

### 3 Locating Community Literacy Studies

To what can we trace this interest in how ordinary people go public? How did it come to pass that community-literacy studies put a new unit of analysis—the local public—on the table in order to pursue this interest? Topics come and go all the time in academic fields, so what about this one let it take hold? What roles have sites such as Pittsburgh’s CLC played in the history of community literacy, particularly in relation to building the kinds of observation-based theories and practices that scholars have needed to get this line of inquiry off the ground? These are some of the questions that the previous chapters raise.

In response to these questions, this chapter argues that the history of community literacy is tied up in efforts to define the *local public* as an object of inquiry and a site for rhetorical intervention. What has attracted community-literacy scholars to local publics is the promise they hold of enacting (never perfectly, always provisionally, and sometimes never that) what Flower has called “a rhetoric of engagement” grounded in relationships and focused on rhetorical action (*Community Literacy* 1).

As you would expect, the ethical visions that inspire community-literacy scholars’ interest in local publics vary. Flower anchors her vision in Reinhold Niebuhr’s “ethic of love and justice” [ . . . ] a “spirit of stubborn generosity [ . . . that] acknowledges the undeniable—the social and economic substructures of power, racism, of identity that will not be erased by goodwill” (“Negotiating” 51, 60). Coogan anchors his vision in West’s “love ethic” that is neither sentimental nor culturally separatist” (“Counterpublics” 463). Affiliated with Karl Marx, Cushman’s vision upholds “reciprocal relations” as a standard for “ethical action in the research paradigm to facilitate social change” (*Struggle* 28). Rooted in Ernest Bloch’s utopian ideal, Paula Mathieu’s street-based literacy projects enact “hope”—a gesture that seeks to move out

of abstractions about a better world toward actions devised to change the current world (*Tactics* 18). Inspired by Alinsky, Goldblatt's vision is "the promise of true mutual benefits for postsecondary schools and their off-campus partners" ("Alinsky's Reveille" 294).

For all the differences in their language, politics, and theoretical orientations, these scholars are drawn to the potential of local publics to dismantle university/"white" privilege and to reconfigure writing instruction outside the academic classroom in terms of mutual learning, linguistic and cultural diversity, and rhetorical action. In sum, scholars' interests in local publics have coalesced around the connection between vernacular literacies and public life—a connection that contends with the inherent ambiguity of language rights discourse and all the complexity of public-spheres studies.

## TWO PRIOR ACCOUNTS

People have been writing in their communities for several hundreds of years (Howard).<sup>1</sup> Yet compared to invention—the topic of the first book in this series—with its two-thousand-year history, the history of the discipline's interest in community literacy is strikingly brief, transpiring over the last few decades. Significant portions of this history have already been told. In *Moving Beyond Academic Discourse: Composition Studies and the Public Sphere*, published in 2002, Christian Weisser positioned community literacy in terms of larger social then public turns in the field at large. One of the earliest visionaries was Michael Halloran who in 1975 and then in 1982 sounded the call to revitalize rhetorical education by reclaiming the classical attention to public discourse. In relation to this call, Weisser mapped a now familiar disciplinary history in which cognitivism, expressivism, and social constructionism gave way to one another respectively and then to the radical pedagogy of Paulo Freire and to Freiristas' "activism in the academy" (116). In relation to this history, Weisser identified community-literacy programs as valuable sites where college students develop their capacities for going public (48).

More recently, in the third chapter of *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Engagement*, Flower has recounted the historical context of the CLC as it relates to the development of cognitive rhetoric. The CLC was an experiment in the rhetoric of engagement, the practice of learning to "speak with others [. . .] for something" as an engaged

response to collaborative inquiry (79). Flower's account positions the CLC in relation to some of the same process-movement, cognition/society debates that Weisser detailed, but for Flower the promise of this disciplinary discussion has lain not in the power of cultural critique to inform public pedagogies (where Weisser took his history) but in the discipline's capacity to develop working theories to articulate rhetorics of performance capable of supporting both personal and public discovery and change (R. Young, Becker and Pike). That, for Flower, is the power of Freire's pedagogy—its contribution as a working theory of politically charged literate action and reflection. Likewise, for Flower what is especially valuable about the renewed interest in Aristotelian and sophistic rhetorics is that they restore traditions of *praxis* (theory and action) and *phronesis* (contingent judgment) that can be employed to meet the contemporary demands of intercultural inquiry for productive working relationships and wise action.

