Community Literacy Journal

Fall 2006

Community Literacy: A Rhetorical Model for Personal and Public Inquiry

Lorraine Higgins
Worcester Polytechnic Institute, ldh@wpi.edu

Elenore Long
Bay Path College

Linda Flowers
Carnegie Mellon

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/communityliteracy

Recommended Citation

Community Literacy: A Rhetorical Model for Personal and Public Inquiry

Lorraine Higgins
Elenore Long
Linda Flower

This paper develops a rhetorically centered model of community literacy in the theoretical and practical context of local publics—those spaces where ordinary people develop public voices to engage in intercultural inquiry and deliberation. Drawing on fifteen years of action research in the Community Literacy Center and beyond, the authors characterize the distinctive features of local publics, the deliberative, intercultural discourses they circulate, and the literate practices that sustain them. They identify four critical practices at the heart of community literacy: assessing the rhetorical situation, creating local publics, developing citizens' rhetorical capacities, and supporting change through the circulation of alternative texts and practices.

What is community literacy? Fifteen years ago, when we[1] chose the term "community literacy" for our work in Pittsburgh, we saw it in part as a challenge to the hubris and exclusivity of "cultural literacy," as an affirmation of the social knowledge and rhetorical expertise of people in the urban community in which we worked, and as an assertion that literacy should be defined not merely as the receptive skill of reading, but as the public act of writing and taking social action (Peck, Flower, and Higgins).

As Jeffrey Grabill pointed out in his 2001 analysis of community literacy and the politics of change, our conceptualization of community literacy was, in one sense, an invitation for others in composition/rhetoric to locate the profession's work more broadly in the public realm (89). We located our own projects not in schools or workplaces—at the time, typical sites for composition scholarship and pedagogy—but in a multicultural urban settlement house, a place where private lives and public agendas often merged in social gatherings, youth programs, and community meetings: a place of community-building.[2] But our understanding of the term community literacy referred to more than the need to expand our *sites* of practice. It stood in contrast to cultural and critical literacies as a new kind of rhetorical *activity* encompassing a unique set of goals, literate practices, resources, and relationships. Community literacy was, for us, "a search for an alternative discourse," a way for people to acknowledge each other's multiple forms of expertise through talk and text and to draw on their differences as a resource for addressing shared problems (Peck, Flower, and Higgins 205). Thus, we were not describing an existing community but aspiring to construct community around this distinct rhetorical agenda, to call into being what Linda Flower has more recently described as "vernacular local publics" ("Intercultural" 252; "Can You Build").

The projects that sprang from our collaboration have taken us in many different directions: developing programs for college students who mentor urban youth (Long, "Rhetoric of

Social Action"); helping parents and inner-city teens collaborate on life-project plans (Long, Peck, and Baskins); organizing marginalized groups such as welfare mothers or free-clinic patients to address conflicts through grassroots publications (Higgins; Higgins and Brush); and documenting the expertise of low-status workers, welfare-to-work employees, and disabled students in the public policy discussions of a university think tank (Flower, "Intercultural"). And, as this journal itself will attest, many others in composition and rhetoric have expanded the practices and sites for what is now broadly referred to as community literacy. As Cushman, Barbier, Mazak, and Petrone have noted, this work tends to fall under two rubrics: service learning and action research (209). Many service learning projects foreground the twin goals of public contribution and personal growth. Such programs enhance the rhetorical skills and critical awareness of student interns or mentors who work in non-profits, churches, and after-school programs (e.g., see Deans; Goldblatt, "Van"; Herzberg; Schutz and Gere; Stock and Swensen; Swan). Taking another tack, university scholars and teachers engaged in action research often draw on their disciplinary expertise to intervene in the literate practices of communities, foregrounding aims of social justice and scholarship. They analyze their own interventions to contribute to disciplinary knowledge about the relationships among literacy, education, social policy, and democratic participation (e.g., see Coogan, "Service"; Cushman, *Struggle*; Goldblatt, "Alinsky's"; Hull and James). Other compositionists have conducted ethnographic and other naturalistic studies of literacy within communities and families (e.g., see Brandt; Cintron; Grabill; Moss; Smitherman), contributing to an interdisciplinary strand of scholarship that began several decades ago in education and sociolinguistics (e.g., see Barton and Hamilton; Farr; Freire; Harris, Kamhi and Pollock; Heath; Hull and Schultz; Scribner and Cole; Street; Zentella)[3].

Community literacy now refers to this whole family of literate and social practices that draw their strength from different theoretical frameworks—from progressive pedagogy, to community organizing and action research, to discourse analysis, cultural critique, and theories of organizational change. This paper sketches a rhetorically centered model of community literacy as personal and public inquiry. Our approach to community literacy

- uses writing to support collaborative inquiry into community problems;
- calls up local publics around the aims of democratic deliberation; and
- transforms personal and public knowledge by restructuring deliberative dialogues among individuals and groups across lines of difference.

A rhetorically grounded community literacy opens up a unique space where intercultural partners can inquire into and deliberate about problems, working toward both personal and public change. At the same time, our approach entails a distinctive form of praxis that guides rhetorical theory building. Our action research with local publics allows us to work toward a model of local public discourse, one that fills the gap between descriptive accounts of situated literacy and more abstract theories of public discourse. In comparison to both *formal* (Barton and Hamilton) and *adversarial* or *subaltern* publics (Roberts-Miller), the *local* publics of community literacy extend Fraser's notion of *alternative* publics. Located in place and time, they offer fine-grained images of spaces where ordinary people develop public voices, letting us characterize the distinctive features of these discursive spaces, the discourses they circulate, and the literate practices that sustain them.

Analyzing the work of local publics extends Iris Young's philosophical theory of communicative democracy, which attempts to overcome the barriers to substantive dialogue

between people who do not typically talk with one another. In our experience, such aspirations need to be even more operational. A rhetorical model would guide the development of new practices of collaboration, argument, and problem solving across hierarchical and diverse publics. Finally, accounting for inquiry in this rhetorical model shows us a process of invention and knowledge building more public than that of the classroom, more collaborative than that of media communication (cf. Hauser). And it shows us a new kind of counterpublic (cf. Warner) that attempts to transform the usual patterns of public knowledge building.[4]

In the spirit of Deweyan pragmatism, we want to move toward a grounded, observation-based theory of community literacy as personal and public inquiry by examining its rhetorical features in practice. The work of developing, implementing, and testing literate practices for intercultural inquiry and deliberation is a response to the specific challenges we have

> **The work of developing, implementing, and testing literate practices for intercultural inquiry and deliberation is a response to the specific challenges we have observed in schools, institutions, and individual lives in our multicultural urban contexts.**

observed in schools, institutions, and individual lives in our multicultural urban contexts. The kinds of problems that erupt at this intersection of private and public lives are deeply complex and persistent. Moreover, they involve multiple and diverse stakeholders—a wide array of individuals and groups involved in, affected by, or able to do something about a problem. Such groups rarely share common perspectives on problems, much less a sense of what constitutes the common good. They may not envision themselves as a community, yet if they hope to address complex and far-reaching problems that cross interest groups and demand shared resources and knowledge, they will need to face the deliberative question: *What should we, as a community, do?* And in the face of incredible differences in power, in perspectives, and in discourse styles, they must ask: *How can we, as a community, reason together?* The answer to these open questions shapes not only future action but, we will argue, shapes relationships as well. We seek an inquiry-based, deliberative process that can help stakeholders frame open questions as a community, elicit their multiple—often conflicting—perspectives, and put those perspectives into generative dialogue that promotes change.

In this paper we want to talk about this rhetorically centered approach in terms of critical practices that support inquiry and deliberation. In fifteen years of action and reflection on a variety of projects, we have identified four distinct literate practices that have helped us articulate, support, and rethink the goals of this rhetorical model:

1) assessing the rhetorical situation,
2) creating a "local public",
3) developing participants' rhetorical capacities, and
4) supporting personal and public transformation through circulation of alternative texts and practices.

In this article, we articulate this four-part model for community-centered personal and public inquiry.

1. Assessing the Rhetorical Situation

The process of writing about community problems begins, as all writing does, with an analysis of the rhetorical situation—identifying the nature of the exigency that prompts response and the potential audiences that might be addressed (Bitzer). Careful assessment of the rhetorical situation is particularly critical and complex in multicultural and hierarchically organized communities, where different stakeholder groups with unique social perspectives will likely perceive the problem in different ways and will recognize different audiences as appropriate. In this context, there are no "insiders" who possess the means to analyze the situation "correctly." It is not the activist researcher's job to define "the" problem on her own or with "insider" assistance and then impose a solution from without.[5] Rather, when writing about community problems in an intercultural context, all participants enter a discourse and address a situation they do not fully understand—including groups with direct experience, experts who have studied the problem, political leaders with the power to shape public policy, and literacy workers who are there to support change. Any *one* group's perspective on a problem will always be partial—both limited and biased toward its own interests. That is not to devalue the contributions of any one group, but to insist on genuine collaboration across groups, for all stakeholders have knowledge, cultural capital, material resources, and experience that can be critical to assessing the rhetorical situation. In the community literacy work we have done, diverse stakeholders shape the parameters of each project—the often shifting sense of the problem the group addresses, its rhetorical goals, the potential audiences whom they call upon to listen and act, and the outcomes they produce. Literacy leaders, researchers, and student mentors who work in these projects contribute not by defining the problem for others or offering prepackaged responses, but by helping groups articulate, document, and update their sense of the rhetorical situation as it unfolds and develops. Moreover, they prompt stakeholder groups to reflect on the partiality of their own perspectives and on the inclusiveness of the collaborative process. They are particularly attuned to the ways in which some stakeholder groups or perspectives might be excluded, and they support groups by helping them develop strategies that might foster inclusion and more reflective inquiry.

This ongoing interpretation of the rhetorical situation itself is as important as the public proposals and positions that might grow out of collaborative inquiry. Prior to claims and proposals that circulate in public deliberation are tacit perceptions, assumptions, and experiences that inform them. And yet groups who engage in public deliberation often do not have access to the unique social perspectives of others. Thus, they cannot understand the logics behind others' viewpoints. When diverse groups collaborate in analyzing the rhetorical situations that motivate public debate, they unearth tacit perceptions and experiences that underlie others' claims, creating grounds for building future understanding and agreement.

Thus far, we have argued how important it is for stakeholders and literacy leaders to assess and document the rhetorical situation they perceive throughout the process of collaborative inquiry. But what should they assess, and how, and for what purposes? Rhetorical analysis means, for us, not only identifying the exigency—the perceived problems—and audience—potential stakeholders addressed—as Bitzer argued. It also involves reflecting critically on

the process of problem solving itself and the ways in which existing practices and histories of decision making and argument might privilege and exclude important stakeholder groups. For us, assessing the rhetorical situation is an ongoing process that involves:

- configuring the *problem space* or object of deliberation,
- identifying relevant *stakeholders* in the community,
- assessing existing *venues* for public problem solving, and
- analyzing *literate practices* used to represent and address problems and the way these practices structure stakeholder *participation*.

Toward this end, it is useful to approach public deliberation as a cognitive-social-cultural *activity*. Yrjö Engeström has argued that activities are systems comprised of *objects*, the problem or material upon which people act; *outcomes*, what is generated by the activity; *tools*, physical and symbolic instruments by which objects are transformed into outcomes; a *community,* those who address the same object; *division of labor*, how tasks, power, and status are apportioned between community members; *rules*, norms, conventions for acting; and *subjects*, the person/group "whose agency is chosen as the point of view for a particular activity" ("Developmental" 67). Activity theory acknowledges the situatedness and materiality of literate practices such as public deliberation, locating practices in particular communities who have particular histories and who draw on particular resources to do their work. Examining these components of an activity system allows for a richer rhetorical analysis that might reveal flaws in the system and points of intervention, as we will illustrate.

