Educating Future Public Workers: Can We Make Inquiry Professional?

Elenore Long, Arizona State University

"Educating Future Public Workers: Can We Make Inquiry Professional?" begins with an observation: students in CIT 300: Communicating in the Helping Professions are preparing for the very human service careers that caused community residents in Ellen Cushman's The Struggle and the Tools such grief. Exploring options from community literacy research for addressing this contradiction, the paper commends a problem-based pedagogy focused on collaborative inquiry and knowledge building designed to represent the agency and expertise of others. The paper dramatizes this model of rhetorical education through the work of a pre-professional named Hillary who interned at a shelter for women and children seeking sanctuary from domestic abuse. The paper follows Hillary conducting a series of "rival readings" on the shelter's no dating policy with theorists, professionals, and, most importantly, those most directly affected by the rule: the shelter's residents. "Educating Future Public Workers" argues that community-based rhetorical research can offer faculty and students outside of English both a theoretical frame and a practical guide to community partnerships.

Hang around awhile, and the irony would likely strike you, too. Students in CIT 300: Communicating in the Helping Professions at the college where I teach are preparing for the very human-service careers that caused community residents in Ellen Cushman's *The Struggle and the Tools* such grief. As gatekeepers, the public workers whom Cushman observed more often than not denied community residents access to much needed resources and thwarted their daily struggle for dignity and respect (Cushman 48). The irony came home to me while I was working with colleagues from the fields of psychology, occupational therapy, and criminal justice—fields that my college calls collectively "the helping professions." Resisting a curricular unit on the topic of conflict resolution, a student majoring in criminal justice told us, "I don't have to learn to negotiate. I'll carry a gun" (Constance I.4).[1]

When students majoring in one of the helping professions enter required junior-year internships, their identities shift somewhat from *students* to *professionals in training*. Marking this shift, they serve internships at human service agencies like the one featured below, Compass/*Familias*.

Compass/*Familias* offers assistance to women and their children in direct danger of domestic violence. In addition to legal council, psychological counseling, financial support, and clothing, Compass/*Familias* sponsors a women's shelter with capacity for eight families (up to twenty-four people). Typical stays are about a month, but may last up to three. According to its mission, the chief purpose of the shelter is to help women and their children remain safe while going about their day-to-day lives as normally as possible. For this reason, families do all their own cooking in a communal kitchen and are expected to maintain structured daily schedules (Eastwood). As is typical of such homes, all information about the women and their children is kept confidential and the location of the shelter is also undisclosed—something the interns must keep to themselves.[2]

According to Cushman, human-service agencies like Compass/*Familias* are typically predicated on democratic ideals and "established out of a concern for the well-being of citizens who were hungry, unemployed, homeless or living in dilapidated housing, or who lacked

access to higher education" (223). In addition, not-for-profit human service agencies "help maintain some of the last remaining public spaces in our culture that are not directly sponsored by government or corporations" (Harris 16). Students themselves are attuned to this potential and often express strong commitments in choosing to work in the human-services sector.[3]

But the daily politics of human-service gatekeeping encounters tend to denigrate community residents. Just as poverty pressed down hard on the poor people in the industrial city Cushman calls Quayville, institutional dynamics pressed down hard on the city's gatekeepers, causing them to restrict community residents' access to what lay on the other side of the encounter. As Cushman describes it, the gatekeeping encounter is characterized by the dualities that wrestle and wrangle there—the tension between the gatekeepers' public "structuring ideology," on the one hand, and the "counterhegemonic ideology" that residents keep private, on the other (Cushman, *Struggle* 139). Consider the encounter between a housing officer named Kathy Oaks and a community resident called Raejone. Raejone had come to the housing office to complete a Section 8 housing application. Oaks tells Raejone that she'll read the form to Raejone "'because some of the words are tricky'" (Cushman, *Struggle* 157) to which Raejone comments to herself, "'What? Cause I'm poor, I can't read [. . .]?'" (158). Scanning ahead, Raejone reads the fine print and asks Oaks why she had completed an item for her without asking if she wanted her ethnicity disclosed. The duel stays beneath the surface of the encounter, for Raejone is careful not to alienate herself from the gatekeeper entirely. As Raejone told Cushman after the incident, "'I could say, 'yo' what's your problem? Gimme my benefits'" (158-59). But in Raejone's estimation, such an approach would have only confirmed Oaks's negative attitude about her, letting her think, "'Oh, another lazy nigger'" (159). Raejone figured: "'I ain't gonna give them that satisfaction'" (159).

Dueling dualities are so pervasive in gatekeeping encounters that Cushman witnessed an alternative just once, in an admissions interview between Raejone and a college admission counselor, Mr. Villups. During the interview Mr. Villups "cleared a rhetorical space for [Raejone] to bring her community based discourse to bear in a context where fluency in academic English is valued" (Cushman 187). By doing so, he signaled his respect for Raejone's understanding of what it means and what it takes to earn a college education.

