolidated at the top, but actively protesting it.

154

The foment spills offline: tweaa *as physically present protest*

The use of *tweaa* to highlight outrage was especially visible in June, when the anonymous online consortium Concerned Ghanaians for Responsible Governance (CGRG) called for a series of protests. First attempting to bring attention to the would-be movement with the hashtag #redfriday, the consortium encouraged people to wear red, a traditional color of both mourning and protest, on Fridays. As the government had put into place a program encouraging Ghanaians to wear clothes made from locally printed fabrics on Fridays the year before, this was seen as being in direct contravention of the state's sartorial efforts and therefore a protest of state efforts more broadly. After a number of formal events, the #redfriday movement culminated in an attempt to occupy the seat of government (#occupyflagstaffhouse) in the capital of Accra on the national holiday of Republic Day, July 1. Tweaa was emblazoned on signs, and heavily peppered tags on online commentary during and after the protest.

For a social and political landscape that for decades has been mired in frustrated resignation to the status quo of slow development, failed structural adjustment, and the lost promise of independence, this public call for change was nothing short of extraordinary. It was also a 'bivalent' moment par excellence, a complicated combination of the signifiers and modalities of the global digitally-mediated 'occupy' protest movement with the particularities of local grievances and myriad local understandings of the politics and historical ramifications of the protest—and, of course, the deeply local leveraging of *tweaa*, whose indexical shift in meaning from disapproval to active, physically-present protest from below was made possibly largely by its rapid digitally-mediated circulation.

Yet for all its historical significance, these and other protests in other Ghanaian cities around the same period were in many ways quite limited, both in their scope and impact. The president did not respond to the protests directly or in policy shifts, and momentum fizzled out.

Those protesters who did come out were repeatedly criticized by politicians and local media for being too comfortably middle class to authentically voice the struggles of ordinary Ghanaian citizens. In the ensuing fight over the characterization of these events, defenders of the status quo laminated the signifiers of youthful contestation as disrespectful and deeply negative failures to conform to local norms and expectations, mocking and delegitimizing their power to index future possibility and change. Further re-entrenching the status-quo, Barima was nominated for reinstatement by the President in November of 2014, and officially returned to his post just before the new year.

All of which begs the question: what freedom do young Ghanaians actually have to leverage these mediated spaces, ideologies, and practices to reconfigure possible selves and sociopolitical frameworks? In raising this question and tracing *tweaa*'s ongoing permutations, I hope to have gestured towards the limits of the technological to transform as completely as many in Ghana believe is possible. This is not meant to diminish the very real possibilities afforded by new media in this context and elsewhere as laboratories of experimentation in the subjunctive mood (Bruner 2002), but rather to inject a sense of ethnographic pragmatism. In the context of Ghana's deeply rooted hierarchies and cultural norms, the possibilities for those alternatives to flourish outside of the contexts that enabled them remain tenuous.

Coda

Recently a new viral video surfaced of a 'man on the street' interview. The interviewee uses the onomatopoeic phrase "kpa kpa kpa" to describe the hustling required to survive in the Ghanaian economy. The Ghanaian twittersphere lit up with the joking declaration, "#kpakpakpa is the new #tweaa" — suggesting that tweaa has not only undergone powerful indexical shift to be available as a communicative resource in new ways, but has in a very real sense become the

156

template for future iterations of powerfully re-indexicalized language in the growing lexicon of

youthful, digitally-savvy Ghanaian protest.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Conclusion