Consider how this framework might be used to assess the activity of public deliberation. The object of such activity is a problem that motivates future action by a community, in this case stakeholders who are involved in, affected by, or able to do something about the problem. In a diverse community, problems are hard creatures to pin down; they change shape depending on one's orientation. Various members of a community might have an investment in and a sense of urgency around a particular issue or series of recent events, but the nature of those investments differs, and they will rarely define the problem they "share" in the same way. Problems are not empirical entities "out there"; they are, as so famously argued in the exchange between Lloyd Bitzer and Scott Consigny, interpretations.

In this context, we attempt to configure the problem not from the vantage point of a particular subject but from the less stable, shifting, and complex vantage of a pluralistic community. Thus, we see the object and starting point of deliberation not as a singular problem definition or claim but as a loosely configured *problem space*—a cluster of competing perspectives that circulate in a community, demanding attention, further interpretation, and response.[6] The outcome of deliberation is actionable knowledge—new understandings and arguments that might inform future response to the problem. Such outcomes are achieved by drawing on available resources—the literate tools and established rules for public discussion and decision making. In examining the division of labor in public deliberation, we identify various stakeholders' levels of participation.

In the mid-1990s, for example, talk around landlord/tenant disputes in Pittsburgh's Perry Hilltop neighborhood grew from a low buzz to a distracting chatter that became hard to ignore. This "talk" took the form of gossip, complaint, anecdote among friends, and documented incidents in local news, police records, and court hearings. One would be

hard pressed to define *the* landlord/tenant problem, but a familiar set of refrains echoed throughout the community: irresponsible tenants, negligent, insensitive landlords, and unkempt and abandoned buildings that eroded property values and neighbors' sense of safety.[7] This circulating discourse loosely defined the problem space and positioned different stakeholders—subjects with different interests and values—in relation to one another. Analyzing the rhetorical situation meant paying attention to this emerging problem-oriented talk, parsing out who was speaking and listening, and anticipating different perspectives or refrains that might emerge as different stakeholders came together.

In this case, key stakeholders included not only local landlords and tenants but also homeowners and community organizations concerned about the effects of rental disputes on the larger neighborhood. Literacy leaders interviewed these key groups, attending to the history and conflicting values and interests, both economic and social, inherent in the landlord/tenant "problem." Perry was a neighborhood in transition. Recent layoffs by a key employer in the area had put some residents and property owners out of work, and some properties had been sold quickly to absentee landlords with no ties to the community. Owners and residents had known each other well in the past; this was no longer necessarily true. In other cases, the landlord was not an absentee owner, but another mid- to low-income resident trying to supplement his or her own uncertain income with rental money. With little reserve capital, a broken furnace or tenant damage could stretch landlords beyond their resources. Social contracts that had up to this point guided people's behavior toward one another were no longer in place. The only guide available was Pennsylvania (PA) housing law, which one mediator admitted "had a lot of grey areas" in terms of rights and responsibilities. Moreover, appeal to PA law did not address ways to develop better working relationships between tenants and landlords—a proactive strategy for warding off future conflict. In fact, PA law and its application in the courts pitted landlords and tenants *against* one another, eroding relationships further. As one president of a neighborhood association lamented, by the time disputants reached court, too much damage may already have been done to relationships and property. A courtroom is not a venue for proactive deliberation because finding fault—through reconstruction of the facts—takes precedence over forging a plan for the future.

Configuring the problem space in this project and others helped Community Literacy Center project leaders identify stakeholders that needed to be at the table in an intercultural inquiry, and it previewed divergent perspectives that might emerge and be further developed in group writing and discussion.[8] But in an attempt to support genuine dialogue across these perspectives, project leaders, along with various stakeholders, also assessed the existing tools for deliberation in the community—the physical and symbolic mediating instruments typically used to address problems rising to the level of public attention. Specifically, we examined existing venues for deliberation and inquiry and how the literate practices that structured this activity reproduced certain values, norms, identities, and relationships. We considered how tasks and power were divided among stakeholders and examined the rules and conventions that typically structured their work together. These elements of the activity system seemed to converge when we looked specifically at different stakeholders' level of participation in the process. Who was empowered to speak, where, and how? Whose voices were and were not heard? What kinds of practices might foreclose or open up the possibility of inclusive dialogue?

In the landlord/tenant project, we found few venues in which landlords and tenants might engage in sustained problem solving together. One landlord indicated that he had attended meetings with other landlords "just trading horror stories." Although such gripe sessions were cathartic, he acknowledged that they failed to translate grievances into new proposals for action and failed to traverse the limited borders of the self-enclosed landlord group. No tenants attended these meetings. Tenants on Perry Hilltop seemed to lack a public venue even for expressing their concerns, other than at an occasional town meeting where other agendas seemed to dominate and individual voices were often lost. One activist expressed her cynicism about such "open" meetings. Stakeholders are invited to the microphone to contribute ideas, she explained, but too frequently, the organizers "call a meeting, pick your brains, and then do nothing."

Literate practices at play in typical community meetings (e.g., giving oral testimony) rendered less powerful participants invisible. One tenant reported that she had tried to participate but was frustrated with participants not "listening to everyone" and leaders failing to ask "good questions." Talk at such meetings is ephemeral, and divergent viewpoints can easily be dismissed or left out of the public record when the minutes, reports and proposals generated are even made public. This tenant explained: "Sometimes you get in groups, and people don't know you, and when you leave, they don't know you either." More powerful stakeholders with formal education and technical expertise—such as outspoken community leaders with professional knowledge of housing policy and law—can dominate discussion, overshadowing those whose expertise may be grounded in a different set of experiences and in less authorized styles of discourse such as storytelling. Some tenants may opt out for this reason and may instead circulate their concerns and hopes more privately among sympathetic networks of friends. An analysis of these existing practices and their tendency to privilege certain stakeholder groups, silence some perspectives, and promote further factionalism informed the eventual process that participants would use in their CLC landlord/tenant project, a process that included the use of first-person narrative and written documentation of rival interpretations and reasoning that emerged at the table.

In our own work, we have used the components of an activity system to guide our ongoing discussion and analysis of the rhetorical situation with stakeholder groups, both in preliminary interviews and throughout the projects themselves. Other researchers have identified additional methods for analyzing rhetorical situations in unfamiliar and complex community settings. They may conduct formal discourse analysis of key texts and discourses in play, or record the social histories of arguments and ideas that circulate within a community (e.g., see Coogan, "Public," "Service Learning"; Hull and James). It may also be useful to draw on existing written and oral histories or ethnographies of a community to understand emerging problems or to look at empirical studies of the literate practices we hope to support.[9]

Assessing the rhetorical situation in these ways can help us identify key problems and stakeholders, challenges to their deliberating together, and potential sites and strategies for intervention. On Pittsburgh's Northside, our rhetorical analysis helped us understand emerging exigencies and groups vying for public attention as well those who had been most disenfranchised from public debate: low-income tenants and landlords, African American teenagers facing discrimination and stress in schools and on the streets, patients struggling to be understood in community hospitals and clinics. Our analysis of dominant discours-

es—in public schools and youth policy, in PA landlord/tenant law, in public discussions of welfare and poverty, and in local emergency rooms—helped us see how power and community relationships were shaped by specific literate practices, to be wary of those practices, and to seek ways to disrupt them in our own projects.[10] Most of all, we realized the need to develop new ways of talking and writing that would document rather than discourage diverse experiences and voices, to create what we call "local publics." In what follows, we describe the requirements of this complex practice.

2. Creating a "Local Public": A Rhetorical Space for Intercultural Inquiry and Deliberation

In contrast to the usual goals of community service, service learning, community organizing, or issue-centered advocacy, our rhetorical model of community literacy seeks to create a *local public*. By this term we mean something more than the public meetings or think tanks we have supported in community centers, church basements, health clinics, and college auditoriums. And we mean something less broad than the imaginary national "public" of the media or the demographic units targeted by marketers. In the rhetorical and philosophical theory on which we draw here, a public is a rhetorical creation; it is called into being by being addressed as a body (i.e., as a public) of interested participants; it exists only if they are willing to lend their attention, to participate in the discourse; and it functions as a public by the circulation of ideas: through reference, response, and rearticulation (Warner 96–114).

In a democracy, one of the most necessary but problem-ridden functions of a public is to deliberate about shared social concerns, from war, welfare, and public education to local policies —such as the banning of hats in high schools.

Theorists such as Nancy Fraser and Gerard Hauser argue that the public sphere is in fact a network of such publics and that we all participate in multiple publics, from activist readers of *MOVE ON* to football fans. In a democracy, one of the most necessary but problem-ridden functions of a public is to deliberate about shared social concerns, from war, welfare, and public education to local policies—such as the banning of hats in high schools.

The idealized model of the public sphere based on liberal, Enlightenment political theory is best described by Jürgen Habermas. But its assumptions and problems are deeply embedded in our traditions of a liberal, humanistic education (Atwill; Roberts-Miller). Called the "bourgeois public sphere" because of its roots in the rise of the middle class and capitalism, this ideal asserts the need to bracket or ignore social difference, to exclude the personal and private in a focus on *common* concerns, and to arrive at consensus though critical-rational argument.

Empirical descriptions of actual publics suggest that the idealized public's wishful fantasy of merely ignoring difference does not work (e.g., see Karpowitz and Mansbridge's study of consensus-oriented public meetings). In practice, the critical-rational argument it privileges can devalue and exclude alternative ways of speaking and knowing—especially those of marginalized groups (Mansbridge). As Iris Young has pointed out, the knowledge

produced in a critical-rational framework of deliberation is often partial; in its devaluation of the personal and its quest for generalizability, its claims are often decontextualized; its consensus is often a false one ("Communication"). Critical rationality excludes issues deemed private—consider the battle to recognize domestic violence as a shared, public concern—and dismisses some discourses (e.g., non-schooled, performative, or affective ones) as inadmissible kinds of argument. This in turn has produced a rather limited, selective number of visible publics frequently dominated by elite, male, and capitalistic concerns (Hauser; Warner) that have had the power to style themselves as "*the*" public (Fraser 61). In short, the contemporary critical problem of the democratic public sphere is the problem of dealing—in just and generative ways—with difference.

Deliberative democracy is an ongoing experiment in how to do this. Some theoretical models of deliberation are strictly procedural, while others insist on a *telos* and judge deliberation by its ability to support values, such as liberty, opportunity, or justice. Those who support consensual models fear the divisive effects of diversity, demanding consensus based on the common good. Pluralists, who fear tyranny more than disharmony, ask just who gets to define what is "common" and are willing to seek compromise and live with disagreements (Gutman and Thompson 21–29). But in practice the dominant model of difference management pits publics against one another as special interest groups competing to win. When deliberation is structured as adversarial argument, stakeholders come to open questions and problems with their answers and solutions already formed. The goal, rather than generating knowledge, is to close off discussion and achieve a resolution by force of argument, by market-type interactions such as bargaining, contracting, or by vote (Bohman and Rehg ix-xiii). However, with Iris Young, we believe that a more generative model would call us beyond both identity- and interest-based images of difference into communication with others ("Communication"). It would structure arguments as dialogical reasoning in search of transformed understanding.

These images of a deliberative, democratic public, attuned to communication, inquiry, and justice help us sketch what the local publics of community literacy hope to achieve. First, unlike a discussion group for advocates, such a public actively *seeks out diverse stakeholders and rival perspectives,* but not for the purposes of adversarial argument. Structured around inquiry rather than interest-based persuasion, it helps participants discover what their interests indeed are. Unlike the positioning that identity politics creates, it draws participants into an inquiry in which cultural identity is a source of rival perspectives rather than of rigid positions. Secondly, it *puts participants and their perspectives into generative dialogue,* treating difference as a resource. Dialogue that promotes exchange, consideration of, and response to rival perspectives can unearth unforeseen points of connection and conflict that can enable as well as foreclose future action. Third, such an inquiry *works toward just resolution*. That is, it reaches not for the closure of consensus or the justification for a particular claim but for a working resolution—a contingent agreement on what to do that acknowledges the need for continued negotiation in the face of reasonable difference. Political issues are, as Gerard Hauser and Amy Grim argue, "in the realm of the contingent" and are addressed though rhetoric. Moreover, "for rhetoric to be democratic it must go beyond procedural norms to embrace practices of *democratic inclusion*" (9). Inclusion means not just the expression of ideas but their serious consideration in the deliberative process.