Raejone's experiences with Oaks and Villups carry serious implications for upper-level writing curriculum aimed at supporting students at the crossroads between academic coursework and professional education. Drawing on Michael Warner's *Publics and Counterpublics*, Ronald Walter Greene observes that the goal of rhetorical education is to prepare students for participation in public life: "rhetoric [is…] a public pedagogy, that is, a form of civics education normatively required to attend to the discourses of a public" (436). Inevitably, rhetorical education invokes one or another model of the communicating self and the listening/responding other. In *Publics and Counterpublics,* Warner casts this dynamic in the public realm and refers to it as *stranger-relationality.* As Greene explains, "[a] public exists as a modern form of power by creating the norms that organize interaction as a space of stranger-relationality" (438). Cushman herself theorizes that as a distinct public role, the gatekeeper is predisposed to a stranger-relationality that is reductive and agonistic, as in the encounter between Oaks and Raejone.[4] However, though gatekeeping discourse may be sedimented, it is not cemented. That Villups could find a way to invite Raejone to join him in setting the terms for their interview suggests that other gatekeepers may likewise successfully invoke an alternative norm for stranger-relationality. A central question is how to structure a rhetorical curriculum for future public workers in a way that tips the balance away from a denigrating norm and toward the alternative that Cushman calls for: that of knowledgeable advocate and fair judge (184)?[5] This shift, I propose, invites rhetorical education focused on the

intellectual work of collaborative inquiry and intercultural knowledge building.

Designing Rhetorical Education for Future Public Workers

Scholarship in community-literacy studies suggests various ways for writing teachers to respond to the disconnect among well intentioned students preparing for careers in the human services, academic programs designed to provide such preparation, conventional gatekeeping discourse, and democratic ideals that challenge us all to find a higher road.

Deter Students from Entering the Human-Service Industry

John McKnight would likely try to dissuade students from entering human-service careers in the first place. In "John Deere and the Bereavement Counselors," McKnight uses the term "professionalism" to indict the entire social-service system and those practicing within it. It follows that gatekeepers tend to violate the same ethical standards as the well-intentioned "bereavement counselor" whose "new tool [. . .] cut[s] through the social fabric, throwing aside kinship, care and neighborly obligations," leaving finally even the bereavement counselor bereft of the "[. . .] possibility of restoring hope in clients [. . .] with nothing but a service for consolation" ("Bereavement" 266). For McKnight, the term *bereavement counselor* is shorthand for all that can go wrong when the system of professional training in higher education devises methods and treatments for social-service programs to deliver that undercut and destroy authentic acts and organic systems of care that exist within intact communities.

Situate Courses in the Community

Susan Swan would have us acknowledge the pressure that works against gatekeepers constructing alternative discourses that make room for community residents. She has witnessed such institutional pressure firsthand. Graduate students in a public policy capstone course interviewed community residents about conditions that could make or break a proposed urban renewal project. However, the students couldn't figure out how to incorporate this vital information into the professional genre they were assigned to write for their course. Instead, they relied on the more conventional expertise of published professionals to evaluate the proposal. Their final recommendation overlooked the residents' well grounded concerns. In light of the disciplinary pressure that Swan observed, she speculates that a "new [research] method" could improve the situation: "What may be called for is a new method constructed outside any specific academic genre or discipline, situated in the community, and performed collaboratively [with community residents] throughout the entire process" (106). Swan concludes "Rhetoric, Service, and Social Justice" by urging us to move our academic courses to community locales where community-based discourse conventions can be deliberately invoked or constructed.

Place Students with Prominent Community Leaders

Eli Goldblatt would likely urge us to get off our moral high horse and start networking with those community leaders who do, in fact, work for social justice in their communities. The community leaders in "Alinsky's Reveille: A Community-Organizing Model for Neighborhood-Based Literacy Projects" oversaw the very kinds of human-service agencies whose leadership Cushman critiques in *The Struggle and the Tools*. Yet never does Goldblatt question their ability to translate their "undying good humor" and "fierce commitment to social justice" into meaningful social action (286). Instead, their standards set the bar for his engagement. Applying Goldblatt's principles for non-interventionist knowledge activism to rhetorical education, educators might put students in contact with such community leaders—in much the way that David Coogan does in "Counterpublics in Public Housing," where college students shadow guardians of public homeplaces in Chicago's southside.

Teach Professional Knowledge-Building Strategies

There's all the difference in the world between exhorting students to demonstrate some attitude—in this case to be fair and knowledgeable—

and designing instruction to make such an approach a matter of professional practice. This is Jeffery Grabill and Michele Simmons' point in "Toward a Critical Rhetoric of Risk Communication: Producing Citizens and the Role of Technical Communicators." They write:

It is one thing to talk about how decision makers should listen and should allow citizens to participate (they should!). It is an entirely different project to structure as part of the everyday practices of a given institution research designed to facilitate user/citizen participation as legitimate knowledge producers and decision makers. (437)

Grabill and Simmons note that in the professional roles students will assume as graduates, they are in a unique position to bring community-based research methods to institutions that are accustomed to bypassing community perspectives. Moreover, in the future, graduates' effectiveness will turn on their ability not to strike a didactic or defensive stance but a procedural one that goes about structuring participatory processes as a function of how they carry out their work as professionals.