As Flower explains, the CLC was founded in 1989 as an attempt to enact a theory-driven, context-sensitive rhetoric, grounded in the legacy of the African American freedom struggle, in the commitments of social activism as embodied in the settlement house tradition, and in the problem-solving orientation of cognitive rhetoric (Flower *Community Literacy*). Based on Wayne Peck's observations of the inventive, transactional purposes to which the everyday people in his neighborhood put literacy, the CLC tested four principles of literate social action: a dedication to social change and action; support of intercultural inquiry and collaboration; a commitment to strategies for collaboration, planning, argument, and reflection that are intentionally taught and deliberately negotiated; and a commitment to a mutually beneficial community-university partnership that supports joint inquiry (Peck, Flower, and Higgins 207–18). The CLC posed “[t]he question [of] how to create an atmosphere of respect, a commitment to equality, and an acknowledgement of the multiple forms of expertise at the table” (210). In response, the CLC envisaged the alternative public discourse of the community problem-solving dialogue—what Flower has termed more recently a *vernacular* local public (Flower “Can You Build”; Flower, “Intercultural Knowledge” 252; Higgins, Long, and Flower 16–18).

Over the years that community literacy was coming into its own, scholars outside rhetoric and composition sounded two calls that would shape the direction of community-literacy studies. One of these

calls urged literacy scholars to situate the study of literacy in the public realm in an effort to study language rights; the other call urged public-sphere scholars to test their theoretical propositions in the crucible of “actually existing democracy” in order to build a more nuanced understanding of the limits and potential of democratic practices (Fraser 109). While literacy scholars and public-spheres theorists responded to these calls within their own disciplinary arenas, community literacy emerged as another site of inquiry, one attentive to the new scholarship in both sociolinguistics and public-spheres studies. As a constructive response to these two calls, community-literacy studies has coalesced in a distinctive way around the democratic potential of vernacular local publics. In this account, I locate community-literacy studies in its academic/disciplinary context at the same time that I make a case for community literacy as a distinctive area of scholarship that integrates literacy and public-spheres theories to study how ordinary people go public and to design interventions that help them to do so more effectively within and across complex discursive spaces.

#### SITUATING THE STUDY OF LITERACY IN THE PUBLIC REALM

Over time, the call to situate the study of literacy in the public realm would come to mean studying people using literacy in a multiplicity of decidedly public domains—not commercial nor academic ones, but institutional sites representing versions of some greater good, such as the medical system designed to promote health or human service agencies organized to strengthen the larger “social fabric” (Cushman, *Struggle* 45). Eventually, this call would direct literacy scholars to conduct research in the community. In sociolinguistic parlance, community designates that subset of the public domain mediating between “the private sphere of home and family [ . . . and] the impersonal institutions of the wider society”; thus, community is the realm that ordinary people most readily experience as “public life” (Crow and Allen 1). In the 1970s, it was a new idea to situate the study of literacy in any locale whatsoever—and it was toward this effort that the call was first sounded.

The call to move the study of situated literacies into the public realm was international in scope. It began as a critique of assumptions about literacy so pervasive and bold that they governed most notably the international, multi-organizational, multi-million-dollar initiative

that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) sponsored in the 1950s to eradicate illiteracy world wide (Le Page 4): the vernacularization project.<sup>2</sup> Today, literacy scholars use the phrase the *autonomous model of literacy* to encapsulate these assumptions. In short, the autonomous model took literacy to be a generalizable skill that fostered levels of abstract thinking and critical analysis unavailable to the oral mind (Goody; Havelock; Ong). The model assumed that, as a generalizable skill, literacy could be packaged and transported from one setting to another for equal effect. It drove the overstated claims of the great divide: that literate people are more intellectually agile (for instance, able to separate fact from myth and to glean abstract principles from concrete experience) than people who do not read and write. The model also supported the view that a country needs to cross a certain threshold of literacy in order to ensure the functioning of its institutions and to achieve economic autonomy (Le Page 9). According to this model, everyday people “went public” to the extent that they developed the literate skills necessary to participate in the economic mainstream of their countries. Thus, the vernacularization project (which aimed to teach people in developing countries to read and write in their mother tongues) was a means toward an end—the most efficient means, that is, to teach people to function in a given country’s standard language.<sup>3</sup>

Among the first to call for and conduct research to interrogate the claims of the autonomous model were Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole. From 1973 to 1978 they directed the Vai Literacy Project in Liberia. Rather than describing general features of literacy, Scribner and Cole found it necessary to refer to literate practices, defined as “a recurrent, goal-directed sequence of activities using a particular technology and particular systems of knowledge” (236). Situated as they were within specific domains of activity, literate practices—from letter writing to reciting the Qu’ran to “doing school”—let the Vai accomplish different things in different contexts for different purposes, but these practices didn’t add up to sweeping changes in cognitive ability or socioeconomic status.