Finally, to achieve these goals, a local public will require two things. First, dominant discourses of deliberative argument have been exclusionary; thus a local public must develop an alternative discourse for doing this work. In turn, participants will require the rhetorical competency to develop and engage in such as discourse. This is not merely the elite competence of critical-rationality that uses universal premises to produce rational, generalizable arguments. A local public communicates in a hybrid discourse: ideas and identities are argued and performed in the languages of its multiple participants. Deliberation in this context is in fact unusually demanding, in that it requires us to listen so well that we can articulate the arguments of others in terms they will accept, to avoid giving or taking offense, and to speak to others who disagree with what they will see as valid reasons, in terms they will understand (cf. Roberts-Miller 207; Young, Becker, and Pike).

That said, one must recognize that the teenagers and college mentors, landlords and tenants, or women from an urban clinic who join a community literacy project come with multiple agendas. But they rarely come prepared to see themselves as problem-solving partners who will be taken seriously. The families, neighborhood advocates, and university types who file into a Community Conversation[11] are rarely prepared to abandon their scripted roles and work with others in new ways—that is, to join a challenging hybrid discourse that values both rational-critical and performative argument, seeks rivals, and works toward collaborative solutions to problems. In short, community literacy enjoins its participants to become a certain *kind* of public, and to engage in rhetorical practices that belong to neither the community nor university. So community literacy must scaffold the rhetorical competence it requires.

And yet, what would turn this unlikely collection of folks in dialogue into a *public*, much less a distinctive one with the power to sustain a discussion? A public exists, Warner argues, not as a material body, but through the process of *circulation*—the flow, cycling, and transformation of *discourse*. And the interesting question becomes, what circulates and how? For example, over a period of five years, the CLC's extended project on "teen stress" put into circulation a distinctive "counterdiscourse," to use Fraser's term (67). This body of texts, thinking tools, ideas, and activities circulated as a chain of CLC projects building on, responding to, and lifting from one another; as a series of booklets printed, distributed, then posted on a website in use by college students 10 years later; as multiple videos and two hypermedia tools that turned up in schools, Planned Parenthood, a detention center, and a hospital clinic; and as dissertation research, academic publication, and local TV coverage. So one test of a public, which we will return to later, is its power to circulate discourse both within a group itself and beyond.

Looking at community literacy from the perspective of rhetoric and political philosophy helps us name this attempt to call into being a distinctive local public: one in which deliberation looks like inquiry, conflicting perspectives and marginalized expertise are a resource, and better resolutions to shared problems are the goal. However, a theory of *local* publics also needs to recognize the very material base of this process—the nitty-gritty work of recognizing the stakeholders, opinion makers, and power brokers and drawing them into this process. It starts, as Eli Goldblatt ("Alinsky's") describes so well, with rubbing shoulders, listening, building networks among the city "suits" and teenagers alike, invitations, the circulation of "news," documents, proposals, and phone calls to those circulators who "spread the word" in the city, the university, and the neighborhood. The process of metaphorical

public making depends on the material reality of creating, on the one hand, a welcoming space for its diverse participants and on the other, forums and events that upset people's expectations and draw them into a new kind of discourse which doesn't end when they walk out the door. It depends on the way institutions such as community centers, public schools, universities, and city offices, are drawn into the process, offering needed space, money, people, and validation. But sponsorship can change the sponsor as well.

When the graduate students at Carnegie Mellon's School of Public Policy & Management enlisted the Community Think Tank model to hold a conference on imminent changes in welfare policy, their project replaced the traditional meeting of black and white civic "leaders" with a ballroom of people—that included a large contingent of women on welfare—who were engaged in direct deliberation on better options with researchers, policy makers, government officials and social workers. It produced a substantive report and, what the Dean had asserted never happened with "community" events, a substantive discussion. Deliberative intercultural inquiry is a performative rhetoric that needs to be structured and modeled if we hope to support marginalized voices and avoid the default practices of interest group discourse or of false consensus. And as we will argue in the next two sections, its demanding rhetorical moves need to be both articulated and nurtured.

3. Developing Participants' Rhetorical Capacities

A rhetorical model for personal and public inquiry attempts to overcome the barriers to substantive dialogue that people unaccustomed to speaking with one another are likely to encounter. Others have recognized the need to address such barriers. Iris Young, for instance, has proposed a communicative model for inclusive democracy that "justly requires a plurality of perspectives, speaking styles, and ways of expressing the particularity of social situation" (*Intersecting* 73). In contrast to the more abstract level of Young's political philosophy, however, our own goal has been to theorize rhetorical practices at the local level—to support local deliberation in action. Given this goal, we describe below three rhetorical capacities that might enable people to deliberate across lines of hierarchy and difference:

- eliciting situated knowledge,
- engaging difference in dialogue, and
- constructing and reflecting upon wise options.

In addition, we describe strategies developed in community literacy projects that support stakeholders in this process.

People develop these capacities in collaboration with others; these capacities depend and draw on different kinds of expertise as well as different kinds of social capital. As researchers we cannot nor would we want to impose some stock set of strategies; our model for community literacy is not a formula or set of steps. Rather we must always work *with* participants to find effective tools that groups can adapt from project to project. Such a model locates community literacy in the classical tradition of rhetoric as education for civic participation.

The rhetorical model we propose treats stakeholders' situated knowledge as a resource for transformed understanding and wise action. The term *situated knowledge* signals the perspectival and partial nature of knowing (Dewey 132), the fact that "our knowing is inevitably local knowledge" (Flower, Long and Higgins 67; cf. Geertz). This fund of knowledge is

a rich, experientially-based resource for interpreting and problematizing familiar abstractions and stock solutions to problems that have not yet been fully understood. Accessing different stakeholders' situated knowledge can help groups construct and assess the unique situations and "complex social contexts" that lie behind problems (Flower, Long and Higgins 6).[12] When diverse stakeholders put their situated knowledge into play, the process helps all stakeholders at the table see their own situated knowledge in terms of the larger landscape (Young, *Intersecting* 67)—to recognize that the starting points from which others join the conversation are different from one's own (Langsdorf 316). Accessing the situated knowledge of others helps stakeholders critically assess and expand their own knowledge of a problem in ways that can have important consequences.[13]

Yet there are obstacles to eliciting situated knowledge and to using it both to rethink culturally loaded issues (like respect, responsibility, work, and welfare) and to inform future action. Foremost, situated knowledge is difficult to tap. In day-to-day life, it operates tacitly and often goes unarticulated. Simply asking participants in community literacy projects to share their perspectives in writing and discussion does not guarantee they can or will. As literacy leaders, we have needed to provide a great deal of support to draw out the knowledge that some participants assumed would be obvious to outside readers. Literacy projects that do not provide sufficient scaffolding to elicit this knowledge leave participants vulnerable to being misread or to reproducing dominant discourses already in place.[14] Participants need time, support, and material resources to compose their stories, analyses, and proposals before going public with them.

But to support personal and public inquiry, a rhetorical model has to do more than elicit situated knowledge of problems; it must also recognize and address differences that may emerge in stakeholders' experiences and interpretations. We have found that engaging others—acknowledging, assessing, and substantively responding to their perspectives—helps participants locate generative tensions, misunderstandings, and common assumptions critical to addressing problems in the long term. But the process of engagement entails social, emotional, and intellectual challenges. If we see others as adversaries, or as less authorized to speak, we may resist acknowledging and possibly legitimizing their point of view.[15] Engaging difference in dialogue also makes strong intellectual demands (Flower, Long, and Higgins 121–32). It is difficult to imagine and assess the response of someone else— to project anything but a stereotypical response—when that someone is a socially distant Other, someone whom we would rarely pass on the street, let alone engage in dialogue (Young, *Intersecting* 57–59). The challenge is to recognize Others as so present, so real, that we not only understand but become more able to imagine the unique contributions they make to the inquiry.

People inquire into personal and public problems not simply because they wish to express or share their viewpoints, but because they want change. Ultimately, a rhetorical model of inquiry will create the potential for informed and just action in the future. Yet participants find it challenging to move from expression and analysis to action. One obstacle is that when people think of taking action, they often think of single or simplistic solutions and feel compelled to argue for them as positions. In this move toward action—even after having acknowledged multiple perspectives and having recognized the complexity of the problem and involvement of others at the table in these projects—participants often first reach for default, prepackaged, or stock solutions that already circulate in the dominant discourse

(e.g., make moms on welfare go back to work so they won't be tempted to have more babies, or eliminate all work requirements because they are insulting. Throw disruptive teens out of school so they won't bother other students, or eliminate suspension altogether because it is unfair). As these examples show, there is often a disjuncture between the richly nuanced experiences and perspectives that the process of intercultural inquiry creates and these stock answers to the problem.

Below we foreground key discoveries that have emerged from our action research: the kinds of challenges people face in developing these capacities, the kinds of scaffolding that seems to help and why, as well as the need for reflection to hone our own rhetorical capacities for developing these scaffolds from project to project and for increasing our understanding of personal and public inquiry.

Eliciting Situated Knowledge

To develop participants' capacities to articulate, elaborate, and circulate their situated knowledge—both their own and one another's—we have developed several ways to scaffold and support their process.

Problem Narratives

We have found that narrative is a powerful tool for eliciting stakeholders' situated knowledge. Situated knowledge is grounded in lived experience; people often encode and express this knowledge through various forms of narrative—anecdote, dramatic reenactments of a problem, or personal stories they share (Higgins and Brush 11). Furthermore, narrative can make important contributions to deliberative inquiry, turning individual knowledge into a communal resource (Higgins, Flower, and Deems 21); it can provide a means of communication available to all stakeholders at the table to the extent that "everyone has stories to tell … and can tell her story with equal authority" (Young, *Intersecting* 71; see also Flower and Deems 116; Higgins, Flower, and Deems 19). Narrative also has a persuasive power that can help unfamiliar audiences identify with the teller's perspective in a way that abstract and generalized positions or claims do not (Higgins and Brush 30). Moreover, narrative helps interlocutors recognize when the differences between their social positions require the "humble recognition" that one cannot fully imagine another's perspective (Young, *Intersecting* 53; cf. Lawrence).

Yet personal stories alone don't necessarily support intercultural inquiry. The challenge is harnessing narrative's capacity to dramatize the reasons behind the teller's values and priorities (Young, *Intersecting* 72) and to illustrate the rich contextual background and social conditions in which problems play themselves out. Narratives that elaborate on stakeholders' reasoning, social positioning, and life contexts generate new information and propel discussion that can move people beyond personal expression to public problem solving.

When narrative is elaborated in this way and focused around the causes of and responses to problems, it can be used for case analysis. In contemporary research circles, John C. Flanagan first identified the power of problem-focused narratives—what he called *critical incidents*[16]—to lay claim to situated knowledge. In the context of community-based deliberative inquiry, critical incidents elicit carefully contextualized accounts of how people actually experience problems involving, for instance, landlord/tenant relations, gang violence, school suspension policies, or welfare reform.

In Community Think Tanks, student researchers do the groundwork for deliberation by collecting critical incidents from a wide range of stakeholders. They use this data to create a briefing book of prototypical problem scenarios (e.g., a conflict between an overworked/behind-schedule nursing aid and an understaffed nursing supervisor). The stakeholders' richly situated interpretations of the scenario allow for a dynamic interchange.

Composed in text, critical incidents translate lived experience into tangible resources for sustained joint inquiry. Participants embed them in articles, dramatic scripts, comic strips, and narratives published in newsletters or handbooks and enacted with the dramatic productions performed within community problem-solving dialogues.