Marked by diversity and conflict, the knowledge that allows gatekeepers to work as fair judges and knowledgeable advocates is intercultural in composition, with the gate serving as a contact zone between two cultures' conflicting value systems (Long 98). On one side of the gate is the culture of community residents. In Cushman's study, residents are African Americans living in Quayville's inner city, people who privilege privacy, self-help, and collaboration among kith and kin. On the other side of the gate is the institutional culture of gatekeepers. The linguistic skill required to navigate this borderland is intensely political and attuned to the contingencies at play here (Cushman 231).

Viewed from Grabill and Simmons's perspective, conventional gatekeeping doesn't adequately elicit and represent community

residents' situated knowledge—that "rich, experientially-based resource for interpreting and problematizing familiar abstractions and stock solutions to problems that have not yet been fully understood" (Higgins, Long, and Flower 19-20). Consider the situated knowledge circulating but underutilized by public workers in another incident from *The Struggle and the Tools*: a sting operation attempting to shut down a drug ring in Raejone's neighborhood. The effort failed because representatives from both the police station and the regional office of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People voiced "paternalistic attitudes" that discouraged community residents from sharing knowledge about the "complexity of the situation" that they freely exchanged with one another and shared with Cushman (106).

In sum, *The Struggle and the Tools* bears testament to how much residents know about the negative circumstances that human services are designed to help mitigate against and how rarely gatekeepers attempt to access this knowledge. That is, Quayville's community residents are fluent with many public institutions' forms, regulations, and procedures. Their knowledge reveals the gap between the professed intent of specific public policies, on the one hand, and how these policies play out in lived experience, on the other. A rhetorically attuned curriculum would teach upper-level students in the helping professions to predict that community residents possess such knowledge and would teach students some strategies for eliciting and interpreting it.

Transforming Professional Internships into Opportunities for Intercultural Knowledge Building

Activist educators seeking to translate *The Struggle and the Tools* into productive pedagogy face a significant challenge. Cushman could document the situated knowledge of community residents because of her rather unique social location, one "normally available only to the attuned ethnographer, confidant or friend [. . .]" (Flower, "Transformation" 197). But how might curriculum help students learn

to access and to listen to community residents' situated knowledge? At the college where this project took place, rhetorical theory transformed internships (previously carried out independently by the students) into service-learning opportunities that not only introduce students to institutional discourse and practices, such as that of the gatekeeper, but also make these experiences sites of inquiry, knowledge building, and reflection.

At the small women's college in western New England where this curricular design project took place, academic programs in the helping professions have long required junior-level internships that take students to various regional human-service agencies, such as Compass/*Familias*. For decades, members of academic departments had overseen the internships. But as the programs grew and the task of coordinating the internships grew more demanding, the director of career services had assumed responsibility for administering these internships—primarily by placing students in the field and coordinating the paperwork (setting goals, logging hours, and filing a final report) necessary to satisfy the programs' internship requirement.

Academic program directors highly value the role internships have played in students' professional preparation as well as job placement. When I joined them, program directors were eager to integrate more closely the internship experience and coursework in their major fields of study. One place they saw to intervene was around the reports students completed at the end of the internship experience.

Together, program directors representing the helping professions, the director of career services, and I read through several dozen students' end-of-internship reports that had been filed away in the career service office. We agreed that past reports typically served more as a means toward a checkmark on the interns' to-do lists of requirements for earning internship credits than as sites for intellectual engagement. Students' reports were typically read (and more often simply skimmed)

by one person—the director of career services—while she conducted brief exit interviews with the interns, a fact students readily shared with one another (Kara I.3). Program directors were eager to have these reports invested with more educational value so the reports could serve as course material the next year within senior-level capstone courses. The director of career services was thrilled, as well, at the prospect of students writing more insightful, useful, and interesting reports. So the academic program directors, the career services director, and I agreed that given the opportunity to invent a new junior-level writing course, we would focus on improving the content, social value, and circulation of students' final reports.

The result of our collaboration positions rhetorical inquiry as the link between students' internships and their major fields of study. Below I report data from an iteration of the new course, CIT 300: Communicating in the Helping Professions, offered in the fall of 2005. At that time, the course enrolled eighteen juniors, including an occupational therapy major named Rita who interned at a family support center, a psychology major named Kara who interned at Mi Casa Family Services and Educational Center, and a criminal justice major named Liza who interned at the Department of Youth Services for the state of Massachusetts. In what follows, the coursework from a psychology major named Hillary, interning at Compass/*Familias*, dramatizes the types and kinds of rhetorical and literate strategies that CIT 300 was designed to teach.

Knowledge-Building Strategies for Future Public Workers

Rhetorical technai forms the crux of problem-based pedagogy. Such an approach anticipates that in the future students will encounter rhetorical situations that resemble but don't replicate those that a classroom or even a service-learning project illustrates for them. In the face of such dynamism, the most helpful writing course offers strategies that can be named and practiced now and evoked later under slightly or even radically different circumstances. As Janet Atwill observes, as a

special class of productive knowledge, techne is "stable enough" that people can grasp them as specific strategies and transfer them to new contexts but "flexible enough" to be useful in specific situations and for particular purposes (48).

