



## Letters to Young High School Students: Writing and Uniting an Academic Community

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For one hundred years, North Carolina Central University (NCCU), a Historically Black College and University, has promoted the concept of service as a means of building a stronger academic and social community. At NCCU, service manifests in many forms; however, during the fall 2009 semester, a group of college students collaborated with high school students on a handwritten letter-writing project. The cross-aged teaching initiative employed different theoretical practices that helped NCCU students become rhetors who immersed themselves in rhetorical situations that promoted change. This article focuses on the impact of this literacy-based service-learning experience on NCCU students' perception of themselves as change agents and problem solvers and on their rhetorical and analytical thinking skills. It also focuses on high school students' readiness to form a partnership with NCCU students and reveal the problems that negatively affect their lives. Since university students engaged in a rhetoric of change, this partnership is an example of how NCCU continues its founder's legacy.

We all have a certain measure of responsibility to those who have made it possible for us to take advantage of the opportunities. The door is opened only so far. If some of us can squeeze through the crack of that door, then we owe it to those who have made those demands that the door be opened to use the knowledge or the skills



that we acquire not only for ourselves but in the service of the community as well.

—*Angela Davis*

**M**y English teacher came up with an idea that we could write letters to [. . .] high school students. . . . I thought this would be another dumb project. But, I think now that it was a good idea,” confesses a university student during a self-reflection exercise. He goes on to say that if he had been given the opportunity to write to an older teenager when he was fifteen or sixteen years old, he would have made fewer mistakes. Initially, this first-year North Carolina Central University (NCCU) student could not conceptualize himself as a participant in a literacy-based service-learning project or as an experiential learner who could successfully engage in community-based experiential learning. In addition, he had virtually no knowledge of how the concept of community engagement has manifested in various forms for a century at North Carolina Central University. From its inception, the university’s mission was to graduate students who had acquired proficient academic and service skills: hence the school’s motto “Truth and Service.”

NCCU, a historically black university located in Durham, North Carolina, is the nation’s first state-supported liberal arts college for African Americans (“Our Heritage”). While many Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were started by white missionaries from the north, NCCU was chartered in 1909 as the National Religious Training School and Chautauqua for the Colored Race by James Edward Shepard, an African American male who “earned the Graduate in Pharmacy degree in 1894” from Shaw University, a liberal arts and professional black college, in Raleigh, NC (“Our Heritage”). Shepard “was also field secretary for the International Sunday School Association and traveled the country taking the measure of the African American clergy. . . . Shepard founded his institution with the mission to educate



African American ministers of all denominations to lift the quality of the leadership of his people” (“Our Heritage”). In 1910, the private school enrolled its first students. In 1911, Shepard made known his philosophical and pedagogical beliefs about social and civic responsibility, community engagement, and education when he posed the following questions: “What is the moral condition of the people of your community? What is the general fitness of the city and country school teachers? To what extent has the work of the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. been effective in your community?” (*The Freeman* 3). Shepard solicited *The Freeman*, a national illustrated African American newspaper, to disseminate his interrogative proclamations. These questions point to Shepard’s intent that the school be intimately involved in the uplift of African-American communities.

Ironically, the university president did not ask these guiding questions of the student body; instead, he “extend[ed] a cordial greeting to the ministers of all dominations to be the guests of the School for one week, beginning July 6, 1912, for the purpose of discussing the following and kindred questions” (3).<sup>1</sup> Shepard’s “rhetoric of change and his call to community is rooted in attempts to confront the divisive and unjust effects of social,”<sup>2</sup> economic, and educational disparities among African Americans. Therefore, Shepard’s inquiry and invitation to ministers illuminate HBCUs’ and Black religious institutions’ obligation to the greater African American community. The university president, like his African American intellectual predecessors, clearly delineated the relationship among religion, education, social mobility, freedom, and collaboration. The questions that Shepard articulated in *The Freeman*, one-hundred years ago were germane to the African American community then; many of them remain pertinent issues in the African

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- 1 See Appendix A for a complete list of the questions that James E. Shepard asked in his advertisement to ministers, which was published in *The Freedom* on December 23, 1911.
  - 2 Flower, Linda. *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Public Engagement*. Carbondale: Southern IUP, 2008. 9.



American community today as they continue to speak to the spiritual, educational, economical, and social needs of African Americans. Although contemporary NCCU stakeholders have expanded Shepard's philosophy, they perpetuate his ideology about social responsibility and service through direct community service and academic service-learning opportunities.

During the 2009-10 academic year, North Carolina Central University celebrated its centennial—a celebration, reflection, and connection. As a result, NCCU students extended a cordial invitation to high school students to put pen to paper and reveal the moral, intellectual, social, and psychological factors that affect their transition from high school to college. This article focuses on the impact of this literacy-based service-learning experience on NCCU students' perception of themselves as problem solvers and change agents and on their rhetorical and analytical thinking skills. It also focuses on high school students' readiness to form a partnership with NCCU students and reveal the problems that negatively affect their lives. This unconventional pedagogical strategy allied literacy practices and a literary unit with service learning to unite and empower two academic communities. This partnership also stands as an example, on a small scale, of how Shepard's school continues his legacy by engaging in a rhetoric of change.

## **Overview of the Course**

The course in this study is a first-year writing class, English Composition I. The general purpose of the course is to introduce students to the concepts and theories of writing expository essays and to the study of the essentials of English composition and rhetoric. The rhetorical situation is a powerful motif in this course; therefore, one of its more specific goals is to provide students with rhetorical situations that generate dialogue with an authentic audience about issues that affect them, their communities, and their nation—issues that emphasize civic, social, and personal responsibility. While this dialogue allows students to recognize the value



of their own voices, it also provides opportunities for them to enter into various discourse communities and negotiate meaning by recognizing other opinions and providing diverse perspectives on those opinions. Ultimately, this course helps students learn that a piece of writing must effectively serve its purpose. Although English Composition I is not a service-learning course, a service-learning component was integrated into one of its units to help university students envision and experience NCCU's legacy of one-hundred years of service to the community. The service-learning project contained three major components: Pre-service Reflections, Service, and Post-service Reflections.

### *My Roles*

My roles on this literacy-based service-learning project were as writing instructor, change agent, and mediator. My role as writing instructor was typical (design syllabus, provide feedback on writing, facilitate discussion, for example); however, my most vital functions on this project were as change agent and mediator. I began to perform these roles immediately after I introduced this service-learning project to my students. My ability to help NCCU students conceptualize their roles as change agents was imperative after they received letters from high school students, read the content of the letters, and surmised that they were not qualified to become members of this crucial university-community partnership. Furthermore, I served as mediator for university and high school students when I attempted to protect both parties' interests during their negotiation processes. These roles are discussed in depth later in the article.