Freire was another early, outspoken critic of UNESCO’s conception of literacy—and one of the first to situate the study of literacy in the public realm. First expressed in his dissertation in 1959, his ideas caught international attention with the publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970. Working in Brazil and later for UNESCO under

exile in Chile, he critiqued teaching literacy as a technical skill and focused instead on literacy learning as a critical act of emancipatory engagement. Interrogating the purposes of literacy instruction, Freire challenged the assumption driving the UNESCO 1953 monograph that the ultimate purpose of literacy instruction was to “bring about conformity to [. . .] the present system”—a position that got him exiled from his home country (Gerbault 147). Instead, Freire promoted education as “the practice of freedom,’ the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (Shaull 16). His pedagogy called for circle facilitators to introduce vernacular literacy to the extent that it addressed the problems that members of the circle had posed. It would be hard to overstate Freire’s influence on rhetoric and composition. Looking back on the discipline in 2002, Weisser contended: “[Freire’s] work—most notably *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* [. . .]—is directly responsible for the discipline’s current focus on public writing” (37).

The critique of the autonomous model instigated numerous historical studies, such as David Cressy’s “The Environment for Literacy: Accomplishment and Context in Seventeenth Century England and New England,” published in 1983.<sup>4</sup> These historical reviews indicated that rather than triggering economic development, literacy flourishes in contexts where other “favourable factors” such as health and economic well-being do, too (Carrington 84).

By the mid-1980s, problems with the autonomous model of literacy—primarily, its insufficient empirical grounds—gave rise to New Literacy Studies (NLS) that focused on “the role of literacy practices in reproducing or challenging structure of power and domination” (Street, *Cross-cultural* 7). One of the strongest advocates of the ideological model and the research supporting it is Street who in 1984 published *Literacy in Theory and Practice* based on his fieldwork in Iran in the 1970s. Arguing that anthropology offered a better framework for studying literacy than formal linguistics, Street pushed literacy scholars to use ethnographic methods to study “the site of tension between authority and power on the one hand and resistance and creativity on the other” (*Cross-cultural* 8). During the second half of the 1980s, the NLG advocated studying literacies in the social and cultural contexts in which they actually occur—for instance, a village in Papua

New Guinea (Kulick and Stroud), a fishing boat in Alaska (Reeder and Wikelund), or a high school in North Philadelphia (Camitta).

Throughout the 1990s, the NLG continued to launch numerous cross-cultural comparisons (Street *Cross-cultural*; Tabouret-Keller et al.) and inspired similar studies of minority-group practices here in the United States—work that continues today (e.g., Anderson, Kendrick, Rogers, and Smythe; Farr, *Latino Language*; Farr, *Racheros*; Joyce Harris, Kamhi, and Pollock; Kells, Balester, and Villanueva; Moss *Community Text*; Moss *Literacy Across Communities*; Zantella). Such research has highlighted that literacy helps shape ethnic, gender, and religious identities by structuring and sustaining the institutional relationships that engage these identities (Street *Cross-cultural*).

By the 1990s, the NLG's *ideological model of literacy* had replaced the autonomous model in most literacy scholarship (Hull and Schultz). The ideological model defined literacy as a constellation of local, situated practices (Barton, Hamilton, and Ivanič) that are shaped by institutional power (Street *Literacy*) and responsive to changes across time and place (Tusting). In a 2000 retrospective, Karin Tusting characterized the claims of the ideological model:

- Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; they can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts.
- Different literacies are associated with different domains of life.
- Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships. Thus, some literacies are more dominant, visible, and influential than others.
- Literacy practices are purposeful, embedded in social goals and cultural practices.
- Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through the process of informal learning and sense making as well as formal education. (38–41)

The NLG and its ideological model were instrumental in advocating the study of situated literacies. The strength of the ideological model is its ability to “connect[. . .] microanalyses of language and literacy use with macroanalyses of discourse and power” (Schultz and Hull 23).

The effort to locate the study of literacy in decidedly *public* domains came about in the 1990s primarily as a result of two research projects,

led—not surprisingly—by researchers affiliated with the NLG: the Lancaster Literacy Project (conducted by David Barton, Mary Hamilton, and associates) and the re-evaluation of UNESCO’s 1953 vernacularization project, led by Andrée Tabouret-Keller in association with the International Group for the Study of Language Standardization and the Vernacularization of Literacy (IGLSVL). Conducted in the first half of 1990s, these two landmark research projects moved the study of situated literacies into public domains, and they did so not by studying formal public discourse, but by identifying local discursive sites where ordinary people went public.