Literature in community-literacy studies suggests points in students' inquiry processes where educators could intervene most productively, as well as techne to introduce at each of these junctures. For instance, once students are oriented to their internship sites and are ready to frame an inquiry project there, the rival-reading technique can help them build more nuanced understandings of problematic situations. Similarly, as students begin composing findings from their inquiries, the multi-voiced inquiry technique can encourage students to represent in text the expertise and agency of others. Finally, as students circulate their inquiry projects, a countervalent postal system structures pathways that allow students to circulate findings from their inquiry projects to other readers. Each of these techniques will be discussed and illustrated below.

In addition to CIT 300's writing component, a flexible set of readings unifies the different majors within the helping professions. Unit one, for instance, entitled Framing Problems / Seeing Possibilities, features Jane Addams's "The Snare of Preparation"; Alice Walker's "Saving the Life that is Your Own: The Importance of Models in the Artist's Life"; and Cokie Robert's profile of Esther Peterson, "Consumer Advocate." The second unit, Self/Other, includes Simone de Beauvoir's "Woman as Other" and John McKnight's "The Bereavement Counselor." The third unit, Listening for Difference, focuses on Stephanie Kallos's *Broken for You* and Gelya Frank's *Venus on Wheels*, an occupational therapist's account of disability in her own life and in the life of Diane DeVries, who was born with no arms or legs. Exploring effective working relationships, the fourth unit focuses on two documentaries, *Maggie Growls*—featuring the founder of the Gray Panthers, Maggie Kuhn—

and *When Billy Hit his Head and other Tales of Wonder*, a feature-length film about the disabilities movement in the United States.

Framing an Inquiry Project: Assessing the Rhetorical Situation
Readers of this journal know: in the history of university-community relations, academics have earned a reputation for assuming their view of "the" problem is the most accurate and their solution for "fixing" it will be the most effective (Flower, "Partners" 95; Goldblatt 284). Gatekeepers in Quayville's human-service agencies had a similar tendency—in this case, to assess a situation based on patronizing assumptions that "poor people, especially poor Black people [are] passive, disorganized, and apathetic" (Cushman 47)—even as the gatekeeper's responses ensured that programmatic services would never eliminate the need for the gatekeeper's job (cf. McKnight *Careless*).

Assessing the rhetorical situation may be the first step in any rhetorical act (Bitzer 3); however, the task is especially complex in community contexts, where, as Lorraine Higgins, Elenore Long, and Linda Flower explain, "different stakeholder groups with unique social perspectives will likely perceive the problem in different ways and will recognize different audiences as appropriate" (12). They continue:

[W]hen 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. (12)

By teaching a techne at this point in the knowledge-building process, the design of CIT 300 makes operational the expectation that professionals approach complex phenomena by deliberately inquiring into that complexity.

As soon as students were oriented to their internships, the CIT 300 curriculum asked them to identify felt difficulties—the heart of the Deweyan approach to rhetoric that Richard Young, Alton Becker, and Kenneth Pike map in *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*. Below is an excerpt from a write-to-learn activity that students completed early in CIT 300:

Ever had the feeling of something new or unexpected bugging you? Maybe the feeling wasn't negative or irritating, but intellectually intriguing—something didn't "fit" so you felt drawn to understand it better. You may remember from the Psych 101 that cognitive psychologists consider such dissonance a primary site for learning. That's because the feeling of intrigue or discomfort pushes us to make sense of the phenomenon within a richer framework than we initially brought to it. This module asks you to identify something from your internship site that initially intrigues or troubles you and then to account for this phenomenon from alternative perspectives using the rival reading technique described below. [. . .]

Based on the felt difficulties they identified, students were then asked to find documents or other cultural artifacts that they judged to be windows into the situations that had given them pause. Students then practiced a strategy for deliberately seeking out interpretations of this artifact: the rival-reading technique.

The rival-reading technique. The rival reading technique structures and sequences the act of interpreting a loaded cultural issue. As a technique, it elicits alternative interpretations of a cultural artifact (Flower, *Problem Solving* 415-19)—such as a home energy assistance form (Cushman 145-50), a map of a city's wards (Cintron 19), or a proposal for an urban renewal project (Swan 85). Typically the student will conduct and collect rival-reading interviews from several people, sitting down with each of them in turn to prompt and to listen as each reads through the document or artifact—line by line or feature by feature.

In the context of CIT 300, the intent is for the student to conduct several of these interviews with people who have experience—particularly firsthand experience—with the felt difficulty the student seeks to better understand.

Hillary's rival-reading project: Interpreting a shelter's no-dating policy. When she started her internship at a Compass/*Familias*, Hillary took issue with its no-dating rule. From her 20-year-old perspective, the no-dating rule seemed "patronizing" and "restrictive." She couldn't imagine someone telling her she couldn't date (Hillary I.2).

To conduct her rival-reading project, Hillary sought out alternatives interpretations of the rule. Based on earlier coursework in her field, she could construct both humanistic and behavioral justifications of the therapeutic benefits a place like the women's shelter seeks to offer its clients. In addition, a professional psychologist on staff at the shelter explained the rule as a safety precaution, both for the individual women who wouldn't be dating but also everyone else who sought safety or worked at the shelter. These explanations led Hillary to interpret her initial appraisal of the no-dating rule as immature: "Looking back, I didn't truly understand the life circumstances of women who would seek the safety of the center and why specific rules were necessary. Now after observing in the shelter, I'm learning that the rules are necessary so that the shelter, as an organization, doesn't get taken advantage of" (Hillary I.5).