### **University-Community Partnership**

"For a community to be whole and healthy,  
it must be based on people's love and concern for each other."

—*Millard Fuller*



During the fall 2009 semester, twenty-five predominantly African American students enrolled in an English Composition I course at North Carolina Central University formed a partnership with forty-seven students from various racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds enrolled in a tenth-grade English course at a local public high school in Durham, North Carolina. This project is the first university-community partnership of its type between NCCU and this particular entity of the Durham Public School System. The high school students' English teacher agreed to initiate the collaboration by asking her students to send handwritten letters to NCCU students. Thus, a *passé* form of discourse—letter writing—that involved revealing a part of one's self forced NCCU students to become pivotal role models and mentors to high school students who sought inspiration, motivation, and guidance about academic and social problems that affected them, their families, and their community.

The high school students were the ideal partners for this service-learning project. They had recently transitioned from a smaller traditional high school to a laboratory high school on a college campus, an experience similar to NCCU's students who had transitioned from a traditional high school to a more complex educational and social environment. This experience often creates difficulties for some students and causes them to make imprudent decisions. Additionally, some high school students verbally articulated concerns about their inability to integrate smoothly into their greater intellectual and social community of a college campus. As their English teacher reported, the high school students claimed that they did not become full members of that academic discourse community because they felt displaced and marginalized. The letter-writing project between NCCU students and the high school students would help bridge intellectual and social gaps as expressed by the high school students.

When high school students contextualized their thoughts, it became apparent that they desired reaffirmation of the advice they had received from their counselors, parents, or peers. Thus, NCCU students, in their



letters, appropriated the discourse that some high school students had previously received, and they attempted to rearticulate the concept of the college experience. They also attempted to help high school students solve other common challenges that interfered with their ability to excel in both academic environments and in society. Some of those challenges include educational and career planning, money and time management, study skills, and extracurricular activities. However, the most prevalent problems that high school students identified in their letters were indirectly related to academics. High school students identified critical social problems that created obstacles in their lives, which resulted in their inability to excel in school. Some of the problems included managing stress and peer pressure, managing peer and sibling relationships, and adhering to or resisting social standards. The fact that high school students explicitly and implicitly confessed that their personal and social problems become obstacles that affect their ability to excel academically also qualified them as the ideal partner for this literacy-based service-learning initiative since most of my students were struggling with the same problems.

### **The *Ars Dictaminis*—The Art of Letter Writing**

“Lifting as We Climb”

—*National Association of Colored Women*

The letter-writing component of this project is its service component. The work of critically acclaimed author and accomplished actor Hill Harper figures prominently in this part of the initiative, as it derives from Harper’s letter-writing project. Harper, who was inspired by Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Letters to a Young Poet*, asserts, “The title, *Letters to a Young Poet*, as well as my experiences speaking with thousands of young people over the few years, inspired me to write this book” (xi), *Letters to a Young Brother: MANifest Your Destiny* (2006). Two years later, Harper published *Letters to a Young Sister: DeFINE Your Destiny* (2008). With words of encouragement, Harper attempts to direct the lives of young



African American men and women who are striving to find a sense of self in a complex, multicultural, multilingual, racist, and sexist society that offers the best and the worst of all worlds. Harper's epistles, where he employs both formal and informal language, respond to questions from African Americans about racism, education, employment, finances, relationships, self-respect, failure, and success. Yet my students surmised from analyzing the content of *Letters* that the questions and concerns addressed in the books are universal even though Harper addresses critical problems that directly affect African Americans.

In the "Introduction" to *Letters to a Young Brother*, Harper affirms, "Through the letters in this book, I wish to pass on to other young men my grandfathers' legacies of education, hard work, determination, and success" (xvi). Harper's affirmation and the National Association of Colored Women's motto of "Lifting as We Climb" symbolize an African American tradition of service to the community. Similarly, the National Religious Training School's motto was "I Serve" ("Our Heritage"). The School's philosophical and pedagogical approaches included promoting moral and spiritual values, fostering leadership skills, and educating the whole self. Through their letters, NCCU students impart to high school students, NCCU's legacy of service, "education, hard work, determination, and success" (Harper xvi). For instance, university students encouraged high school students to enhance the quality of their lives by becoming active students who excel academically and become active citizens, living morally upright lives, thinking logically and globally, appreciating familial and collective voices, and passing on a legacy of literacy. One female university student took this literacy process a step further when she gave a high school student her copy of *Letters to a Young Brother* and asked him to pass the book on to another individual who seeks guidance.

I wanted my students to emulate Harper's model and learn how to enter into a rhetorical situation and discourse community "characterized by unstable rules and expectations" (Long and Flower 108). While this cross-





aged literacy partnership produced a unique service-learning opportunity at NCCU, it also adheres to the University's commitment of promoting literacy among African Americans. Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters, the authors of "Service-Learning and Composition at the Cross-Roads," assert, "service-learning makes communication—the heart of composition—matter, in all its manifestations" (2). Although nontraditional, I also wanted university and high school students to compose handwritten letters because letter writing is an intimate form of communication, and because they were expected to reveal personal aspects of their lives to strangers; therefore, this form of communication seemed appropriate for this rhetorical situation.

In "The Medieval Art of Letter Writing," Les Perelman claims that early narratives exposed in epistles served one of three functions: to focus on the past, the present, or the future (112). My students' letters served a tripartite function, thus encompassing all three functions. Since my students' narratives comprised a story within a story, they explored the past, and since my students addressed high school students' immediate problems and their ability to excel in the academy and in society, my students' letters also explored the present and the future. I also preferred the epistolary genre because it slows the writing process and brain functions, which forces writers to think critically about what they compose and how they compose it. My students grappled with the fact that they composed with a pen as opposed to a word processor that makes corrections or identifies errors on the page. They claimed that composing by hand forced them to think critically about how they articulated their arguments since I gave them three sheets of stationary. Additionally, I compared the rhetorical effectiveness of their arguments in their handwritten letters to the rhetorical effectiveness of essays they had composed all semester, and I discovered that their handwritten letters to an authentic audience demonstrated their ability to sustain a long effective argument that included aspects of Stephen Toulmin's approach to logic. Furthermore, due to time constraints, my students composed their handwritten letters in less time than they composed their word-



processed essays. Of equal importance, this discourse was the standard mode of communication in the early twentieth century when James E. Shepard summoned ministers to engage in discourse about the plight of the greater African American community.