However, using critical incidents and other kinds of narrative to interpret a problem in the service of joint inquiry isn't something that necessarily comes naturally or easily. For instance, to interpret policies for welfare reform in the context of their own lives, welfare moms had to avoid the default schema of popular hero and victim narratives, both of which might erode their credibility and mask the complexity of their lives and decisions (Higgins and Brush 5). Transforming the knowledge of experience into realistically complex problem narratives is demanding work.[17]

Supportive Readers

To support this process of knowledge transformation, we have found it helpful to intervene in several ways.[18] First, as writers begin to construct narratives that illustrate the conflicts in their lives, they benefit from working with supportive readers—college mentors, volunteer readers from the community, or fellow participants in the project. As collaborative planning "supporters," these readers serve as sounding boards, listening to writers' stories take shape (Flower, *Construction* 141–49).[19] A supporter provides not only moral support but also incentive to explain the logic of the writer's experience to a reader who is unfamiliar with her story.[20]

Prompts for Elaboration

Writers' initial stories tend to be under-elaborated, making it hard for readers to understand the motivation behind a narrator or character's actions, their reasoning, or their interpretation of the situation (Higgins and Brush 14). Using supportive readers can help, but we have also supported this process through instructional materials and prompts; for example, a handout listing narrative techniques such as dialogue, inner monologue, or detailed setting descriptions—strategies by which writers might elaborate events and perspectives. We have also found it helpful to prompt explicitly for the story-behind-the-story, a strategy that plumbs for the writer's deeper level of interpretation. Responding to such questions as W*hat would a teenager see going on here that adults wouldn't? Why did she do that? Why did he say that?*, the writer conveys the "movies of the mind" she may be using to interpret a complex situation. These prompts ask her to set the stage, script the action, assign the roles (Flower, Long, and Higgins 6). Such questions may seem basic enough, but the explanation writers provide can be surprising and enlightening to outside readers.

The story-behind-the-story and other prompts for elaboration reveal the *hidden logic* of often unspoken motives, values, and assumptions that people use to interpret complex situations, a logic invaluable to deliberative inquiry. The impulse for readers to judge and dismiss what they don't understand seems to be a glitch in the human genome, a tendency one

has to overtly monitor to hold in check (Gumperz and Tannen 305). As a teenager named Andre pointed out in a newsletter analyzing his city's new curfew policy, "Sometimes adults [police] don't know what teenagers are really thinking, and they misunderstand teenagers' actions and intentions" (*Raising* 2). His article revealed why the curfew policy invoked for him personal encounters with racial profiling, police stopping him because "his hair" made him "look like someone in a picture." Articulated and shared, hidden logic permits other stakeholders to grasp the interpretative power of cultural knowledge other than their own (Flower, "Talking" 40).

Interventions like these do not imply that the people who use them are somehow cognitively or culturally deficient. Quite the contrary. Transforming one's experience into a resource for joint inquiry is often a new enterprise for everyone at the table. Scaffolding that process is a way of honoring the demanding work of transforming lived experience into narrative that serves the aims of problem analysis, collaboration, and argument. Moreover, new situations call for new scaffolds. Adult welfare recipients, for example, needed support to reconstruct chronologies of traumatic life events. The use of "timelines" helped them remember and organize the chronology of their life events for unfamiliar readers (Higgins and Brush).[21]

Engaging Difference in Dialogue

To engage difference in dialogue, it is not enough to invite stakeholders with different perspectives into the room.[22] It is also necessary to represent those not present through outside documents (Flower, "Intercultural" 250), to offer strategies for predicting and engaging rival perspectives, and to use writing to keep difference in dialogue.

Diverse Stakeholders

To make difference real to participants, we have found it useful to create a storehouse of written and visual materials that represent different perspectives on the issue. These may include excerpts from novels, critical incidents that frame the problem, a videotaped interview of someone with firsthand knowledge, published editorials or position statements, even relevant scientific information when pertinent to the project. In the context of deliberative intercultural inquiry, participants analyze these materials not for the internal consistency of their arguments as they might in some writing classrooms; instead, they try to tease out the perspectives of unfamiliar others, representing them not as sound bytes or stereotypes but as interested people who inhabit other social positions, each with an internal logic, set of priorities, and commitments of its own. For instance, Amanda Young's interactive multimedia tool on decisions about safe sex entitled *What's Your Plan*? brings to life the faces and voices of multiple boyfriends and girlfriends as well as teens' moms, older friends, and medical advisors. Individually, these materials create a focal point for discussion, but together they grant specificity and grit as well as variation to the abstract notion of multiple perspectives.

Rivaling

We've also seen the generative power of *rivaling*, a strategy that asks writers to imagine alternative interpretations of a question, conflict, or problem (Flower, Long, and Higgins). In some ways, rivaling bears a family resemblance to Young's notion of "greeting"—the recognition and public acknowledgement of others—as a strategy of inclusion (*Intersecting* 70).[23] Young stresses the affective impact of being acknowledged and thus respected by others and the way that greeting creates a respectful climate where people might work together.

An intellectually different procedure, however, rivaling goes beyond the affective moves of establishing good will and acknowledging others. It seeks not some quick around-the-table inventory of positions but seriously engages a range of responses to an issue and the reasons behind them. Rivaling often takes the form of talking back to characters in a narrative (who may be other stakeholders), imagining an alternative argument, role playing or inviting the response of other stakeholders, and even articulating the compelling reasons someone might have for responding to problems in ways that seem, from a dominant perspective, unacceptable or against the norm: skipping rent, doing drugs, or not following medical advice. In academic circles, scientists or philosophers examine rival hypotheses in order to eliminate competing arguments; in the context of intercultural inquiry, rivaling first attempts to expand rather than narrow potential interpretations.

For example, in the landlord/tenant project, participants raised rival priorities and concerns, exploring the way different values arose out of stakeholders' different social and economic circumstances and needs. The mediator was concerned with rights and responsibilities, in that these provided criteria for adjudicating conflict. The tenant prioritized closer relationships and better interpersonal communication since she had suffered from the uncaring and uninterested attitude of absentee landlords. A community organizer (and homeowner) focused on property values and the economic health of the Perry Hilltop neighborhood, having seen the consequences of mismanaged apartment buildings (Higgins, Flower, and Deems 26). In putting difference into dialogue, rivaling did not suggest that one appraisal would ultimately prevail over the others but that the participants as writers would need to develop a rhetorical plan that acknowledged these rival concerns.

Rivaling also asks participants to seek out differences and gaps in their interpretation and experience in order to critically assess and expand their own knowledge of a problem. On one hand, rivaling means acknowledging counter-claims that qualify and/or set conditions on one's favored interpretation. Supporters often prompt this move, just as Dan did in the landlord/tenant project when he rivaled Lynn's proposal for a legal process to mediate landlord/tenant disputes. Dan challenged that such counsel would only work if landlords and tenants knew about it, and after years in the community organizing business, the mediation service where Lynn worked was news to him. After Lynn listed legal options for handling late payment of rent, he asked: "How are you gonna *veri*—not *verify,* but *support* your position as to…what are the answers about paying rent and the late payment?" In this very moment, however, Dan also rivaled his own tack for engaging with Lynn. He traded a rather challenging and adversarial question that forced her defense ("How are you gonna *veri[fy]*…?) with a prompt for more information ("not *verify* but *support*"). Even more to the point, in listening to Lynn, he also recognized limits to his own understanding: "See, now I didn't even know that. I didn't know that." In the context of intercultural deliberation, rivaling fosters sustained inquiry—as it did among these participants—in the midst of difference (Higgins, Flower, and Deems 18).

Teens have taught us to see rivaling—like its counterpart, the story-behind-the-story—less as a set of textual moves and more as an intellectual performance. For teens, performance often provides a window into difference—differences in what people say and how they say it, as well as the nuances of non-verbal communication such as dress, posture, and hand gestures. Teens' performances of interpersonal encounters, for instance, offer interpretations as knowledge that contributes to the group's inquiry. Consider Shaunise's impromptu

performance. Shaunise was part of a group addressing the question of how to talk to teens about drugs. On the table was the contention that teens can look to their parents for the "real deal" about drugs. To rival this claim, Shaunise scooted back her chair and stood up. Head bobbing, voice animated, she enacted what it's like to talk to her evasive mother about dicey issues like sex or drugs. Watching teens gravitate to performance in the pursuit of inquiry reminds us to provide the discursive and physical space for the workings of their imagination, for teens new to community literacy can often be quite skeptical that adults, in fact, will listen. They are used to being censored, especially if they express themselves in dramatic ways. They are, of course, onto something. As Young points out, rationalistic norms of deliberation look down on "embodied speech"—and the "valuing and expressing of emotion, the use of figurative language, modulation in tone of voice, and wide gesture" that goes with it (*Intersecting* 65). When teens use this kind of performance as a resource for strategic thinking, they also instantiate a more inclusive model of deliberative democracy.

When college mentors write multi-voiced inquiries in lieu of the traditional research paper, they, too, often need encouragement to suspend or complicate standard conversations of academic analysis.

Writing to Keep Difference in Dialogue

Too often in community meetings difference gets lost or ignored as quickly as it is generated—a problem contributing to the evanescent nature of community talk (Flower and Deems 97) and to the tendency for those who run meetings to selectively record proceedings. Therefore, we see the need for public note-taking that not only records rivals and negotiations as they emerge in discussion but also periodically reviews and consolidates these rivals for the group itself—what Karpowitz and Mansbridge call "dynamic updating" (348). In the landlord/tenant project, for example, the facilitator used a blackboard to keep a running record of the rivals the group generated—the genuine conflicts that arose because of the very real differences in how participants had experienced and interpreted landlord/tenant disputes. Periodically within each session, the facilitator would also review and consolidate these rivals, not to suggest that the differences needed to be resolved in the name of consensus, but that these were the conflicts that the group's joint document would need to address if the text were to represent area landlord/tenant issues fairly and accurately and to be of use to other stakeholders. Consolidating and reviewing rivals also tested the facilitator's representation of the group's emerging rhetorical problem against the others at the table, giving the group members an opportunity to clarify their points before the notes were transferred to the computer, printed, and distributed. Although recording rivals does provide a useful memory aid for the intellectual task at hand, more importantly, the practice serves as a form of respect, acknowledging different perspectives.

Besides keeping track of rivals generated in discussion, another challenge is representing different perspectives in text. We've learned to take an inventive approach to text conventions—and to encourage other writers to do the same. This inventive approach creates a hybrid, multi-vocal text that provides a culturally appropriate way to talk to readers about the issue at hand while inviting readers to negotiate and integrate rival perspectives from the text for themselves. Remember how teens like Shaunise gravitated toward performing rivals? Time and again, we have seen teens demand this same performative capacity from

the texts they write. To transform the rivals they've performed into text, teens often borrow and combine text conventions from several interactive genres: an advice column with letters and responses, a skit with multiple characters, or even an internal monologue dramatizing the competing voices inside the mind of a stressed-out teen. Here again, collaborative-planning supporters help writers navigate a decision space filled with an often daunting array of choices. This inventive approach to text conventions brings normally silenced or marginalized voices into a more fully realized intercultural dialogue. For instance, a mother in the Rainbow Health Clinic project wrote about an incident in which she had let her child's prescriptions lapse because they were not covered by her insurance. Text conventions associated with a dramatic script let her represent rival perspectives in dialogue with one another. So her article contextualized typically privileged voices—for instance, the doctors whom she represents in text as "powerful men with long, white beards"—while still giving these voices a way to be present in the inquiry, not in control but in negotiation (*Getting to Know You* 14). When college mentors write multi-voiced inquiries in lieu of the traditional research paper, they, too, often need encouragement to suspend or complicate standard conversations of academic analysis. In classes with our college-student writing mentors, we explore ways that traditional academic research conventions tend to absorb difference, contradiction and complexity—making it hard to express the tentative, experiential or unresolved aspects that arise when you engage difference in dialogue. We encourage students to draw upon "techniques you know from creative writing and expressive document design" to juxtapose alternative perspectives while offering a running commentary that interprets these voices and their significance to the inquiry (Flower, *Problem-Solving Strategies* 421).