Next, Hillary took her rival-reading technique to the women's shelter and used it to structure conversation with residents there. Prior to the inquiry session, Hillary circulated a written description of her project. She found residents who were willing to talk with her and explained to them that she would be coming back with a tape recorder and would remove any identifying information from consequent transcripts. Returning to the shelter, Hillary had along a printed version of the

shelter's rules and asked residents to interpret the list with her, line by line.

Working their way through the list of the shelter's rules, the residents who spoke with Hillary emphasized that it was not the no-dating rule that bothered them, but that the clean-kitchen rule was not enforced. The conversation began between Hillary and Aretha, who had positioned themselves in the living room. Not long after, Liz, another shelter resident joined them:

Hillary: [Moving down the list of rules.] Number 4. Dating is prohibited for clients residing at the shelter.

Aretha: Oh, that. Yeah. Hey, Liz. Hillary here is talking about rules for her class paper. Remember that time you, me and Nina wrote that note in the kitchen?

Liz: Oh, yeah. We were so damn mad.

Aretha: You see, Becka and her kids would leave the kitchen a mess whenever they were through with it.

Liz: Ughh. They'd be crumbs, jam on the counter. The time my purse landed in a pool of syrup—that was the last straw.

Aretha: We told Becka's case worker. She's supposed to keep her clients in line, you know, but she wouldn't do nothing. So we wrote a note in big black felt pen—'cause we were damn mad.

Liz: "Clean up after yourself," it says. "We are not your mother."

Aretha: We have enough to worry about without doing someone else's dirty work.

The women went on to recount having created—in a show of collaborative problem-solving and solidarity—a big "clean up after

yourself" sign which at the time of Hillary's internship still hung in the communal kitchen. The women's narrative of trying to get out the door in the morning spurred Hillary to continue grappling with the culturally loaded concept of rules and rule making at a women's shelter. For Aretha and Liz, at issue was less a single no-dating policy and more the question of how rules are made and kept within a collaborative living environment. The exchange pushed Hillary to reframe her inquiry to consider how rules in a communal, therapeutic setting get made and enforced and whose interests they serve. In class discussion afterward, in her journal, and in her final course project, Hillary worked to do justice to the complexities that the rival readings revealed to her.

It would be inaccurate to equate Hillary's position as a student intern with that of the conventional gatekeeper whom Cushman observed. The women Hillary interviewed were quite at home at the shelter; it was Hillary who was the newbie there. In much the same way that guardians from public homeplaces in Coogan's "Counterpublics in Public Housing" supported college students' moral development simply because the students belonged to "the human family" (473), the women opted to help Hillary with her "class paper." Yet at the shelter, Hillary also represented a woman with a life set on a different, less encumbered trajectory, with social, cultural, and economic prospects—from schooling to meaningful work—clearly within her grasp. But Hillary's tenuous status at the shelter didn't relieve her and the residents from having to negotiate the power differentials among themselves; rather, her tenuous status pointed to the rhetorical complexity of trying to do so, and it benefited from the assistance that a tool like rival reading can offer such an endeavor.

Composing Findings to Represent the Agency and Expertise of Others
Constructing a more robust mental model of a problem is one thing. Communicating that more nuanced understanding to readers is another. Recall the difficulty that Swan observed in "Rhetoric, Service, and

Social Justice." For the course, students sought out local residents' perspectives on a proposal for an urban renewal project. In those interviews, community residents qualified the positions of academic experts, and through the interviews, student built more robust mental models of an urban problem and considered more comprehensive proposals for urban renewal than they would have otherwise. But when it came to composing the results of their inquiries, students had difficulty figuring out how to use the community knowledge; they opted, instead, for discursive moves—from sentence structure to graphic organizers—that muted ordinary people's voices and overlooked local insights in favor of discursive moves that complied with conventional, disciplinary standards of validity, rigor, and authority.

Swan's research among public policy students shows that traditional academic research conventions can absorb difference, contradiction, and complexity—making it difficult for students to express the tentative, experiential, or unresolved aspects that arise when they engage difference in dialogue to the degree that the rival-reading technique requires. The multi-voiced inquiry provides an alternative.

The multi-voiced inquiry. As a techne, the multi-voice inquiry is described most explicitly in *Problem-Solving Strategies for College and the Community* (420-22). Here Flower explains its three phases: framing a question, bringing multiple voices to the table, and reflecting multiple voices in text. In practice, the multi-voiced inquiry comes to life in Flower's "Intercultural Inquiry and the Transformation of Service," featuring college students serving as writing mentors for urban teens at the Community Literacy Center in Pittsburgh. Synthesizing students' fieldwork, readings, and reflections, multi-voiced inquiries capture students deliberating culturally loaded open questions with teen writers. The inquiries "put charged issues like [. . .] justice, success, responsibility, emancipation, or role models [. . .] on the table as open questions" where they "become[. . .] qualified,

conditionalized concept[s . . .] for both the teenager and the mentor" (Flower, "Transformation" 197). The multi-voiced inquiry asks student to draw upon "techniques [they] 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).