### Course and Project Objectives

To facilitate a successful service-learning initiative that promoted multiple skills and met the courses' student learning outcomes, numerous objectives were emphasized. Students were expected to:

1. Learn the value of critical reading skills by performing a close, critical reading of one of Hill Harper's biographies, *Letters to a Young Brother: MANifest your Destiny* (2006) or *Letters to a Young Sister: DeFINE your Destiny* (2008), and the letters they received from high school students.
2. Enhance their critical and analytical thinking skills by clearly articulating their perspectives on the content of the books and the letters from their community partner, and by drawing a correlation among their lives, the content of the books, and the content of the letters. Therefore, students were expected to support their assertions by providing a relevant example from their lives and a relevant quotation from one of Harper's biographies.
3. Further develop their cognitive and affective skills. Students were expected to perform mental tasks that exceeded memorizing information. Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains, specifically the cognitive and affective domains, were included in the assessment of students' achievement.
4. Discern their rhetorical situation by establishing an appropriate tone, employing appropriate language, and remaining cognizant of their audience and their purpose for writing.
5. Ascertain a personal and a social sense of self (Musil 57).



6. Ascertain communal/collective, empathetic, and engaged knowledge (Musil 57).
7. Engage in self-reflective thinking about their life choices.
8. Learn about social responsibility, ethics, and values (Jacoby 9).
9. Challenge their values.
10. Learn creative problem-solving, conflict resolution, and collaboration skills.

### **Theoretical Framework**

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

—*Mahatma Gandhi*

The theoretical framework for this study draws on Thomas Deans’ concept of writing with the community and on Linda Flower’s approach to community partnerships that manifest at the Community Literacy Center (CLC), a university-community partnership between Carnegie Mellon University and Community House in Pittsburgh (Deans 110). Flower is a co-founder and co-director of the CLC. At the CLC, university mentors and local teenagers execute rhetorical practices that help local teenagers solve their own critical problems; consequently, according to Deans, the collaboration exemplifies “the writing-with-the-community paradigm” (110). Teenagers at the CLC articulate problems that violate their human and civil rights, and university students help them provide both verbal and written solutions to those problems by publishing a magazine, performing plays, producing videos, and hosting forums “that bring local residents, urban teens, university people, and city officials together to address local community issues” (112). Similar to the goals of the CLC, this NCCU literacy-based service-learning project promoted community literacy by uniting university students and high school students who addressed critical problems through written discourse.



Wayne Campbell Peck, a CLC co-founder, defines community literacy as “first and foremost a response of urban residents to dilemmas and opportunities in their lives” (qtd. in Deans 110). At the CLC, community literacy intertwines with cognitive rhetoric to engender “transformational praxis” (Flower qtd. in Deans 117). A close examination of NCCU students’ written discourse provides an understanding of how cognitive rhetoric informs their solutions to high school students’ problems. According to Flower, cognitive rhetoric “describes writing as a performative act, as a way of entering into rhetorical situations and discourse communities, often characterized by unique, unstable rules and expectations” (Long and Flower 108). The theoretical, pragmatic, and pedagogical practices of this literacy-based service learning project show “the major tenets of cognitive rhetoric—individual agency, problem solving, strategic thinking, and metacognition—[that] are evident . . . in the composing process” (Deans 120) of university students’ letters and during students’ inner speech and verbal thinking processes.

## **Responses to Service Learning**

### *In-class Preservice Reflections*

Initially, NCCU students did not express a desire to engage in dialogue with high school students. Several university students argued that they could not add to their community partner’s knowledge base and that they were not change agents. My students’ candid concerns about their inability to address high school students’ problems was disconcerting; thus, we engaged in polemical discourse about their experiences, their intellect, and their obligation to adopt leadership and collaborative roles that position them as agents who effect change on their campus and in their communities. For many of the NCCU students, this service-learning project, which placed them in the role of University representative, was their initial introduction to the bond between college and community. As such, these students had to negotiate their roles in the community with their community partners; in particular, they had to guard against



elitist, paternalistic attitudes. According to Nadinne Cruz, this type of hegemony silences and marginalizes the community partner because it suggests that the University has the dominant voice and “the University’s knowledge is all one needs to know.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, a critique that can be offered of this literacy partnership is that the university students, and, thus, the University were cast as the wise experts with all the advice and knowledge to share with the inexperienced community partners. However, as the following analyses demonstrate, often the high school students set the agenda and tone for my students’ responses.

### **Service: Letters to Young High School Students**

“Between my finger and my thumb / The squat pen rests / I’ll dig with it.”

—*Seamus Heaney*

The content of university students’ letters exemplifies “good” writing because it directly addresses their partners’ critical problems; accordingly, it creates a venue for social change. It is also “good” writing because it is focused, explicit, organized, complex, and purposive. High school students’ problems are the exigencies in each rhetorical situation, and their questions functioned as main ideas—controlling ideas that each university student judiciously addressed and supported. Most university students wrote complex sentences and provided specific details, which, as mentioned previously, were examples from their academic and social lives and from Hill Harper’s texts; this type of specificity is often omitted from students’ academic writing, resulting in a compilation of general statements. Additionally, students smoothly integrated relevant quotations from Harper’s texts into their content. This type of attention to detail is another convention that is often omitted from students’

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3 Nadinne Cruz is a practitioner, leader, advocate, and author on the need for pedagogies of engagement in higher education. She delivered a speech titled “Service-Learning and Civic Engagement: Reframing the Context and Reclaiming the Ethos of Transformative Practice” during the 2010 Speaker Series in Applied Educational Research at Duke University on April 10, 2010.



academic compositions. While the majority of the writing contains some lower-order writing problems, the handwritten letters lack the numerous spelling and capitalization errors that occur in much of academic writing.

Additionally, some high school students integrated informal language into their compositions because their English teacher instructed them to conceptualize their mentors as “Big Brothers” and “Big Sisters” since Harper establishes this model in his letters, where he greets young males and females accordingly, “Dear Young Brotha” and “Dear Young Sistah.” Therefore, university students reciprocated this informal discourse because Harper models that language in his letters to young adults and because their community partner employs similar language in their handwritten letters. This use of “Dear Young Brotha” and “Dear Young Sistah” contribute to an intimate, caring relationship between older, wiser African American college students and their younger community members.