Constructing and Reflecting Upon Wise Options

Finally, participants must be encouraged to generate specific options that grow out of their carefully situated analysis. Whether they propose new responses or interrogate "stock" solutions, they must be encouraged to specify the consequences that might reasonably ensue based on the knowledge they have gleaned from their work together.

Options and Outcomes

To draw people into a deliberative process, the options and outcomes strategy focuses inquiry around choices and their consequences.[24] Rather than offering a single, specific proposal for policy change, these documents pose the question: how can you, the engaged reader, create options in your own sphere of influence that are responsive to the life experiences and social circumstances of others? In this way, the options and outcomes strategy offers a unique version of social action. Instead of eliciting a single solution, the strategy suggests that different stakeholders may need to respond to a problem in different ways, making different trade-offs and choices in the face of no obvious "good" option: *You may be willing to do this, but I would choose this option instead because I fear those consequences more… .*

In good pragmatic fashion, the options and outcomes strategy lets decision-makers hear what their decisions might mean in the lives of people affected by them. The test of the decision that a manager or teacher makes will be in its consequences—yet employees or students are often far more able to project those consequences than those in power. At a welfare-to-work think tank session, the human resource manager had a standard "professional" solution to the problems of Melissa, the new hire. Her company's "buddy system" seemed the obvious option, until the union leader at the table began to quietly sketch out-

comes from his perspective "on the floor"—such as situations in which race played a quiet but decisive role in what the assigned "buddies" did or in which busy staff were expected to work as trainers, without the pay or prestige of official staff. By the end of the options and outcomes session, the human resource manager had not only suspended her ready solution but had begun to rival herself (Flower, "Intercultural" 260–61).

Imagining a deliberative role for yourself is one challenge; inviting readers to take this deliberative stance is another. When participants in the landlord/tenant project faced the problem of orienting readers of their published Memorandum of Understanding toward future action, they invoked a text convention to structure that deliberative process. You'll recall that the participants' scenarios analyzed the complexity of landlord and tenant problems. Their rich analysis defied simple solutions. To implicate readers, whether landlords, tenants, community organizers or mediators, in wise action in the face of such complexity, the writers followed each scenario with a set of "what-if" questions: *What if the tenant had spoken up about her expectations during her first visit to the apartment?* Under each question, the writers enumerated a set of actions and their consequences, the details of which had been generated over the course of the previous planning sessions. The "what-ifs" implicated all stakeholders in taking wise action, demonstrating that in response to local problems, the deliberative work of the community is to discuss and document an expanded set of options and their consequences in the lives of those affected by them.[25] The *Landlord Tenant Handbook* also included blank pages for notes following each scenario that a reader might take as he or she interpreted the problem and considered the consequences of the "what-if" questions.

In the context of personal and public inquiry, we have found that these text conventions can provide rhetorical cues that expand and shift the standard terms of debate and the standard participants addressed in public deliberation to alternative sets of possibilities, questions, and stakeholders. "What-ifs" generated in the welfare project raised possibilities for *both* personal and structural change, often linking the two in ways rarely acknowledged in public arguments about welfare. These proposals for action do not address welfare recipients as the problem nor do they simply attack current policies or social conditions. As in the landlord/tenant project, individual writers used a variety of "what-ifs" to analyze the implications of their narratives for a variety of stakeholders who might act on the problem.[26] Using narrative and rival interpretation to generate and reason through multiple options instantiates an alternative, more inclusive model of deliberation. In concluding their group document—entitled *Getting By, Getting Ahead*—the group of welfare recipients invoked the same "what-if" convention to form the overarching question that had guided the entire project:

> WHAT IF welfare moms had and took the chance to respond to allegations against them?
> THEN the dialogue would go like this…

On the basis of the reasoning the group had articulated over the project's sixteen sessions, the concluding commentary that follows this question shifts public discussion from policy analysts talking among themselves or tax payers pitching insults at welfare recipients (Higgins and Brush 2) to a local public that puts into conversation a range of perspectives and possibilities. The conclusion invokes the repeated phrase "[s]ome have said that welfare mothers" to introduce the most egregious assumptions about welfare recipients in the

dominant discourse. The writers then explicitly talk back to these charges, problematizing these claims with counterexamples and rival interpretations that have become shared knowledge from the project itself.

Documents such as the Think Tank "Findings," the *Landlord Tenant Handbook,* and *Getting By, Getting Ahead* are not decision documents or policy statements. Instead, they model an alternative version of argument: deliberative intercultural inquiry. These documents ask people who are decision-makers both in their own lives and on the job to take their experience with collaborative inquiry and the options proposed in a given document back into arenas where they have choices to make. Ultimately, rather than offering a solution, these documents pose the question: how can you create options in your own sphere of influence that are responsive to the life experiences and social circumstances of others?

As researchers we have found that these rhetorical capacities have helped us to adapt scaffolds from project to project and to situate them within a larger working theory of community literacy. For instance, to rival our own socio-cognitive perspective, we look to disciplines outside English studies to inform our study of intercultural deliberation, particularly work in political philosophy and public policy. We don't mean to suggest we are the first to see the need to do so. We trace much of our own appreciation for Iris Young's political philosophy, for instance, to Susan Wells' and John Trimbur's earlier essays and bibliographies in public rhetoric in the early 1990s. We know other readers will recognize the tremendous excitement—the downright gratitude—we feel as we exchange e-mail that cites a quotation, article, or book of a critical theorist or policy analyst who puts a finer point on a problem than we've been able to, or that generalizes more broadly about an issue we've observed firsthand. Consider, for example, Susan Lawrence's study of mentors and teens using a technique called rival readings to grapple with interpretive differences. Often mentors assume they need to establish common ground between their teen writers and themselves; the rival reading technique provided an option for another, often far more generative conversation.[27]

The implications of Lawrence's findings came to life for us against Young's broader treatment of asymmetrical relationships, especially the moral humility that requires people to listen across difference rather than assume they can imagine walking in another's shoes (*Intersecting* 168). Of course, engaging in difference also requires us to consider rivals to our own positions. Currently under debate in public spheres studies are the consequences of deliberation. This debate places our contention that intercultural deliberation builds *new intercultural knowledge* alongside Warner's claim that *deliberation is a fiction* (143), G. Michael Weiksner's claim that deliberation is less about making specific policy changes and more about *conversational exchange* (216), and Carolyn Rude's claim that *more research is needed* to trace the effects of deliberation over time and across circuits of distribution (271). Similarly, comparing options and outcomes lets us grasp what rhetorical studies has to contribute to this growing area of study—particularly its strong methodological tools for sustaining what Hauser calls an "empirical attitude" toward the way "untidy communicative practices" shape public life (275).

We value the distinct capacity of rhetoric to provide principled, adaptive heuristics for treading into unfamiliar intercultural waters. Heuristics like the story-behind-the-story, rivaling, and options and outcomes are the tools of rhetorical invention, but in the context

of intercultural deliberation, they help us figure out not just what to say but to invent with others the very discourse in which to say it. We see heuristics like these—with features that can be identified, described, and taught—are a tremendous resource for making good on the promise of intercultural deliberative inquiry and for negotiating its inherent challenges.

4. Supporting Personal and Public Transformation through the Circulation of Alternative Texts and Practices

Calling an intercultural group into a local public is an act of faith and strategic action. Endowing that public with the power to transform anything is working against the odds. But this we believe is at the heart of the model of community literacy theorized here. When the local publics of community literacy launch their counterdiscourse into circulation, they often act as a *counterpublic*, challenging the business of discourse as usual. But, we will argue, they do so with one significant difference from how counterpublics are often theorized.

A Distinctive Kind of Counterpublic

Fraser's and Warner's influential accounts of feminism and queer culture describe counterpublics as critical spaces in which subordinated people formulate oppositional identities and alternative discourses/world views. Moreover, they do so through "poetic world making," resisting the exclusionary norms of critical-rational discourse and creating a space for performative, affective, and situated meaning making—central features of community literacy's hybrid discourse.

On one hand, counterpublics work as safe houses, which like the CLC and many other community projects nurture the construction of alternative identities and personal and public voices, empowered to assert oppositional interpretations of their world. On the other hand, they are not merely the expression of a subaltern culture. They are "counterpublics" to the extent that they address, as Warner asserts, a public of "strangers" and that they try to supply different ways of imagining public discourse: "Counterpublics are spaces of circulation in which it is hoped that the *poesis* of scene making will be transformative, not replicative merely" (121–22). In particular, by refusing to adapt to normative discourse, counterpublics are formed in "the original hope of transforming not just policy but the space of public life itself" (124).

Community literacy publics act like a counterpublic—with a critical difference. Current counterpublic theory has attempted to understand the large, national, media-infused discourses of feminism, queer culture, or the black public sphere (Black Public Sphere Collective; Fraser; Gaonkar; Hauser; Warner). Community literacy publics, on the other hand, are local, drawn together by immediate issues and concerns, and are likely to form, dissolve, and reform with an overlapping set of participants—"the usual suspects" of community networks. And unlike strictly textual counterpublics, they thrive on text and talk, on phone calls, face-to-face meetings, church dinners, "just chillin'," local networking, and the work of rainmakers. These counterpublics circulate though myriad paths.

But, we will argue, an even more significant difference is what circulates—that is, the kind of transformation these counterpublics perform and support. Public discourse, Michael Warner argues, call publics into being through address, by saying "not only 'let a public exist' but 'let it have this character, speak this way, see the world this way.' …Run it up the flagpole

and see who salutes" (114). What is so deeply at stake in these counterpublics—the reason for changing our ways of speaking—is asserting a transformed/transformative *identity* for marginalized, dominated, or devalued peoples. Community literacy publics, by contrast, are not called into being around the aims of a shared identity but are in fact defined by their aspiration to an intercultural, cross-hierarchy composition. What community literacy runs up the flagpole is not the image of an alternative identity, but an alternative discourse. The essential goal of *this* transformative counterpublic is a transformed deliberative practice.

Why is this so important? In currently heated debates over the possibility of deliberative democracy, the central tension is how to deal with the volatile presence of diversity. Should we strive to bracket it, encourage competitive argumentation, or suppress its divisiveness with a focus on the "common" good?[28] The problem, Iris Young points out, lies in identifying difference with identity, as in identity politics ("Difference"). Much as we have done, she argues that difference needs to be treated as a *resource*; not a position, but a source of perspectives. The community literacy stance toward difference asserts the power and necessity of locally situated knowledges. But, with Donna Haraway, we dismiss claims that the identity of the speaker confers a special access to truth. Marginalized knowledge enters discussion as a sought out, valued-but-not-privileged understanding or interpretation that a deliberative democracy needs to consider. In its assertive counterpublic performance of intercultural inquiry, community literacy is less about building oppositional identities than about using difference to articulate silenced perspectives. Rather than dichotomize groups, it challenges the normative exclusionary practices of public talk.

Community literacy acts as a transformative counterpublic when it succeeds in circulating not just fresh arguments, insights, positions, or policies, but an alternative image of public discourse. Its contribution is a transformed model of local public talk. This is a model that actively seeks out difference (in the form of diverse perspectives, rival hypotheses, situated stories-behind-the-story); that insists on the necessity of inquiry before advocacy; and that calls people into a local public charged to imaginative listening and collaborative problem solving grounded in engaged dialogue.

This image of how transformation can work parallels the way Engeström sees activity systems changing in his work in courtrooms, medical clinics, and work teams. Change, he argues, occurs when an idea "is transformed into a complex object, a new form of practice" ("Innovation" 382). In these settings, knowledge building emerges in the "creation of artifacts, [the] production of novel social patterns," and "a re-orchestration" of the voices of participants and the way people work together ("Activity" 27, 35). Looking at community literacy counterpublics as an *activity* also helps us see how that notion of *circulation* works in a *local* public rather than a national or purely media-based one.