Hillary's multi-voiced inquiry. Hillary composed a multi-voiced inquiry after conducting her rival-reading interviews. (The inquiry is reprinted following this article.) For the document, she borrowed the table and chairs from pages in *Problem-Solving Strategies*, as well as the main metaphor there—voices at the table—to be the organizing principle for her own document.

The document includes various sources: quotations from Hillary's Psychology 101 textbook; her course notes from previous coursework in cultural diversity and the psychology of women; excerpts from each of her rival-reading interviews, including the one above with Aretha and Liz and another with a staff member at the shelter. Hillary's commentary runs throughout the document, highlighting and connecting key ideas, as well as pointing out important differences and raising pressing questions.

Through its design, Hillary's multi-voiced inquiry poses an alternative to the scholarship that Hillary has read—academic treatises where women like Aretha and Liz who seek safety in a shelter are the object of analysis. Within the inquiry itself, Hillary asks the reader to listen as community residents relay stories from their own experiences. These narratives spur new understandings of the no-dating rule in ways that Iris Young predicted they would:

• First, narrative reveals [. . .] particular experiences [. . .] that cannot be shared by those situated differently but that they must understand in order to do justice to the others.

• Second, narrative reveals a source of values, culture and meaning.

• Finally, narrative not only exhibits experiences and values from the point of view of the subjects that have and hold them. It also reveals a total social knowledge from the point of view of that social position. (72–73)

As Hillary's document illustrates, the multi-voiced inquiry creates a rhetorical challenge for writers: to design a text that draws readers into the issue at hand while inviting readers to negotiate and integrate rival perspectives from the text for themselves. Like the more collaboratively composed think tank's findings that Flower described in "Intercultural Knowledge Building," the point of students' end-of-term multi-voiced inquiries is not to "add up" to a tidy thesis but to "confront [. . .] contradictions" and "invit[e] rivals [. . .] through the eyes of difference" (187).

Circulating Findings to Other Readers

In "Composition and the Circulation of Writing," John Trimbur advances the position that "the circulation of writing should figure much more prominently in writing instruction" (190). That is, by equating "the activity of composing with writing itself," writing instructors have missed altogether the complex delivery systems through which writing circulates" (189-90). An "ethical and political" aspect of public discourse, circulation has implications for service learning. Referring to Bruce Herzberg's landmark essay "Community Service and Critical Teaching," Trimbur notes: "community service learning in particular does not always come to grips with its own origins in the middle-class project of going into the world to do good works for the less fortunate—a script of benefactors and the needy that has a long history" (195-96). Service-learning initiatives have a

better chance of doing so when they circulate alternative discourses that interrogate the prevailing script, for publics are neither as non-problematic nor as readily available as some of the field's public writing assignments suggest (Trimbur 190). By engaging students not only in the production of texts but in their circulation as well, writing instruction can ask students to grapple with the ironies and contradictions that circulate in a given public, such as the gatekeeping encounter.[5]

Yet prioritizing the circulation of discourse poses a quandary for educators. Given time constraints, how do we best support students to circulate their writing in public? One option is to sponsor venues for live public performances. This is the option Jenn Fishman et al. commend in "Performing Writing, Performing Identity." Stipulating that "'performance on a public-scale'" is "'something efficacious or capable of producing change'" (Sedgwick qtd. in Fishman et al. 250), they recommend developing rubrics for effectively communicating expectations for public performance to students and for evaluating how well students' work meets the mark.

Another option is to work behind the scenes to position research projects for service-learning initiatives within streams of public discourse. For instance, to mobilize parental support of a local school initiative, college students at the Illinois Institute of Technology wrote and circulated public documents, ranging from "a guidebook for parents of school-age children; a PowerPoint presentation on how to read and interpret a school budget; and flyers, posters, even magnets advertising upcoming meetings" (Coogan, "Service" 682).

Still another alternative is to place the responsibility for circulating texts on students themselves. This is what Nancy Welch did in a course entitled Aphrodite Daughters, a women's studies seminar at the University of Vermont. A student called Katie dressed in black and lurked downtown at night to post ransom-note-style poems in

undesignated areas. In sparking "arresting moments" such as these, students in Welch's class flirted with, tested, and defied the police's version of law and order. Next time Welch teaches such a course, she says she'll draw upon the history of class struggle to help students interrogate the dominant popular image of the "anarchic 'edgeworker'" (Welch 484) and to imagine creative, timely and collaborative acts of political activism and protest.

A countervalent postal system. Another option follows from Greene's reading of Warner's *Publics and Counterpublics*: to implement a techne best described as a countervalent postal system. The idea of a postal system follows from conceptualizing a public as a nexus of circulating discourses, rather than a physical body of decision makers. Greene emphasizes that as a public pedagogy, "rhetorical studies produces, circulates, and delivers communicative souls to the discourses of a public. In other words, rhetorical pedagogy is part of a public's postal system" (435). The postal system allows discourse "to keep circulating" beyond the exigency that called forth the rhetor's initial response.