Thus, university students negotiated academic standards, social standards, home and community languages and practices, and the conventions of Harper’s texts while simultaneously negotiating with an audience and its demands. Additionally, university students negotiated with their audience by addressing them as both an authentic and an invoked audience. In “Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy,” Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford define an “addressed” and an “invoked” audience. According to Ede and Lunsford, “the ‘addressed’ audience refers to those actual or real-life people who read a discourse, while the ‘invoked’ audience refers to the audience called up or imagined by the writer” (78). Audience became the most significant aspect of university writers’ rhetorical situation because academic, social, and cultural forces informed and re-informed their discourse.

University students invoked an audience by engaging in internal dialogue about high school students’ responses to their problems. Susan Wall,



who is quoted in Ede and Lunsford, claims that this type of context is established during the rereading process, and ““there are really not one but two contexts for rereading: there is the writer-as-reader’s sense of what the established text is actually saying, as of this reading; and there is the reader-as-writer’s judgment of what the text might say or should say. . . .” (81). One university student’s internal dialogue exemplifies this concept. The student admitted, “As your role model I will try my best to give you the advice that will be helpful to you in your quest for knowledge.” The internal dialogue that university and high school students integrated into their content proves that knowledge of the audience’s expectations does not result in writers instantly and confidently meeting those expectations. Therefore, this study asks the question that Linda Flower asked of the social-cognitive rhetor: “How does the rhetor operate as an agent and meaning-maker within the social and cultural structures, assumptions, conventions, and settings that allow and shape meaning?” (109). The example letters in this article demonstrate how university students, who acted as rhetors, operated as problem solvers and change agents within an academic setting that informs and re-informs contrasting meanings of education, success, and life; thus, university students perpetuate the practices of cognitive rhetoric and community literacy while redefining themselves.

At the beginning of the semester, university students expressed concerns about executing their academic freedom as that freedom relates to constructing creative, formless compositions and integrating home languages into high-stakes assignments. They did not want to limit their writing to the conventions that the academy, thus mainstream America, forces upon them. Additionally, university students believed that the written and oral discourse that had sustained them throughout their personal and intellectual lives should suffice in the academy. This assignment helped them understand how to enter into rhetorical situations, how to distinguish between an academic discourse community and a social discourse community and how to apply the conventions of those communities. This project placed “writing, rhetoric, and



problem solving at [its core], opening [a venue] for . . . written rhetorical performance to address pressing community problems” (Deans 138).

Of equal importance, university students used rhetorical strategies such as examples, anecdotes, the Aristotelian Appeals, multiple dialects and tones, and repetition to help them emphasize the significance of their discourse. Consequently, the content of the NCCU students’ letters demonstrates a complex collaborative relationship built around literacy, and analogous to Thomas Deans’ assessment of literacy-based discourse, this discourse can also be identified as “initiatives that move the context for writing instruction beyond the bounds of the traditional college classroom in the interest of actively and concretely addressing community needs” (2). Below are analyses of four pairs of letters. Each pair includes a high school student’s and a university student’s letter.

## **The Letters**

### *Letter 1*

In the first letter,<sup>4</sup> a male high school student writes a letter to a male university student about his inability to balance his academic life and his social life, which negatively affects his grades. He asserts, “I was once a straight A student, but ever since my first quarter my grades have been drastically falling by almost seven points. . . I believe my troubles start with my new found schedule which makes me lose valuable time.” Therefore, he seeks a solution to his problem.

### *Letter 2*

In this letter,<sup>5</sup> a male university student responds to his mentee’s concerns about his schedule and his grades. In this letter, the university student aims to convince the high school student that he must place emphasis on his grades even if he has to “drop one or two extracurricular activities in

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4 See Appendix B for the full content of the high school student’s letter.

5 See appendices C and D for the full content of the university student’s letter.





order to stay on top of [his] grades.” To compose a strong, convincing essay, the university student uses the Aristotelian Appeals, comparison, and an authority figure to substantiate his assertions.

The university student begins his letter with a cordial, informal greeting, which is, “Thanks for writing me, bro!” This technique establishes the letter as informal and personal discourse that Harper employs in his letters, which elicits trust and captures his reader’s attention. The university student resumes his casual tone, shifting from “bro” to “my friend” when he immediately introduces his first point, which is, “The first thing I want to get out there is that grades are terribly important, my friend. Grades decide your future!” Although the author’s tone is casual, it is authoritative. Here, the university student exercises his role as a change agent. Then, the university student poses three hypothetical situations that provide limited options to the high school student’s problem.

After providing these three scenarios, the university student transitions to a second voice of reason, which is that of Hill Harper, “one of the most successful people around,” according to the university student. Therefore, Harper’s voice becomes an authoritative discourse for the university student in his letter, and he integrates a relevant quotation from Harper’s *Letters*: “when you say you are quitting something, it means you are stopping because it’s hard, challenging, . . . ‘but, if you decide to give up [an activity] in order to spend that time doing something you are passionate about, then that is ‘changing your mind.’” This quotation directly supports the university student’s suggestions. The quotation also functions to support the university student’s repetitive assertions about the importance of a good education, claims he can substantiate since he is a student at North Carolina Central University. Finally, the university student appeals to this mentee’s sense of logic. For example, he asserts, “Education helps you become an informed, active and functional member of society. . . . Knowing about the world around you is your only defense against ignorance and mediocrity. Do you



just want to be mediocre? Or do you want to be GREAT?” Although extracurricular activities tend to overshadow academics, this university student is relentless in his effort to promote education, which leads the high school student to logically infer that ultimately he is responsible for his destiny. The university student attempts to help the high school student conceptualize the attitude he needs to succeed in the academy and in society. In general, the university student’s content epitomizes cognitive rhetoric.

### *Letter 3*

The second high school student letter<sup>6</sup> is also composed by a male student to a male university student about balancing his academic and social lives. However, this high school student wants to increase his hours at work, so he can purchase an automobile, which will negatively affect his grades. The high school student writes, “I’m actually starting to like this school now that I am getting better grades and doing things how they need to be done. And I won’t leave this school to go to my base school because I really recognized what an importance it is to continue going here.” Although the high school student is apprehensive about his plan, he seeks guidance from his mentor.

### *Letter 4*

In the second university student’s letter<sup>7</sup>, the writer establishes his credentials by employing a personal anecdote, comparison, and many of the same rhetorical strategies used in Letter 2 by the first university student. In this letter, the university student attempts to dissuade his inexperienced peer from purchasing an automobile; he aims to convince the high school student that he must place emphasis on his grades and thus sacrifice owning an automobile at this time in his life.