This discussion of transformation, circulation, and outcomes is another way of talking about assessment, which is often equated with the narrow evidence of student ratings or the impractically broad result of clear social change, more likely to come from tightly focused advocacy. Within a local public, the indicators of impact can be seen in personal understandings and deliberative performance, and in the more public, multi-faceted evidence of circulation, which we can train ourselves to see (Flower, in prep). Some of these indicators are sketched below.

Supporting Personal Transformation

We have already seen how relatively small, intercultural community literacy groups themselves constitute a productively unsettling public space. Within these locally constructed publics, participants and rhetoricians are inventing new relationships, ideas, and practices that effect personal transformation. One of the most powerful outcomes of this work has been on participants' own sense of agency, particularly their confidence as rhetors—as people with important knowledge who have something to say and a right to say it in the presence of strangers (cf. Hull and Katz). For all the bravado displayed by teens in our projects, for all the self-confidence they exude in each other's company, they often fail to believe that adults can or will listen to them or even that they should. They, and many disenfranchised stakeholders we have worked with, often buy into dominant discourses that construct them as "the problem," rather than people with potential to solve problems, and as incapable or untrustworthy rhetors with nothing worthwhile to contribute. At first tentative about their own ability to speak and be heard, these stakeholders become more confident as they talk across the table, are acknowledged by others, and see their private memories and feelings celebrated in print. Perhaps because of these confidence-building experiences, many participants in CLC projects have joined subsequent projects or participated more actively in their neighborhoods through the networks they established while at the CLC.

Frank Bryan has noted how participating in mixed community meetings can be an important form of civic education—providing a kind of gentle tutelage in how to listen to others with different views, how to suffer the occasional fool, how to take turns and act neighborly to fellow citizens (286–92). But in these projects, participants learn more than the niceties of cooperation on which civil meetings depend; they learn to discover, articulate, and reflect on their own interests which are often put into sharp relief as they listen to others' views. Here, personal transformation goes beyond one's newfound rhetorical confidence and skill in communicating across difference. Articulating and reflecting on one's own situated knowledge can generate surprising insights into one's own beliefs. This type of personal transformation was evident in the welfare writing project, where one participant reflecting on her life history acknowledged—after a great deal of some very difficult and uncomfortable discussion with her peers—a pattern of misplaced trust and naivety in her relationships with men over the course of her life. She titled her section of their publication, "If I knew then what I know now," and called for older women in the community to share their collective wisdom through mentoring young girls.

Caroline Heller, among others, has noted the kind of intimate connections that blossom when disconnected and marginalized citizens come together to write from the depths of their personal experience. This deeply personal and often exploratory writing, discussion, and response takes time and patience, and stakeholders often come to know each other in new ways over the weeks and months they may work together, especially when they assume new roles, such as supporting another's writing. Solidarity building, empathy, and newly forged relationships are often important byproducts of the work of local publics.

Discourse shapes identity and structures relationships. We have found that the literate practices and strategies described here can not only transform the way stakeholders think about themselves but also how they relate to one another. The counterdiscourses produced in some projects, for example, challenged professional service discourse in particular. John

McKnight has identified the way the discourse of service professions (e.g., in medicine, education, social work, criminal justice) creates asymmetrical relations of power between the "expert" professional and the "passive" and "deficient" recipient of professionalized care or service. When these stakeholders typically come together, for example, when teens talk with principals or when clinic patients confer with medical professionals, their roles, identities, and relationships are shaped by professional conventions that limit the participation of those who are "served" and that filter and frame their knowledge in sometimes disabling ways. Local publics generate counterdiscourses when they set up and enact alternative rules and practices for interacting and thinking together. For example, the Rainbow Health Clinic project demonstrated the transformative power of placing patients' illness narratives, rather than the standard medical chart, at the center of the medical encounter. These narratives solicited psycho-social dimensions of illness that are often bracketed by the traditional practices of taking a patient's medical history;[29] in doing so they transformed the doctor-patient relationship. Patients were not treated as diseases to be cured but as people with illnesses inextricably tied to their complex social and personal histories. As such, their knowledge and expectations were considered critical to diagnosis and treatment, important as the cataloguing of physical symptoms. In this local public, they were active partners with medical staff in interpreting and creating health for themselves and improving the effectiveness of the clinic.

Supporting Public Transformation

Local publics not only spark personal transformation but public change. The challenge here is to recognize the different ways circulation works. The local efforts of the many people cited in this article have led to published essays and new journals such as *Reflections* and the present *Community Literacy Journal*. Our own fifteen years of work have led us from projects and research into theory building. But another obvious form of circulation occurs when documents go beyond publication into practice. For instance, a women's shelter modeled a new writing workshop on the welfare narratives. Medical students prepared for internships in community clinics by learning the socio-cultural aspects of patient care and how to elicit patients' situated knowledge, adapting strategies from *Getting to Know You.* High school teachers used *Whassup with Suspension*? to reflect on how their non-verbal cues might shame, embarrass, and anger some students. And they used Deems' *Rivaling about Risk* multimedia dialogue to structure a writing/discussion course unit in the public schools. Swan's research created a new course unit in CMU's School of Public Policy and led to a collaborative Think Tank on welfare policy with graduate students. Planned Parenthood used Amanda Young's multimedia *What's Your Plan: Sexuality and Relationships* to train their teenage peer counselors while a University Hospital Adolescent Clinic used it to collect research data. Moreover, local publics have transformed service learning at Carnegie Mellon, where students in a rhetoric course hone practices such as mentoring teens, developing rivaling readings, and constructing multi-voiced inquiries as a complement to more standard research reports and school-based arguments typically produced in college classrooms. In doing so they sometimes face and negotiate pressures to conform to the writing conventions of their disciplines (Swan), but in the process they learn to consider how the everyday expertise of people they work with connects—or fails to connect—to disciplinary expertise and research findings in their fields. A study of CLC mentors, for example, revealed that the conflicts these mentors negotiated not only paralleled but extended the scholarly debates in Rhet/Comp studies over the contested relationship between literacy and social justice (Long, "Rhetoric of Social Action").

We have argued that one way to understand the transforming work of a counterpublic is to look at how it circulates an alternative discourse and a "new form of practice." Part of this process is to some extent under our control. For instance, in response to a local, unresolved crisis in staffing at long-term care facilities, Flower designed a Community Think Tank that would give voice to the insights of low-wage nurses' aides (the women, usually African American, who worked at the bottom rung of medicine's intensely hierarchical system). Over two semesters, students in a rhetoric class collected critical incident interviews, scripted problem scenarios, and worked with small groups to draw out stories-behind-the story, all of which went into a briefing book that was distributed first at a series of Think Tank sessions with nursing home staff and management and later in a city-wide session with stakeholders from hospitals, agencies, government, policy research, medical education, and nursing homes. This led to the more formal publication and distribution of the Carnegie Mellon Community Think Tank findings on "Healthcare: The Dilemma of Teamwork, Time, and Turnover." Then to make accessible the findings and methods for developing a Think Tank, we developed a university-supported website, http://www.cmu.edu/thinktank, which itself gets put into circulation through use in courses and publications like this one.

This is the kind of textual circulation with which we are all familiar. Although these documents explored options and outcomes for dealing with a particular healthcare dilemma, they raised the flag of a counterpublic by their aggressive focus on the deliberative process itself. The texts modeled—they insistently dramatize in text—an alternative kind of dialogue in which marginalized voices bring significant expertise to solving a shared problem.

Engeström's "new form of practice" may be easiest to see in a text, but the transformations in the relations between people are ultimately more significant, when we can discern them ("Innovations" 382). For instance, students were intimidated by the thought of interviewing nursing aides: "How was I … going to offer any useful advice that could possibly change the working conditions for nursing aides?" because they clung to the assumption that they, with the benefits of class, education, income, would need to be the "expert." The transformation came in the recognition of alternative sources of expertise—"I believe the most important thing I learned about the inquiry process was that I knew nothing about the problem"—and criteria for value—"I was shocked … to find myself conversing with someone who [working for slightly more than minimum wage] loved their job. It seemed incomprehensible to me."

Other transformations were more clearly "a re-orchestration" of voices and the way people work together (Engeström, "Activity" 35). In one think tank session, the aides and nurses worked out a more equitable way to handle being short-staffed on a given morning, and the Nursing Center CEO, also a participant, adopted it on the spot. At another, the staff thought their idea was good enough to adopt it on a trial basis, without waiting for an administrative order. Needless to say, neither aides nor nurses had been offered this role of collaborative administrative problem-solver before. At the city-wide think tank, when the nursing aide, the head of the city Hospital Council, a policy analyst, and a human resource director sat at a table together, sharing rival interpretations of a problem and testing each other's options with their differently situated insights into possible outcomes, the participants themselves recognized this event as itself the "production of novel social patterns" (Engeström, "Activity" 27).

Stepping back, we would say that the work of inquiry and deliberation rarely leads to such a direct and satisfying change, nevermind to revolutionary change on the scale of transforming flawed national policies or eradicating tenacious structural problems like racism. One booklet of welfare narratives will not create a sea of change in welfare reform; *The Landlord Tenant Handbook* will not eliminate the need for mediators and magistrates, even in one small community (cf. Rude). Moreover, reasonable innovations face serious obstacles: physicians, for example, acknowledge the value of soliciting patients' situated knowledge through narrative, but they work in a culture of time-keeping, managed care that constrains their ability to engage in the kind of extended dialogue modeled by the CLC projects. The texts and practices produced in these projects are not ends in themselves but only beginnings, and they work, as publics do, through multiple paths, circulating and re-circulating, evolving and changing—even if incrementally—the way we live and work together as a community. A rhetorically centered model of community literacy proposes one way to keep that important work going.

Notes

[1] In using the collective "we," the authors not only refer to themselves, but to their wider network of partners—literacy leaders, mentors, and project participants—who have had a hand in shaping, implementing, and theorizing community literacy with us at the Community Literacy Center. Although our collaborators are too numerous to mention here, we especially acknowledge the vision and leadership of Wayne C. Peck, Joyce Baskins, Philip Flynn, and Donnie Tucker.

[2] Barton and Hamilton draw on a sociological definition of community as the "realm that mediates between the private sphere of the family and household and the public sphere of impersonal, formal organizations" (15–16). Like them, we are drawn to study these local constructions where dominant and marginalized discourses come into contact.

[3] Those interested in a review of community literacy scholarship and programs might turn to Cushman, Barbier, Mazak, and Petrone; Deans (for service learning); Grabill; and Long, *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Local Publics.*

[4] In attempting to sketch a working theory of this rhetorically centered model of community literacy, we will not do justice to the theoretical work of others on which we draw or to what we hope this work adds to such discussions. For a framework that locates this work more broadly in literacy studies in which ordinary people go public, please see Elenore Long's comparative analysis of how different approaches to community literacy imagine their guiding metaphors and context and how they draw on different discourses, literate practices, and inventional processes (*Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Local Publics*, in prep). For research that positions community literacy within argument theory, rhetorical analysis, and the debates around deliberation, see Lorraine Higgins and Lisa Brush ("Personal Experience Narrative and Public Debate," 2006 and "From Narrative to Argument: Subordinated Rhetors Talk Back," in prep). For a discussion of alternative models of social engagement and empowerment in rhetoric and composition studies and the contribution of contemporary theories of publics and counterpublics, see Linda Flower (*Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Engagement,* in prep).

[5] Scholars in many disciplines have cautioned against this kind of missionary stance, stressing the need to work with community partners (e.g., see Cushman, "Rhetorician"; Flower

and Heath; McKnight; Stringer). Brenton Faber has argued that understanding problems and affecting change requires us to be an *engaged* part of a team, not an observing ethnographer, objective consultant, or professional facilitator.

[6] In classical rhetoric, deliberative argument begins at the point of stasis, where competing claims about future action are tested by rhetors who are assumed to draw from the same pool of community values and experiences—common *topoi*. But in diverse communities, such argument seems premature; the problem space itself has not been defined. Thus deliberation is a form of inquiry—of discovering the nature of problems and thus plausible responses to them.