Greene urges scholars of rhetoric to recognize the extent to which their work is about preparing communicative "souls" for public life (434). I read Greene to suggest that if the dominant postal system for producing gatekeepers is not interrogated, it delivers gatekeepers into public life in ways that reinforce presumptions of power and prestige. In contrast, a course like CIT 300 provides an opportunity to circulate a countervalent alternative, in much the same way that counterpublics in Warner's study "try to supply different ways of imagining stranger sociability and its reflexivity" (Warner 87). In other words, a countervalent postal system can not only prepare students in the helping professions to communicate in self-other dyads, but also to circulate discourse—including turn-taking scripts—that embody alternatives to the reductive and agonistic norm of stranger-relationality that gatekeepers in training are soon likely to encounter on the job.

In terms of designing a countervalent postal system, Trimbur takes up where Greene leaves off. Trimbur offers cues as to "how [a . . .] writing teacher could actually stage the circuits of distribution and exchange through which writing passes" (194-95). One way is to highlight the distinction between exchange value and use value. In classroom contexts, a text's exchange value is often transactional and contractual. (Give me a report to file away in a drawer that no one will ever look in, and I'll authorize the checkmark on your to-do list of internship requirements.) Use value is inherently more difficult to predict. According to Trimbur, the significance of a discourse's exchange value lies less in some measure of the text's results or outcomes and more in "what it carries in its internal workings as its circulates" (212), such as a norm for stranger-relationality in the gatekeeping encounter that emphasizes the agency and expertise of both parties.

Curricular decisions put students' texts to use through publication on the internship websites that correspond with the students' academic programs. These websites are accessible to students and faculty through the college's intranet portal. The texts are typically posted under one of three links:

• What-if scenarios: students translate specific internship experiences into problem narratives (e.g., a supervisor is too busy to provide much direction or assign repetitive and menial tasks); they suggest strategies for responding effectively, and they reflect on the outcomes that follow.

• Inquiry modules: students design guidelines that walk future students through the inquiry process for CIT 300. ("Here's how I got my rival-reading interviews going. . . .")

• Findings: students' multi-voiced inquiries become the basis of study and reflection for the senior-level course that students take the following academic year in their major fields of study.

The design of each website is simple enough that work-study students have been able to keep it updated with students' new material from one semester to the next. Hillary's multi-voiced inquiry paper described above is posted under *findings*. She also composed several *what-if scenarios* based on her experiences at the women's shelter.

To the extent that these websites successfully serve as a countervalent postal system, they do more than serve as a glorified course management interface. Instead they structure inquiry-based professionals practice that recognize the agency and expertise of ordinary people. Yet rather than trying to control readers' behavior (you should!), the websites circulate "a rhetoric of engagement" (Flower, *Community Literacy* 79) and "really useful knowledge" for democratic communication (Johnson qtd. in Trimbur 216). That is, like other documents associated with community literacy's rhetorical model of personal and public inquiry, these websites 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?" (Higgins, Long, and Flower 28).

Conclusion

So what comes of using rhetorical theory to study a problem in pre-professional educational development? Furthermore, when educating future public workers, can we make inquiry professional? Responding to such questions—given the obviously limited evidence of some consequences—invites what John Dewey called an "experimental way of being," an orientation that engages problems in the world and then uses data to refine one's understandings of those problems ("Quest" 132).

Viewed accordingly, this study suggests that community-based rhetorical research can offer faculty and students outside of English both a theoretical frame and a practical guide to community partnerships. First, the focus on inquiry invites pre-professionals to grapple intellectually with the problems and possibilities of what Iris Young calls "communicative democracy" (73). Then it makes communicative democracy operational. Tools of inquiry provide a guide to practice—on terms pre-professionals can construct within spaces available to them—what Cornel West calls a "[d]emocratic faith [in . . .] the abilities and capacities of ordinary people to participate in decision-making procedures of institutions that fundamentally regulate their lives" (140). For the alternative norm and practices that such rhetorical education circulates are not abstract philosophical ideals. Nor will they obstruct the new hire's ability to do his or her job. Consider Goldblatt's community partners in "Alinsky's Reveille." They succeeded in their human-service agencies because of the high road they traveled, Manuel as a community organizer for the AIDs community in South Chicago and Johnny as a culture advocate in Philadelphia (285-86). Similarly, the effective health care providers whom Amanda Young and Linda Flower observed in an inner-city emergency room found ways around the gatekeeping discourse that separated community residents seeking health care from medical professionals who could provide it. Effective health care providers invoked an alternative, something Young and Flower term *collaborative inquiry*. No, it's not that pre-professional rhetorical education will thwart the gatekeeper's ability to do his or her job. Rather, these technai circulate a model for doing better work.

Endnotes

[1] The data reported in this paper were collected with academic program directors and the director of career services at a small all-women's college in New England. Students' retrospective self-interviews and class discussions were audiotaped and transcribed. Excerpts from entries are labeled I for Interview and numbered according to the sequence in which they were recorded. To maintain confidentiality, students provided pseudonyms which are used in this article.