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6 See Appendix E for the full content of the high school student’s letter.

7 See appendices, F, G, and H for the full content of the university student’s letter.



Again, the writer's response begins with a cordial greeting: "Thanks for the letter, man!" This language reflects the discourse that Harper employs in his letters, which elicits trust. Based on the letter's content, the university student possesses intimate knowledge about the subject; therefore, he compares his past situation to his mentee's present situation. Then, the university student suddenly shifts to a personal anecdote about his experience, establishing his credentials and eliciting emotional and logical responses from the high school student. This brief rhetorical strategy serves two functions: it immediately establishes the letter as personal, and it lightens the mood of the letter. This strategy lessens the effect of the opposing view the university student discusses with his mentee about the life-altering decision the high school student contemplates. For example, the university student writes, "I understand about the car dilemma. I didn't get my first car until halfway through senior year in high school, and the wait was dreadful!" Then, he transitions to his mentee's problem and attempts to dissuade the high school student from purchasing an automobile. The university student's divergent discourse includes, "However, despite the fact that I have felt your pain, I am going to advise you strongly to focus on school above everything else in your life. This means cars, work, girls, and everything." Here, the university student's tone is authoritative yet nonthreatening, and in an authoritative voice, he proclaims, "Let me take a moment to stress to you the importance of education." Next, he evokes an audience and confesses, "I know I probably sound like your high school counselor when I say that, but I don't mind." Again, the university student exerts his role as a change agent. Throughout the letter, he uses repetition and examples to emphasize the importance of education. He states, "Once you buy [a car], you are going to work just as much to keep it running. . . . You are going to want to drive your friends around and go places more. If you are worried about your grades slipping, you should be." He also creates a story within a story when he exposes his friends' decisions to own automobiles while they were in high school. These narratives also allow the university student to compare himself to his friends, who



are perhaps high school dropouts. Therefore, anecdotes dominate the text, but this rhetorical strategy is effective since most readers relate to writers' personal experiences.

Although Harper's voice is limited in the university student's letter, it is authoritative discourse that also symbolizes James E. Shepard's philosophy of education, which is "education, clear and simple, is power" (Harper). The final rhetorical strategy the university student employs is a complimentary statement about his mentee's ability to make logical decisions, which is intended to appeal to the high school student's sense of logic.

### *Letter 5*

In this third example,<sup>8</sup> a male high school student writes to a male university student. This high school student addresses a serious social issue that occurs among male teenagers: males who are pressured into defining their manhood by becoming sexually active. This high school student's friends are sexually active, so they pressure him to adhere to the behavior norms of their socio-cultural group although the student has informed his friends that he has decided to practice abstinence. The high school student needs assurance that abstinence is not unique to the college experience.

### *Letter 6*

The third university student's letter<sup>9</sup> is a response to his mentee's concerns about abstinence and peer pressure. This writer's response is succinct yet persuasive. The author makes a brief comparison, and he appeals to the high school student's emotions and sense of logic.

In order to demystify popular beliefs about sexual activity among college students, the university student immediately addresses the high school

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8 See Appendix I for the full content of the high school student's letter.

9 See Appendix J for the full content of the university student's letter.



student's exigency and asserts, "First, I would like to say that abstinence is not looked [down] upon in college." Additionally, the university student establishes his credentials by informing his male mentee that occasionally he wishes he had remained abstinent; then, he asserts, "I admire you for that." This type of validation is important since it comes from an older male, a university student.

Furthermore, the university student appeals to his mentee's emotions when he suggests that the high school student values his uniqueness and the decision he has made about his destiny. The university student substantiates this claim by using Harper as an authority figure. In this letter, Harper asserts, "You are perfect the way you are." The university student's letter concludes with a brief, powerful comment about peer pressure.

Although the high school student should be proud of his uniqueness, there are cultural differences that the university student does not address in the letter. For example, for some university students, engaging in sexual intercourse or losing their virginity is a ritual and a rite of passage. Additionally, although his mentee uses an ethical reason for practicing abstinence, there are other important reasons why unmarried teenagers should abstain from premarital sex: sexually transmitted diseases among African American teenagers have reached epidemic levels and single African American teenagers have the highest pregnancies rate. Nevertheless, the letter addresses the high school student's concerns.

### *Letter 7*

While the first three letters are from male writers who wrote to male university students, this final example is from a female university student writing<sup>10</sup> to a male high school student for whom the university student's gender is quite important.

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10 See Appendix K for the full content of the high school student's letter.



Although this high school student discusses a serious social issue that occurs among all genders, age groups, ethnicities, and races, he specifically addresses female exploitation and illicit drug use among African American females. Additionally, these activities have created a serious health crisis in the African American community, which is HIV/AIDS. The high school student's dilemma changes the context of the letters from problems related to managing one's time and resisting peer pressure to engaging in illicit activities. The high school student discusses his sister's past engagement in illegal, promiscuous behavior such as prostitution and drug addiction. For him, role-playing has become both a defense mechanism and a survival mechanism.

### *Letter 8*

While the fourth letter from the male high school student added a new dimension to the challenges that high school students encounter, it also created a complex situation for my students.<sup>11</sup> The original female recipient of this letter refused to respond to its content because she misconstrued the high school student's purpose for writing. When I explained the high school student's intention, the female student decided that she did not want to address the serious social issues the young male identifies in his letter. Therefore, I pleaded with my students to provide a response to the high school student's concerns about female exploitation and drug addiction. After several days of gentle persuasion, one female student agreed to tackle the issues discussed in the high school student's letter.

The female university student aims to convince her mentee that his family is important, he should celebrate all of his sisters' accomplishments, and he must focus on his intellectual aspirations. This university student skillfully uses language and an authoritative figure to compose a strong, convincing letter that exhibits the characteristics of an effective rhetor and change agent.

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11 See Appendices L, M, and N for the full content of the university student's letter.



She begins her letter with a confession. She admits that although she is aware of her audience's expectations, she neither readily nor expeditiously met those expectations. Then, she establishes her credentials by acknowledging that she lacks the right and the authority to speak for or to represent his sister. The university student maintains, "As I attempted to perform the role you checked for me, I have realized that I cannot answer your question—questions that deserve answers. However, I cannot speak for your sister." Here, the female writer does not claim to be the "wise and perceptive" university student, although her language represents the discourse of a change agent.