[7] Coogan demonstrates how these common refrains can be analyzed as ideographs that reveal key arguments and ideologies.

[8] In inviting members of representative stakeholder groups to the table, we have found it useful to target what we call second-tier leaders: these are respected individuals who other stakeholder groups have identified as knowledgeable, reasonable, and open to dialogue. First-tier leaders are well-known and highly positioned persons who have already committed publicly to particular positions on community problems. Although their viewpoints are critical and should be considered at the table, the actual participation of first-tier leaders at the table can be disruptive and intimidating to less powerful groups, particularly at the beginning of a project. First-tier leaders are often invited to respond at later stages of community literacy projects.

[9] E.g., it was helpful for us to read Mansbridge's analysis of the New England town meeting, in which she notes obstacles to marginalized groups' participation that are similar to those described by participants in the landlord/tenant project (60–62, 109)
.
[10] See Higgins and Brush for an extended discussion of the discourse of poverty and welfare. They identify two common narratives—the hero and victim narrative—that often reproduce dangerous stereotypes of welfare recipients and erode their credibility.

[11] Community Conversations are interactive public meetings structured around project participants' writing. They may include performances, readings, panel discussions, and other forms of public presentation and audience interaction.

[12] For instance, when female patients from the Rainbow Health Clinic met with medical professionals around the issue of patient noncompliance, the women's situated knowledge shifted the terms of debate (Flower, Long, and Higgins 304; Higgins, *Getting to Know You*). Initially, the medical professionals at the table pinned the problem of noncompliance on the personality of "difficult patients." In contrast, some of the women interpreted noncompliance in terms of historical and cultural conflicts between African Americans and the medical establishment. It was the situated knowledge of these women writers that recast the dialogue to explore the cultural differences that lead to communication problems.

[13] For instance, a doctor who assumes a "noncompliant patient" is belligerent, rather than well versed in the infamous Tuskeegee study (to cite one source of a patient's mistrust) relates to that patient differently than one who considers patient-physician trust to be a complex

historical and institutional as well as interpersonal negotiation (Ainsworth-Vaughn; Higgins; Young, and Flower). It's not that the physician's interpretation of noncompliance—focusing, say, on recurring illnesses, avoidable side effects, and more severe outcomes such as heart attack, as well as costs to the health care system—isn't also valid. The point is that a medical point of view is likewise perspectival and partial.

[14] The inquiry process we detail here includes both eliciting situated knowledge and testing the adequacy of the interpretive frames that people use to make sense of their own and others' experience. As discussed below, the story-behind-the-story and the rivaling strategy work in tandem to accomplish these two goals. It is not that stakeholders necessarily know from the outset what specific knowledge needs to be elicited and what existing knowledge needs to be reframed—though more marginalized participants often tell us that they have joined a literacy project as a way of challenging negative stereotypes. Joint inquiry is a recursive process of rhetorical invention that the deliberative process itself makes possible.

[15] A welfare mom might not want to recognize rival readings that could paint her or others in her situation as irresponsible mothers, for example. And can you blame her? In some cases, dominant discourses have indeed constructed marginalized people as incapable, lazy, inexpert. "Professionals" may also discount the N-of-1, personalized (read: *devalued, biased*) knowledge of their "clients" because their training teaches them to do so. And those who occupy more privileged social positions might feel it dangerous to identify with others whom they assume have not earned "equal" standing.

[16] Critical incidents provide specific details and contextual information about the problems people face within complex situations. Critical incidents put pet theories and stereotypes to the test of more operational definitions of a problem. Treated as data, critical incidents show situated cognition in high-stakes contexts where decisions make a difference such as flying a plane in combat or making medical diagnoses.

[17] This knowledge isn't necessarily cut off from formal public knowledge. For instance, a tenant may in fact be fluent with many public institutions' forms, regulations, and procedures. But it is also the case that marginalized people often have something to say about institutional discourse that isn't usually part of collective social knowledge; moreover, they know something about the gaps between the professed intent of specific public policies, on one hand, and how they play out in lived experience, on the other.

[18] As activist rhetoricians, we have found that designing interventions requires us to refine and articulate our own situated knowledge of community literacy. This action-reflection starts when we actively attend to conflict—the "real life" contradictions, obstacles and surprises that arise over the course of a project, complicating the story we had previously imagined as to how the inquiry would unfold. Action-reflection then pushes us to construct an explanatory account of the problem, a rationale for the rhetorical design of the intervention itself. Such action-reflection is often recursive as Higgins and Brush found as they tested and refined scaffolding that writers in the Welfare project would find genuinely useful (19). But *useful*, of course, doesn't simply mean that the intervention makes the invention process easier. It means that the rhetorical principles of meaning-making that inform the design of the intervention will help the writer do justice to the expertise she has to share.

[19] More specifically, collaborative planning structures the rhetorical thinking typical of ex-

perienced writers. The supporter prompts the writer not only to consider content or topic knowledge—the point at which inexperienced writers typically start and stop—but also to construct a more rhetorical plan by actively thinking about key points and purpose in writing, the needs and anticipated responses of readers, and alternative text conventions that might support this increasingly elaborated network of goals, plans, and ideas (Flower, Wallace, Norris, and Burnett).

[20] Collaborative planning has been used in a number of academic settings and with participants in a wide range of community literacy projects to teach writing, to support classroom inquiry by teachers and students, and to conduct research into students' strategies. Because this process of articulating a plan helps make thinking "more visible," collaborative planning has been used as a platform for reflection, allowing writers, mentors, and teachers to gain new awareness of writers' goals, strategies, and struggles.

[21] Creating such scaffolds is the work of anyone in a project who identifies a rhetorical problem which a bit more structure could help to solve. Mentors often work opportunistically to help writers manage the complex set of goals they often set for their texts (Flower, Long, and Higgins 290–91). In addition, participants often create their own scaffolds with and for one another as they translate a shared problem into a rhetorical plan. For instance, the landlord/tenant group transformed critical incidents into scenarios that blended or realistically modified actual events from anecdotes and personal experience in order to illustrate four "typical" conflicts that could serve as cases against which participants tested their proposals for change (Flower and Deems 118).

[22] Here the image of stakeholders seated around a round table first serves as a metaphor and a heuristic, prompting a writer to imagine her perspective as one among others, to figure out how to frame her text in relation to other anticipated perspectives so that hers might not only get a fair hearing but also possibly encourage others to revise their understanding of the problem in light of the situated knowledge she has to offer. Other stakeholders are invited to the table later in the process as writers re-visit their texts to clarify their own experience and interpretations from the perspectives of real, not imagined, readers. By working with community members, we have identified a number of useful criteria for deciding who and how to bring additional stakeholders to the table at this point in the process. For instance, once the Rainbow Health Clinic writers had drafted their contributions to a joint document, but before the texts were finalized for publication, a physician, nurse practitioner, and health administrator were invited to the table not only to listen to the writers but also to articulate the "movies of the mind" they created in their own interpretative imaginations as they worked through the writers' texts. Again, these were not first-tier leaders in Pittsburgh's healthcare community who had already committed publicly to positions, but rather second-tier leaders—people more likely to know the other points of view well and be able to articulate them, but who also would be more open to hearing new perspectives (Higgins, Flower, and Deems 33). This rival reading session with healthcare professionals put difference into rigorous dialogue, asking writers to re-visit their texts to clarify their own experience and interpretations from the perspectives of engaged and present readers. Often those invited to the table at this time are people whom project participants themselves want to engage in dialogue. In a literacy project on school suspension, for example, teens identified the teachers and administrators whom they wanted to have read and respond to the early versions their documents—adults who were, in the teens' assessment, "at least okay sometimes, and open minded."

23 Young's model of communicative democracy challenges the conventional conception of public deliberation by valorizing the roles that greeting, rhetoric, and storytelling as well as critical argument play in public discourse. For a critique of Young's model, see Seyla Benhabib's "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy" in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political,* also edited by Benhabib.

24 First, the options and outcomes strategy asks participants to generate multiple "real" options—a move designed to counter the common tendency in decision-making to consider only one option and decide "yes" or "no." Then, because the responses to complex problems often involve trade-offs—there isn't one "good" option—the strategy asks participants to project and to compare possible outcomes, weighing values and the probability of an outcome.

25 The "what-ifs" allowed the group to share and distribute their expertise; participants actually waited to develop their "what-ifs", not in preparation for a session, but over the course of the session itself (Higgins, Flower, and Deems 32).

26 For instance, following the problem narrative she wrote for the group document, a writer named Jules considered options and outcomes in the "Taking Action" section of her article:

> **WHAT IF**… Young women and men were more savvy about using protection that works for them?
> **THEN** they would have more control over their finances and future.
> **WHAT IF**… The older women/teachers/mentors in Jules's life had counseled her earlier about relationships?
> **THEN** she might have felt more secure and savvy when dealing with her boyfriends.
> **WHAT IF…** All young women were counseled in this way?

In these action plans, the writers don't reach a decision or one claim about what to do. That is, they don't solve anything *per se*. Instead, they generate multiple, plausible, informed proposals built on the reasoning they have done together. And they consider the consequences of these possibilities for all stakeholders.

27 For a description of the rival reading technique, see Flower's *Problem-Solving Strategies in College and Communit*y 415–18.

28 If one locates the hope of a democracy in a common commitment to the common good, acknowledging, much less enfranchising, difference opens the Pandora's box of divisiveness and interest group bargaining. Yet, if our ideal is a disinterested concern, who defines this common good, especially if you and I hold racially different notions of what it is, and some of us lack the cultural capital to assert our vision as the common one (cf. Bohman and Rehg; Gutman and Thompson; Roberts-Miller)?

29 Medical rhetoricians, anthropologists, and practitioners have written extensively on patient-physician communication and the way standard medical practices create what Parson has called a "sick role" for patients (also see Higgins; Hunter; Kleinman).

Works Cited

Ainsworth-Vaughn, Nancy. *Claiming Power in Doctor-Patient Talk*. Oxford Studies in Sociolinguistics. New York: Oxford UP, 1998.

Aristotle. *Art of Rhetoric*. Trans. J. H. Freese. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982.

Atwill, Janet, and Janice Lauer, eds. *Perspectives on Rhetorical Invention*. Knoxville, TN: U of Tennessee P, 2002.

Barton, David, and Mary Hamilton. *Local Literacies: Reading and Writing in One Community*. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Bitzer, Lloyd. "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1–14.

Black Public Sphere Collective, ed. *The Black Public Sphere: A Public Culture Book*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995.

Bohman, James, and William Rehg. *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 1997.

Brandt, Deborah. *Literacy in American Lives*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge UP, 2001.

Bryan, Frank. *Real Democracy: The New England Town Meeting and How it Works*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004.

Carnegie Mellon Community Think Tank. "Healthcare: The Dilemma of Teamwork, Time, and Turnover." *The Community Think Tank*. Spring 2002. Carnegie Mellon University. 19 September 2006 <www.cmu.edu/thinktank/docs/healthcare.pdf>.

Cintron, Ralph. *Angel's Town: Chero Ways, Gang Life, and Rhetorics of the Everyday.* Boston, MA: Beacon P, 1997.

Consigny, Scott. "Rhetoric and Its Situations." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 7 (1974): 175–186.

Coogan, David. "Counter Publics in Public Housing: Reframing the Politics of Service-Learning." *College English* 67.5 (May 2005): 461–82.

———. "Service Learning and Social Change: The Case for Materialist Rhetoric." *College Composition and Communication* 57.4 (2006): 667–93.

Cushman, Ellen. "Rhetorician as Agent of Social Change." *College Composition and Communication* 47.1 (1996): 1–28.

———. *The Struggle and the Tools: Oral and Literate Strategies in an Inner City Community.* Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 1998.

Cushman, Ellen, Stuart Barbier, Catherine Mazak, and Robert Petrone. "Family and Community Literacies." *Research on Composition: Multiple Perspectives on Two Decades of Change.* Ed. Peter Smagorinsky. New York: Teachers College P, 2000. 187–217.