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has tracked how digital literacies are socialized across elite and marginalized contexts in Ghana, in the midst of sweeping rhetoric about the power of new technologies to transform the African continent and enable the cultivation of a 'New Ghana.' Taken as a whole, my work argues for attention to situated digital literacies, and especially the ideologies animating the pedagogies through which these literacies are taught, in the face of the persistent and widely held belief that digital technology represents a straightforward panacea for the problems of poverty and underdevelopment. It is also a humble corrective in an increasingly robust and energetic response to centuries of assumptions about the 'dark continent' as a space absent innovation and technological imagination. In doing so I have situated contemporary "silver bullet" claims about technology and its transformational potential in the broader history of interventions into the speaking, reading, and writing practices of those outside the global Standard, and the history of those speakers' agentive responses to such interventions. This dissertation therefore represents a turn in an ongoing conversation within linguistic anthropology and Africanist social theory about the situatedness of literacy ecologies within regimes of development, and an opening bid for an overdue conversation about digital literacy practices in contexts beyond the Post-Industrial world—and particularly about the role of pedagogy in the socialization and uptake of these skills.

In proffering concrete data in response to the dearth of research into the formal socialization of digital literacies beyond the Post-Industrial world, I have suggested answers to such questions as, what does access to digital literacies look like in contemporary Ghana? How

are digital literacies leveraged (or erased) in the circulation of claims about Ghana's future? How are digital literacies taken up across asymmetries of age and class, and how are they made meaningful within the sociohistorical grounding of Ghanaian notions of knowledge, scarcity, and success? In my effort to be as comprehensive in my description and understanding of the many strands of New Ghana claims around ethical personhood, knowledge production, and hierarchy, I chose to cast a wide net, siting myself both in the rarified halls of Ashesi University and the I maintain that tracing socialization into digital literacies *across* these sites is necessary to reveal the slippages between the globally-circulating rhetoric and practice of digital literacies and their consequences. My goal has been to represent these spaces as important sites making up the larger constellation of contemporary Ghanaian experience around digital literacies and technological aspiration.

In Chapter Two, I examined socialization into digital literacies in a relatively rural school that is in many ways representative of the bulk of public schools in the country. I set the widespread assumption at the core of many global development programs about the transparency of technologies and the subsequent ability of users to launch themselves out of poverty against, first, the longstanding history of interventions around development and literacy in both the Global South and inner cities of the post-Industrial world, and specifically in Ghana; and secondly, against the realities of Ghanaian ICT classroom practice. My ethnographic and discursive analysis of these practices illustrates that, since the values of deference to authority in the production and circulation of knowledge in the Ghanaian classroom lie orthogonal to notions of critical-thinking and exploration embedded in imported technologies themselves, efforts to transform the Ghanaian educational and sociopolitical landscape through technologies alone are ultimately misaligned. In other words, throwing technology at a context of rote learning does not lead to transformation; it leads to tech taught by rote. In emphasizing the ways in which digital

159

literacies are taken up and embedded in local genres and routines, I extend the argument long made about print literacies in newly literate societies by linguistic anthropologists (Schieffelin 2000, Ahearn 1994, Besnier 1991, etc.) into digital spheres: that literacy is not a monolithic technology with predictable outcomes of use, but rather a tool necessarily taken up in different ways in different places according to the values, beliefs, and uses of speakers. This chapter ultimately points to the need for attention to pedagogy and literacies in discussions of last-mile connectivity and the so-called digital divide.

In Chapter Three, I travelled 'up the hill' to Ashesi University, to look at the ways in which students' socialization into the school's intensive Honor Code dramatically shifts their orientations to hierarchy, knowledge production, and self-representation. While this may not at first appear to be connected to the technological imaginary, I argue that widespread claims about the ability of technology to transform the individual and the nation is in fact at the heart of the Honor Code's ethical imperatives to do the same. I examined longitudinal socialization into the Honor Code by comparing students' evolving arguments for and against joining the Code from freshman to sophomore years: first from incredulity at the idea of equating survival-orienting copying with "cheating" and breaking ranks to turn in a "cheating" friend, to internalizing the university's universalist moral gaze, exhortations towards critical thinking, and horizontal relationships while retaining qualms about abandoning loyalty to kin-and-friend networks for loyalty to a larger institution and its branded ethos. I contend that, having been socialized into the imperatives underpinning the Honor Code, students align themselves with the expectations of unmarked, cosmopolitan, mobile labor required in the global knowledge economy—expectations linked to the assumptions about end users embedded in both the technologies and technological ideologies imported from post-Industrial contexts.