·☆·

² Sites such as Compass/*Familias* (pseudonym) serve people whom the National Institutes of Health describes as "vulnerable." As a condition for approval from our college's internal review board and for cooperation from agencies' directors overseeing students' internships, residents' participation in students' inquiries is always voluntary and—under HIPPA legislation—entirely separate from any psychological, legal, or medical counseling clients may receive; in addition, participants provide pseudonyms which students are required to use in all oral and written discussion of their experience. Agencies learn about our CIT 300 curriculum and review the rival-reading technique and consent forms prior to accepting interns.

³ Hillary, for instance, explains in her journal: "I went there [to the women's shelter] with my heart on my sleeve. What can I do to help you?" Even more typical are students' stories of genuine gratitude for the services they or family members received from human-service agencies, such as respite care for an aging grandparent. In the transition from childhood to adulthood, students often identify with human-service providers and understand careers in such fields to offer meaningful work.

⁴ In *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Local Publics*, I read the gatekeeping encounter as a unique local public (97-105), and Cushman theorizes the gatekeeper as a distinctive public role (47).

⁵ The terms Cushman uses here may invoke for readers a rational-critical model of deliberation. In this paper, I work with an alternative rhetorical model, one based on intercultural inquiry (Higgins, Long, and Flower). For background concerning this distinction, see Iris Marion Young's *Democracy and Difference: Constesting the Boundaries of the Political*. Ed. Seyla Benhabib. Princeton: Princeton UP, 120-35.

·☆·

Works Cited

Atwill, Janet. *Rhetoric Reclaimed: Aristotle and the Liberal ArtsTradition*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1998.

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

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

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

Cushman, Ellen. *The Struggle and the Tools: Oral and Literate Strategies in an Inner City Community*. New York: SUNY P, 1998.

Eastwood, Jennifer. "Holyoke Womanshelter's Mother's Day Fundraiser." *The Daily Collegian*. www.dailycollegian.com. 25 April 2002.

Fishman, Jenn, Andrea Lunsford, Beth McGregor, and Mark Otuteye. "Performing Writing, Performing Identity." *College Composition and Communication* 52.2 (2005): 224–52.

Flower, Linda. *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Engagement* Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2008.

—. "Intercultural Knowledge Building: The Literate Action of a Community Think Tank." *Writing Selves, Writing Societies Research from Activity Perspectives*. Ed. Charles Bazerman and David Russell. Fort Collins: WAC Clearinghouse, 2002. 239–70. http://wac.colostate.edu/books/selves_societies/

—. "Intercultural Inquiry and the Transformation of Service." *College English* 65.2 (2002): 181–201.

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

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

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

Grabill, Jeffery T., and Michele Simmons. "Toward a Critical Rhetoric of Risk Communication: Producing Citizens and the Role of Technical Communicators." *Technical Communication Quarterly* 7.2 (1998): 415–41.

Greene, Ronald Walter. "Rhetorical Pedagogy as a Postal System Circulating Subjects through Michael Warner's 'Publics and Counterpublics.'" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88.1 (2002): 434–43.

Harris, Joseph. Rev. of *Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning in Composition,* by Thomas Deans. *Reflections* 2.1 (2001): 15–17.

Herzberg, Bruce. "Community Service and Critical Teaching." *College Composition and Communication* 45 (1994): 307-19.

Higgins, Lorraine, Elenore Long, and Linda Flower. "Community Literacy: A Rhetorical Model for Personal and Public Inquiry." *Community Literacy Journal* 1.1 (2006): 9-42.

Johnson, Richard. "'Really Useful Knowledge': Radical Education and Working-Class Culture, 1790-1848." *Working Class Culture Studies in History and Theory.* Ed. John Clarke, Chas Critcher, and Richard Johnson. New York: St. Martin's. 1979. 75-102.

Lavadenz, Magaly. "*Como Hablar En Silencio* (Like Speaking in Silence): Issues of Language, Culture and Identity of Central Americans in Los Angeles." *Building on Strength: Language and Literacy in Latino Families and Communities.* Ed. Ana Celia Zentella. New York: Teachers College P, 2005. 93–110.

Long, Elenore. *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Local Publics* West Lafayette: Parlor P, 2008.

Mathieu, Paula. *Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in English Composition.* Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 2005.

McKnight, John. *The Careless Society: Community and its Counterfeits.* New York: Basic Books, 1996.

—. "John Deere and the Bereavement Counselor." *Writing and Community Action: A Service-Learning Rhetoric with Readings* Ed. Thomas Deans. New York: Longman, 2003. 263-72.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Teaching 'Experimental Critical Writing.'" *The Ends of Performance.* Ed. Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane. New York: New York UP, 1998. 104–15

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

Trimbur, John. "Composition and the Circulation of Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 51.2 (2000): 188–219.

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

Welch, Nancy. "Living Room: Teaching Public Writing in a Post Publicity Era." *College Composition and Communication* 56.3 (2005): 470–92.

Young, Amanda, and Linda Flower. "Patients as Partners: Patients as Problem-Solvers." *Health Communication* 14.1 (2001): 68-97.

Young, Iris Marion. *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997.

Young, Richard E., Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike. *Rhetoric Discovery and Change.* Orlando: Harcourt, 1970.