Actually, this writer performs the role of the "perfect big sister" when she composes the greeting to her mentee's letter, which reads: "My Precious Brother" and a conclusion that declares, "I love you, your sister." Furthermore, the remainder of the letter's content typifies an intimate sibling relationship. Therefore, the author's tone is serious yet personal and inviting. Both letters demonstrate the writers' "adaptability in role-playing."<sup>12</sup> The university student does not criticize her mentee's sister; instead, she uses language that expresses compassion for the high school student's and his sisters' experiences. For example, she explains,

Sometimes people, particular young people are not strong enough to [not] yield to temptation because they lack self-determination and high self-esteem and after they surrender it is difficult for them to return to their old selves. Therefore, they do whatever they believe is necessary to survive and to maintain their unhealthy life styles, which often lead to another unhealthy routine.

The author concludes the letter by perpetuating the literacy process when she presents Harper's *Letters to a Young Brother* as a gift to her mentee and advises him to continue the legacy by imparting this symbol of literacy to someone else.

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12 Spencer, Brookins, and Allen qtd. in Heath 368.



## In-class Post-service Reflections

During the Post-service Reflections session, university students worked collaboratively to respond to their partner's problems. Each university student was required to read her or his community partner's letters to their classmates and solicit solutions to the community partner's problem. In general, university students performed better during this peer-to-peer discussion session than they did during the Pre-service Reflections session where they invoked an audience by anticipating their audience's questions and assuming that they could not provide effective responses to those questions. During the Post-service Reflections session, similar and divergent voices generated numerous solutions to high school students' problems.

Additionally, when university students composed their responses to high school students, some of them, candidly expressed their initial reluctance to offer solutions to their mentees' problems. One university student confessed, "At first I was a little worried that I wouldn't be able to help you, but when I read your letter closely, I was actually glad to be of help." This student's apprehension that eventually morphed into gratification substantiates Linda Flower's claim that listening to and speaking with others initiate rhetorical action (82). After my student performed a close, critical reading of her mentee's letter, she "heard" and "saw" the high school student's problem and formulated solutions to it. Again, the fact that high school students were asking the same critical questions that university students were asking or had recently asked, made high school students the ideal partner for this project, and it made writing *with* the community less complex once university students collaborated and accepted their roles as problem-solvers and change agents. When university students accepted these roles, each student writer saw "'the totality of his symbolic life' in written discourse."<sup>13</sup> University students measured the validity and effectiveness of that discourse by engaging in self-reflective thinking and providing responses within the context of

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13 J. Moffett and B. J. Wagner qtd. in Vavra and Spencer 7.





their rhetorical situation. Similar to CLC writers, NCCU writers analyzed text, synthesized information, grappled with serious issues, and problem-solved.

It was important for university students to engage in problem-solving through this community literacy activity for numerous reasons. Problem-solving:

1. Is the basis of cognitive rhetoric, which is the core of this project;
2. Is the platform by which students derive at the meaning and the significance of this project;
3. Is a rhetor's primary tool;
4. Helps students foster critical and analytical thinking skills;
5. Helps students understand other individuals, the complex world in which they live, and the value of their and other's voices;
6. Is an essential skill that students will need in their private, social, and professional lives;
7. Is the means by which university students address the exigencies described in high school students' letters.

For the most part, the content of university students' letters demonstrates their ability to solve critical problems. Therefore, this collaboration between NCCU students and high school students exemplifies "the writing-with-the community paradigm" (Deans 110).

### **End-of-Course Reflections**

When mentors and mentees assembled in the Alfonzo Elder Student Union at North Carolina Central University on December 3, 2009, for a reflective session, NCCU students expressed their satisfaction for having the opportunity to help high school students make informed decisions about their educational goals and about their lives in general. NCCU students concluded that the service-learning project was the most valuable



part of the course. For the most part, this project produced positive responses, but it also exposed an elitist attitude, which manifested when one NCCU student articulated his initial perspective of this assignment. He proclaims that when I introduced this project to the class, he expected to receive letters from “kids” who lacked the ability to provide intellectual stimulation or to ask serious questions that required critical thinking. He was astonished by the complexity of his mentees’ intellect and by the validity of their questions and concerns. In her discussion about service learning and activist research, Ellen Cushman asserts, “One limitation of service learning courses can be students’ perception of themselves as imparting to the poor and undereducated their greater knowledge and skills” (823). Although university students’ rhetorical situation compelled them to operate as change agents and problem-solvers cast as the more knowledgeable partner, this student’s internal dialogue initially undermined his community partner’s intellectual ability and voice.

## **Conclusion**

University students’ written discourse embodies North Carolina Central University’s rich legacy of service to the community. Hence, we made a small yet important contribution to NCCU’s heritage of “Truth and Service.” The content of my students’ letters characterizes individuals who promote change and literacy. Although all of these students should gain more service-learning experience that promotes problem-solving and social change, I am convinced that the university and high school students who participated in this university-community partnership learned the correlation among education and social mobility, the power of individual and collective voices, and the importance of cross-age teaching and of their roles as change agents. I also believe that they have inadvertently inspired each other to act upon the question that James E. Shepard passionately asked on December 23, 1911, which is, “What is the moral condition of the people of your community?” (*The Freeman* 3). This project exposes the moral, psychological, social, and intellectual condition of a campus community, and it resurrected an aspect of African



Americans' lives that critically acclaimed author Toni Morrison believes was eradicated after World War II. During an interview in 1978, Morrison said the following about a generation of African Americans of the post-World War II era who believed their children benefited from obliterating an aspect of their heritage: "Somebody forgot to tell somebody something." In my English classes at North Carolina Central University, "Somebody [is telling] somebody something," and the narratives are powerful, elucidative, and didactic. In 1980, Morrison declared, "at the end of every book there is epiphany, discovery, somebody has learned something that they never would otherwise" (74).<sup>14</sup> Morrison's assertion about the function of text recapitulates the goal of my literacy-based service-learning project which resulted in a research-based reflective analysis that demonstrates how university students used their writerly voices to unite and empower an academic community.

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14 From Shirley E. Faulkner-Springfield's speech that was delivered to University and high school students during the End-of-Course Reflections session that was held in the Alfonzo Elder Student Union at North Carolina Central University on December 3, 2009.



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## Appendix A



### James E. Shepard's Questions to Ministers



# The National Religious Training School and Chautauqua

extends a cordial greeting to the ministers of all denominations to be the guests of the School for one week, beginning July 6, 1912, for the purpose of discussing the following and kindred questions:

What is the moral condition of the people in your community?