Chapter Four represents an effort to draw the themes of the preceding chapters together.

By tracing the viral circulation of a YouTube meme, I demonstrate how both youthful challenges to the hierarchies of the Ghanaian status quo and a reimagining of that status quo through the metaphor and practice of horizontal social media networks are at the very core of the contemporary moment. The viral uptake and repeated re-entextualization of this meme across both digitally-mediated and off-line settings led to the semantic expansion of the Twi term *tweaa* from merely expressing disagreement, to indexing the protest of an immoral authority from a powerless position. I argued that the very fact of *this* meme catching the national imagination and being circulated in *this* way speaks to the power of the rhetoric of technological transformation of the hierarchies of status quo in contemporary Ghanaian life—but the failure of these protests to materialize in any substantive way beyond the digital realm speaks to just how entrenched and enduring these hierarchies continue to be. The social life of the #tweaa meme therefore acts as a kind of analogy for the coexistence of both the very real digital foment transforming everyday life for an elite sector of the population, and the very real slippage between the rhetoric of this transformation's imminent democratization and the reality of speakers' access to participation in the technological.

Future work

The analysis contained in this dissertation represents a mere sliver of the substantial mixed-methods data corpus I collected. Following my contention (Flamenbaum 2013) that the use of direct English registers is part of a wider shift in seeing indirection and other traditionally-valued ways of speaking as problematic rather than virtuosic, a more specific focus on the registers and norms of codeswitching that organize and animate the hierarchies and lateral networks of 'old' and 'new' Ghana teaching environments would further substantiate my claims. This could be illuminated by an examination of the ways in which Ashesi students passed on

161

their socialization into particularly direct, Americanized registers of English in the Adesua Yɛ ("learning is sweet") Adult Literacy Program for residents of Berekuso. I filmed this rare instance of Ashesi and Berekuso overlap nightly for several months, and witnessed innumerable instances of Ashesi students initiating repairs to Berekuso students' class-inflected vowels and other prosodic features. I expect a systematic analysis would yield a pattern of Ashesi students' role as experts normalizing the global imprimatur of their ways of speaking, while further pathologizing local speech and local language.

In additional future work, I plan to re-examine the classroom data from the joint ethnomethodological and phenomenological perspective pioneered and refined by various UCLA luminaries (c.f. Garfinkel 2006 [1948]; Goodwin & Goodwin 1996; Duranti 2009; Ochs 2012). Though there has been considerable research on cyborg embodiment since Donna Haraway's socialist-feminist Cyborg Manifesto (1991), much of this literature takes the contemporary enmeshment of self and technology as a priori; few attempt to examine ethnographically how we come to be merged in the first place. A phenomenologically-inflected examination of Berekuso students' attempts to reconcile their bodily alignment to the novel infrastructure of keyboards, mice, and screens, as well as the complex semiotic environment these objects enable, would shed light on the process of phenomenological shift whereby users and technologies become enmeshed in practice.

Processes, however unfold in time. As Fabian (1983) cautions, leaving the participants in our research trapped in the ethnographic present does a disservice both to them and to the fullness of the knowledge we seek to produce. As I write these words, the sophomores I watched engage in such intensive debates about whether or not to join the Honor Code are preparing for their graduation ceremony. Possibly the richest re-examination of the data at hand extends from them and the futures they are embarking upon. How will they fare out in the world? How many

will stay in Africa and contribute to its transformation, and how many will feel more suited for employment abroad in the global knowledge economy in whose image they have been, wittingly or not, refashioned? Whose voices and visions of Ghana and Africa's future will be legible going forward? My own future work lies in a continuing examination of the shifting repertoires of possibility available in the Ghanaian linguistic landscape as these futures unfold.

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