Deans, Thomas. *Writing Partnerships: Service learning in Composition*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2000.

Deems, Julia, and Linda Flower. *Rivaling about Risk: A Dialogue Tutorial*. Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Mellon, 1996.

Dewey, John. *Quest for Certainty*. Vol. 4 of *John Dewey: The Later Works 1925–1953*. Ed. Jo Ann Boydston. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1988.

Engeström, Yrjö. "Developmental Studies of Work as a Testbench of Activity Theory: The Case of Primary Care Medical Practice." *Understanding Practice: Perspectives on Activity and Context*. Ed. Seth Chaiklin and Jean Lave. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge UP, 1996.

———. "Activity Theory and Individual and Social Transformation." *Perspectives on Activity Theory*. Ed. Yrjö Engeström, Reijo Miettinen, R.-Leena. Punamäki, and Roy Pea. Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1999. 19–38.

———. "Innovative Learning in Work Teams: Analyzing Cycles of Knowledge Creation in Practice." *Perspectives on activity theory*. 375–404. Ed. Yrjö Engeström, Reijo Miettinen, R.-Leena. Punamäki, and Roy Pea. Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1999.

Faber, Brenton. *Community Action and Organizational Change: Image, Narrative, Identity.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2002.

Farr, Marcia, ed. *Latino Language and Literacy in Ethnolinguistic Chicago*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005.

Flanagan, John C. "The Critical Incident Technique." *Psychological Bulletin.* 5.4 (1954): 327–358.

Flower, Linda. *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Engagement*. In prep.

———."Acts of Negotiation." *Learning to Rival: A Literate Practice for Intercultural Inquiry.* Ed. Linda Flower, Elenore Long, and Lorraine Higgins. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000. 277–95.

———. "Can You Build a Transformative (Local) Public Sphere? Spaces for Alternative Representations of Identity and Agency in Marginalized Youth." Berkeley, CA: NCTE Assembly for Research. February 19–21, 2004.

———. *The Construction of Negotiated Meaning: A Social Cognitive Theory of Writing*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1994.

———. "Intercultural Knowledge Building: The Literate Action of a Community Think Tank." *Writing Selves and Society: Research from Activity Perspectives*. Ed. Charles Bazerman and David Russell. Fort Collins, CO: WAC Clearinghouse, 2002.

———. "Partners in Inquiry: A Logic for Community Outreach." *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service Learning in Composition.* Ed. Linda Alder-Kassner, Robert Crooks and Anne Watters. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education, 1997. 95–117.

———. *Problem Solving Strategies for Writing in College and Communities*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace, 1998.

———. "Talking across Difference: Intercultural Rhetoric and the Search for Situated Knowledge." *College Composition and Communication* 55.1 (2003): 38–68.

Flower, Linda, and Julia Deems. "Conflict in Community Collaboration." *New Perspectives on Rhetorical Invention.* Ed. Janet Atwill and Janice Lauer. Knoxville, TN: U of Tennessee P, 2002. 96–130.

Flower, Linda, and Shirley Brice Heath. "Drawing on the Local: Collaboration and Community Expertise." *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines* 4.3 (2004): 43–45.

Flower, Linda, Elenore Long, and Lorraine Higgins. *Learning to Rival: A Literate Practice for Intercultural Inquiry.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000.

Flower, Linda, David Wallace, Linda Norris, and Rebecca Burnett, eds. *Making Thinking Visible: Writing, Collaborative Planning, and Classroom Inquiry.* Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1994.

Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56–80.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Trans. M. B. Ramos. New York: Continuum, 1989.

Gaonkar, Dilip P. "The Forum. Publics and Counterpublics: Introduction." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88.3 (2002): 410–12.

Geertz, Clifford. *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books, 1983.

Getting to Know You: A Dialogue for Community Health. Pittsburgh, PA: Community Literacy Center and The Rainbow Health Center, 1996.

Goldblatt, Eli. "Alinsky's Reveille: A Community-Organizing Model for Neighborhood-Based Literacy Projects." *College English* 67.3 (2005): 274–94.

———. "Van Rides in the Dark: Literacy as Involvement." *Journal for Peace and Justice Studies* 6.1 (1994): 77–94.

Grabill, Jeffrey T. *Community Literacy Programs and the Politics of Change.* Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 2001.

Gumperz, John, and Deborah Tannen. "Individual and Social Differences in Language Use." *Individual Differences in Language Ability and Language Behavior.* Ed. Charles Fillmore, Daniel Kempler and William S.Y. Wang. New York: Academic P, 1979. 305–25.

Gutman, Amy and Dennis Thompson. *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2004.

Habermas, Jurgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society.* Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 1989.

Haraway, Donna. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature.* New York: Routledge, 1991.

Harris, Joyce L., Alan G. Kamhi, and Karen E. Pollock, eds. *Literacy in African American Communities.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001.

Hauser, Gerard. *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres.* Columbia, SC: U of South Carolina P, 1999.

Hauser, Gerard, and Amy Grim. *Rhetorical Democracy: Discursive Practices of Civic Engagement.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2004.

Heath, Shirley Brice. *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms.* New York: Cambridge UP, 1983.

Herzberg, Bruce. "Community Service and Critical Teaching." *College Composition and Communication* 45.3 (1994): 307–19.

Higgins, Lorraine. "Revising the Medical Encounter." in prep.

Higgins, Lorraine and Lisa Brush. "From Narrative to Argument: Subordinated Rhetors Talk Back." in prep.

——— ."Personal Experience Narrative and Public Debate: Writing the Wrongs of Welfare." *College Composition and Communication* 57.4 (2006): 694–729.

Higgins, Lorraine and Theresa Chalich, eds. *Getting to Know You: A Dialogue for Community Health.* Pittsburgh, PA: Community Literacy Center and Rainbow Health Center, 1996.

Higgins, Lorraine, Linda Flower and Julia Deems. "Collaboration and Community Action: Landlord and Tenants." Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Mellon, 1996.

Hull, Glynda, and Michael Angelo James. "Geographies of Hope: A Study of Urban Landscape and a University-Community Collaborative." *Blurring Boundaries: Developing Writers, Researchers, and Teachers: A Tribute to William L. Smith.* Ed. Peggy O'Neill. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, in press.

Hull, Glynda, and Mira-Lisa Katz. "Crafting an Agentive Self: Case Studies of Digital Storytelling." *Research in the Teaching of English*, forthcoming.

Hull, Glynda and Katherine Schultz. *School's Out! Bridging Out-of-School Literacies with Classroom Practices.* New York: Teacher's College P, 2002.

Hunter, Kathryn. "Remaking the Case." *Literature and Medicine* 11.1 (1992): 163–179.

Karpowitz, Christopher F. and Jane Mansbridge. "Disagreement and Consensus: The Need for Dynamic Updating in Public Deliberation." *Journal of Public Deliberation* 1.1 (2005): 347–64.

Kleinman, Arthur. *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition.* New York: Basic Books, 1988.

Langsdorf, Lenore. "Argument as Inquiry in a Postmodern Context." *Argumentation* 11 (1997): 315–327.

Lawrence, Susan. *Reading Other's Realities: Double-Sided Discourse Moves*. ms. Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Mellon, 1996.

Long, Elenore. *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Local Publics*. West LayFayette, IN: Parlor Press, in prep.

Long, Elenore. "The Rhetoric of Social Action: College Mentors Inventing the Discipline." *Inventing a Discipline: Rhetoric Scholarship in Honor of Richard E. Young*. Ed. Maureen Daly Goggin. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2000. 289–318.

Long, Elenore, Wayne C. Peck, and Joyce Baskins. "Struggle: A Literate Practice Supporting Life-Project Planning." *School's Out! Bridging Out-of-School Literacies with Classroom Practice*. Ed. Glynda Hull and Katherine Schultz. New York: Teachers Coll. P, 2002. 131–61.

Mansbridge, Jane. *Beyond Adversary Democracy*. Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 1983.

McKnight, John. *The Careless Society: Community and its Counterfeits*. New York: Basic Books, 1995.

McNamee, Gillian Dowley and Sarah Sivright. "Community Supports for Writing Development Among Urban African American Children." *School's Out! Bridging Out-of-School Literacies with Classroom Practice*. Ed. Glynda Hull and Katherine Schultz. New York: Teachers Coll. P, 2002, 169–97.

Moss, Beverly. *A Community Text Arises: A Literate Text and Literacy Tradition in African American Churches*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2003.

Peck, Wayne, Linda Flower and Lorraine Higgins. "Community Literacy." *College Composition and Communication* 46.2 (1995): 199–222.

Raising the Curtain on Curfew. Pittsburgh, PA: Community Literacy Center and the Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy, 1996.

Roberts-Miller, Patricia. *Deliberate Conflict: Argument, Political Theory, and Composition Classes*. Southern Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2004.

Parsons, Talcott. *The Social System*. NY: Free Press, 1951.

Rude, Carolyn. "Toward an Expanded Concept of Rhetorical Delivery: The Uses of Reports in Public Policy Debates." *Technical Communication Quarterly* 13.3 (2004): 271–88.

Schutz, Aaron, and Anne Ruggles Gere. "Service Learning and English Studies: Rethinking 'Public' Service." *College English* 60.2 (1998): 129–50.

Scribner, Sylvia, and Michael Cole. *The Psychology of Literacy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981.

Smitherman, Geneva. *Talkin' that Talk: African American Language and Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Stock, Patricia, and Janet Swensen. "The Write for Your Life Project: Learning to Serve and Serving to Learn." *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service Learning in Composition*. Ed. Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks and Ann Waters. Washington: American Association for Higher Education and NCTE, 1997. 153–66.

Street, Brian. *Literacy in Theory and Practice*. Cambridge UP, 1985.

Swan, Susan. "Rhetoric, Service, and Social Justice." *Written Communication* 19.1 (2002): 76–108.

Stringer, Ernest. A*ction Research: A Handbook for Practitioners.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1996.

Trimbur, John. "Consensus and Difference in Collaborative Learning." *College English* 51: 602–16.

Warner, Michael. *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York: Zone Books, 2005.

Wells, Susan. "Habermas, Communicative Competence, and the Teaching of Technical Discourse." *Theory in the Classroom*. Ed. Cary Nelson. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1986. 245–69.

Whassup with Suspension? Pittsburgh, PA: Community Literacy Center, 1992.

Weiksner, G. Michael. "E-THE PEOPLE.ORG. Large-Scale, Ongoing Deliberation." *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century.* Ed. John Gastil and Peter Levine. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005. 213–37.

West, Cornel. *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America.* New York: Routledge, 1993.

Young, Amanda. "Patients as Problem Solvers: Toward a Rhetoric of Agency in Healthcare." Diss. Carnegie Mellon University, 2000.

———. *What's Your Plan?: Sexuality and Relationships. A Multimedia Dialogue/Tutorial.* Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Mellon, 1996.

Young, Amanda, and Linda Flower. "Patients and Partners, Patients as Problem-Solvers." *Health Communication* 14.1 (2001): 69–97.

Young, Iris Marion. "Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy." *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political.* Ed. Seyla Benhabib. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1996. 120–35.

———. "Difference as a Resource for Democratic Communication." *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics.* Ed. James Bohman and William Regh. Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 1997. 383–406.

———. *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1997.

Young, Richard, Alton Becker, and Kenneth Pike. *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change.* New York: Harcourt Brace, 1970.

Zentella, Ana Celia, ed. *Building on Strength: Language Literacy in Latin Families and Communities.* New York: Teachers Coll. P, 2005.

Lorraine Higgins is Associate Professor of Rhetoric at Worcester Polytechnic Institute where she directs the Center for Communication Across the Curriculum and teaches in the Professional Writing program. She has published on the teaching of writing and argumentation, community literacy, and the use of narrative in public deliberation.

Elenore Long is Associate Professor of Rhetoric at Bay Path College and is completing a book entitled *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Local Publics*, to be published by Parlor Press.

Linda Flower is Professor of Rhetoric at Carnegie Mellon. She recently completed a book entitled *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Engagement*.