Is crime on the increase? If not, what was the cause of its reduction?

What is the sanitary condition? What effort, if any, has been made to improve the sanitary condition?

Is the death rate increasing?

To what extent do you co-operate with the Civic Improvement Leagues?

Has settlement work been conducted to any extent in your community, and with what result?

What has been the effect of Temperance Organizations, and have you co-operated with them?

To what extent has the work of the Y. M. C. A. and the Y. W. C. A. been effective in your community? Do you approve them?

What is the general fitness of the city and country school teacher?

What has been the attitude of the day-school teacher toward the Church and Sunday School.

What is the real religious condition of your people? Reveals, how conducted?

All ministers who intend attending this Conference should make it known at an early date, addressing the president, so that reservation can be made for them.

The Summer School and Chautauqua of the National Religious Training School will open July 3, 1912, and continue for six weeks. The MOST COMPLETE and most up-to-date Summer School for the Colored Race in the United States.

For particulars and terms address

President **JAMES E. SHEPARD**

*The Freeman. 23 Dec. 1911, natl. ed.: 3. Print.*





## Appendix B

Dear

Recently I have been having problems at my school with my grades. I was once a straight A student, but ever since my first quarter my grades have been drastically falling by almost seven points! I am currently taking Advanced Formulas and Modeling (AFM), English Honors III, and Earth Science. I believe my troubles start with my new found schedule which makes me lose valuable work time.

My schedule starts at five in the morning and ends at three in the afternoon, the time I get home if I take the bus. I usually stay

after school either for a project or for an after school activity. When I get home I am usually tired and ready to go to sleep. If I am lucky enough to go straight home, I usually fall asleep during my hour break and do not wake up until six! This is not my only source of my problems, but also my massive work load. So do you have any suggestions for improving my grades?

Sincerely,

Letter from a male high school student to a male university student about balancing his intellectual life and his social life



## Appendix C

Dear

Thanks for writing me, bro! The first thing I want to get out there is that grades are terribly important, my friends. Grades decide your future! If you need to drop one or two extracurricular activities in order to stay on top of your grades, then do it. This doesn't mean quit everything. It doesn't even mean you have to slow down. If you feel that you can handle the workload then go for your dreams and do everything you want! But if you think it is going to detract from your studying efforts, then it is probably a good idea to take some time off from it until you can get your studies straightened out.

In English class this semester, we read a book called Letters to a Young Brother by Hill Harper, one of the most successful people around. In his book, he talks about the difference between quitting and changing your mind. In it, he says "when you say you are quitting something it means you are stopping because it's hard, challenging, uncomfortable, or raises some kind of fear in you." ... "but, if you decide to give up [an activity] in order to spend that time doing something you are passionate about, like playing an instrument or another sport, or even taking a second language, then that is 'changing your mind.'" Hill Harper is hugely successful, which is a good reason to listen to him.

Studies are important because they affect you for the rest of your life. If you let your grades drop, you might not get into the school you want to go to, which is a very important step in your life. Becoming educated about the world is also the best tool you can ever acquire in this world. Education helps you become an informed, active, and functional member of society. These are all things that will help you in

Letter from a male university student to a male high school student about balancing his academic and social lives (page 1)



## Appendix D

life and down the road. Knowing about the world around ~~the~~ you is your only defense against ignorance and mediocrity. Do you just want to be mediocre? Or do you want to be GREAT? Because the way you treat your studies will define the way you are treated by others and yourself for the rest of your life.

My final advice to you is to reach for your dreams, man! Do anything you want or can ~~do~~ and keep on top of school, and your future will be incredibly bright and full of possibilities!

Sincerely,

Letter from a male university student to a male high school student about balancing his academic and social lives (page 2)



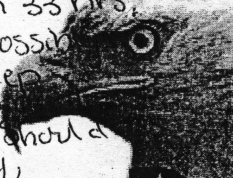
## Appendix E

Dear

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and  
I am currently a sophomore at ECHS. I  
am also considered a freshman in college at  
NCCU. Surprisingly, I'm actually starting to like  
this school now that I am getting better  
grades and doing things how they need to be  
done. And now I wouldn't leave this school  
to go to my base school because I really  
recognized what an importance it is to continue  
going here. It's a great opportunity and I'm  
not going to give it up now.

But there is one major problem. I am  
working at \_\_\_\_\_  
now since November 11th so I would be able  
to buy a car. The problem is I am becoming  
to have more need for transportation the  
deeper I get in the school year. I'm trying to  
decide whether to work more than 33 hrs.  
a week so I can afford it and possibly  
have my grades drop. Or just keep  
working and getting good grades.  
worry about a car later. What should  
I do?

Sincerely,



Letter from a male high school student to a male university student about purchasing an automobile and balancing his intellectual and social life





## Appendix F

Dear

Thanks for the letter, man! The first thing I want to let you know is that I understand about the car dilemma. I didn't get my car until halfway through senior year in high school, and the wait was dreadful! However, despite the fact that I have felt your pain, I am going to advise you strongly to focus on school above everything else in your life. This means cars, work, girls, everything. School is extremely important, and though you may not realize it now, it is the greatest tool you can ever acquire in this life.

Let me take a moment to stress to you the importance of education. I know I probably sound like your high school counselor when I say that, but I don't mind. Education makes you smarter. When you are smarter, people admire you more. You are also able to be a more productive and better functioning member of society when you have a good education. In addition to all these benefits, acquiring an education can be relatively fun if you let it. Until I got to college, I never really appreciated the amazing quantity and quality of things out there waiting for us to learn about them. Allow yourself to be interested by something cool you learn in class or even something you see on NatGeo or Discovery Channel. Becoming educated about the world around you will make you feel empowered. In fact, my English teacher had me read Hill Harper's book

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Letter from a male university student to a male high school student about purchasing an automobile and balancing his intellectual and social lives (page 1)



## Appendix G

Letters to a Young Brother for my class, and in it he says "education, clear and simple, is power." If Hill Harper, one of the most successful people in show business or otherwise says it, then I think there must be some truth to it.

With that said, a car might seem like it will solve so many of your problems that only exist because you don't have a car, and it will. But having a car is a big responsibility, and it will bring along with it many problems that in turn only exist because you DO have a car. These problems can easily outweigh the problems of not having one. The simplicity offered by not having a car is really great, I even miss it sometimes. A car will complicate your life and cost you money and time and effort on things that would just simply not be a part of your life if you refrain from purchasing one.

One thing about a car is that, though it may not seem evident before you ~~buy~~ actually own one, cars are extremely expensive assets to own and maintain. Once you buy one, you are going to have to work just as much just to keep it running. Not only that, but the newfound accessibility to almost everything offered by a car can serve as a huge distraction from things that matter. You are going to want to drive your friends around and go places more. If you are worried about your grades slipping, you should be. Grades are really important. Not only do they help you become more of an intelligent, educated, and altogether well-round person, but ~~they~~ also if you do well in school and worry about a car later, you might be able to worry about any car you want.

Shoot, you might even have the privilege of having several cars to worry about.

I have told you the way I feel about the situation, and now it is your turn to make the right

Letter from a male university student to a male high school student about purchasing an automobile and balancing his intellectual and social lives (page 2)



## Appendix H

decision. Understand that letting your grades drop could have a significant effect on the rest of your life. When I say that, I mean you might end up kicking yourself later for not giving the right things the attention they require, and if you need proof, you could talk to lots of my friends that spent lots of time in high school rolling around in cars and not doing work, and they will keep doing that for a long time because they have no school to go to. Anyway, I am sure that whatever you decide ~~on~~ to do will be an educated decision because you seem like the type who thinks things through properly.

Letter from a male university student to a male high school student about purchasing an automobile and balancing his intellectual and social lives (page 3)



## Appendix I

Dear

My question to you is a topic that is very important today, but is not talked about a lot. This question is a serious question and I have had it on my mind for a while now. Is abstinence (or refraining from sexual activity until marriage) looked down upon in college?

Yes, I know. Am I serious? As a matter of fact I am. A lot of my "friends" say that I am "lame" or "whack" when I tell them that I have decided to be abstinent. I am confiding in you by asking you this question. Please be truthful in your response.

Many of the teenagers have already had sex, decided NOT to be abstinent, or really don't care. So from the looks of it, I am in this by myself. I would really enjoy learning about abstinence amongst college students.

Sincerely,

Letter from a high school student to a university student about abstinence





## Appendix J

Dear

First, I would like to say that abstinence is not looked down upon in college. In my opinion, it shouldn't be looked down upon in high school. In college, you might have more opportunities to have sex, but that doesn't mean you have to take them. It's okay to say no; it is your choice. Be your own person. I don't think you are "late" for deciding to be abstinent; in fact, I admire you for that. According to Hill Harper, "You are perfect the way you are." Most people in high school think because they are having sex it is cool, but it is something that can and should wait. Sometimes I wish I had waited. If you feel like you don't fit in, so what, everyone is entitled to their own opinion. You don't have to be like anyone else. Again, be your own person. Peer pressure is more common in high school, but don't let peer pressure make you do something you will regret, or change your mind about doing something you think is right.

Sincerely,

Letter from a university student to a high school student about abstinence



## Appendix K

Dear

Hi sis, I'm just coming to you with a concern of my life, basing it off of yours. I just hope you feel comfortable telling me. But I know you been through in your past life. I mean, you're 29 years old, and you recovered from your past, so you have a lot of life ahead of you. Back in the day, when you were about 16 or 17 years old, how did you feel, knowing or seeing all the things you were going through. Before that, you was just the perfect big sister. Then you just went on bout your business in the real world, where nobody could tell you what to do, and you thought you were all grown. So you see how you were out in the streets at the age of 16 and 17 doing drugs, saline your body like you we just some prostitute. How is that giving an example to your younger siblings. I know I can't sale my body to no other people since I'm a boy, but you have younger siblings that are girls that know everything you are doing, and every move you make. So I'm glad you recovered before our little sisters got too old, because I'm still trying to teach them the good things to do in life. Really it's no telling how they would be if you were still doing the things you did.

Sincerely

Letter from a male high school student to a female university student about female exploitation and drug addiction



## Appendix L

My Precious Brother

The content of your letter rendered me temporarily speechless and powerless; therefore, I did not know how to begin my response to you. Nevertheless, I appreciate your honesty.

My courageous brother, you have presented me with an overwhelming task. As I attempt to perform the role you checked for me, I have realized that I cannot answer your question - questions that deserve answers. However, I cannot speak for your sister. I cannot provide you with an explanation for why your "perfect big sister" altered her life at such a young age or how someone of something had such a tremendous impact on her life.

While I cannot speak for your sister, I will say this: Sometimes people, particular young people are not strong enough to yield to temptation because they lack self-determination and high self-esteem and after they surrender it is difficult for them to return to their old selves. Therefore, they do whatever they believe is necessary to survive and to maintain their unhealthy life styles, which often lead to another unhealthy routine.

However, we should rejoice the fact that she has "recovered" because as you know, some people never recover or change. We should also celebrate the fact that your "little sisters" have you, a brother who loves them, protects them, communicates with them, and wrap the best for them. You are an excellent role model and mentor.

Letter from a female university student to a male high school student about female exploitation and drug addiction (page 1)



## Appendix M

I know your sisters, all of them are proud of you. I am certainly proud of you, and I wish I had a brother like you.

As you know, my English class was required to read actor and author Hill Harper book, Letters to a Young Brother and Letters to a Young Sister. In the latter book, Harper asserts, "We can choose our friendship, but we cannot choose our family." He goes on to discuss a young sister's relationship with her mother that I think is appreciable to you and your sisters relationship and to you individually:

I know you are capable of great things, and I believe you can use this obstacle quite having with your [sister] as an opportunity to ultimately build a stronger relationship with her. It'll only make your life better in the short and long run.

I believe you and your sister will mend your relationship, as your entire family can recover. I am proud of your accomplishments including writing your revealing letters, which required a lot of courage and strength. These characteristics directly relate to the reason I decided to use purple ink to articulate my thoughts - thoughts that your letter evoked. Purple is a combination of the power of blue and the energy of red. Purple is associated with royalty, wisdom, dignity, independence, and activity your letter manifest all of these characteristics I admire you, friend. I hope you continue to love and support your sisters; of equal importance, I hope you continue to pursue your educational and professional goals. I know you will thrive in your endeavors.


Letter from a female university student to a male high school student about female exploitation and drug addiction (page 2)



## Appendix N

I love you,  
Your Sister

P.S. Here is the Letters to a Young Brother  
book as a gift, and I hope it encourage  
you as it did me. Then, pass it on to  
someone you feel may need it.



Letter from a female university student to a male high school student  
about female exploitation and drug addiction (page 3)