Barton and Hamilton conducted the Lancaster Literacy Project 1990 to 1996 and published the results in 1998 under the title *Local Literacies: Reading and Writing in One Community*. Here Barton and Hamilton used the term “domain” to refer to the “structured, patterned contexts within which literacy is used and learned” (10).<sup>5</sup> In keeping with the NLG, they observed that the literacies which people of Lancaster practiced in the domain of the home were different from those they practiced in the neighborhood, and different still from literacies required within the academy, workplace, or formal public institution such as the courtroom or doctor’s office. The differences were due, in large part, to the distinctive social purposes that organize these domains. But Barton and Hamilton were especially interested in the domain of community; thus, reports of a neighborhood activist named Shirley caught their attention. Interviews with Shirley revealed that in her informal but efficacious social role as local-public liaison, Shirley used a mix of vernacular and more formal literacies to go public, spanning the space between the informal and formal, the private and public.

At this same time, an international group of literacy scholars, under the acronym IGLSVL, joined forces to re-evaluate the 1953 UNESCO vernacularization project that had proclaimed vernacular literacy to be a human right. When their research results were published in 1997, Tabouret-Keller sounded the call for more literacy scholars to situate their studies in the public realm. To consider this call, imagine yourself a member of the IGLSVL that met in Sèvres, France, in 1992 to re-evaluate UNESCO’s earlier project. You and your colleagues represent vernacularization projects from all over the world—“former colonies of Britain and France, but also in Europe, the Americas, East, South, and South-East Asia and in Oceanic Australia” (Le Page 6). For



your contribution to the research symposium, you need to identify the consequences of the 1953 UNESCO monograph on the corner of the globe where you have been conducting your sociolinguistic research. Your colleagues would be doing the same for theirs. It's not just that forty years have passed. Time itself would have made your job quite straight forward: you would have measured the effect of the vernacularization policies on your region and identified any constraints that thwarted their effectiveness—or conditions that made for their success. But that's not what frames your research problem. The point is that over the past forty years, you and your colleagues have rejected the formal linguistics, as well as the great divide theory, that motivated the 1953 UNESCO monograph. You no longer see languages as discrete entities that more or less respect the boundaries of nation states. Instead, you have come to understand languages falling along “linguistic continua focused from place to place and generation to generation around social group nodes, and labeled accordingly” (Le Page 4).<sup>6</sup> Likewise, you no longer assign agency to language as the UNESCO monograph had. Instead, as a colleague put it: “It is no longer very meaningful to say that languages are capable of doing things, such as being used for education; people do things—languages are abstractions from what people do, and language is in a symbiotic relationship with other social processes” (Le Page 6). Given this shift in perspective—given the humility that has replaced UNESCO's ethnocentric confidence—the question is, *what do you now consider noteworthy to report back to your colleagues?*

From here, we no longer need to hypothesize. Published in 1997, the IGLSVL's research proceedings *Vernacular Literacy: A Re-Evaluation* recorded observations the group considered noteworthy. For example, Jean-Michel Charpentier described a group of singers in Melanesia who had devised an improvisational pidgin to “exalt the existence and the genius of a group that had previously remained unexpressed” (242). The singers could have sung in their regional local language. But that vernacular was already used for folk songs. Instead, the invented pidgin let the singers reach a larger audience (Charpentier 242).<sup>7</sup> Referring to the singer's decision to employ a pidgin over a regional vernacular, Charpentier noted that the pidgin allowed the singers to call into being a “new semantic field” that made an “outward-turn[. . .]” (242).<sup>8</sup> Pushing the capacity of sociolinguistic terminology to express rhetorical ideas of audience and reach, commentary

like Charpentier's referred to the rhetorical space of a local public; his phrase "new semantic field" suggests an invented, local discursive space and the "outward turn" refers to the singers' public orientation.

Throughout *Vernacular Literacy: A Re-Evaluation*, what the sociolinguists noted were accounts of "ordinary people" finding "genuine utility" in literacy (whether standard, vernacular, or some inventive mix) as it proved useful "for those aspects of social and political life with which they are concerned" (Tabouret-Keller 327). In fact, this descriptor becomes the group's boldest claim concerning where and how it is that people exercise their language rights. In her conclusion to the report, Andrée Tabouret-Keller offered not broad, propositional claims about literacy or language rights.<sup>9</sup> Instead, she concluded that people best exercise their language rights by using language to pool literate resources in order to address pressing social and public issues (327).

Here in the United States, the call to situate the study of literacy in the public realm has also been framed in terms of language rights. In rhetoric and composition, the clearest example is the 1974 Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) resolution "affirm[ing] the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language" (*Students' Right* 1).<sup>10</sup> Most basically, the SRTOL resolution encapsulated the field's commitment to respond to and to make room for the growing number of "Blacks, Browns, women and other historically marginalized groups" who appeared in mainstream colleges in the 1960s and 1970s (Smitherman, "CCCC's Role" 354). The SRTOL recognized the existential centrality and linguistic legitimacy of the discourses that students bring with them to composition classrooms—vernacular literacies like Black English Vernacular (BEV) or, more generally, what the linguistics in the UNESCO project would have called one's *mother tongue*. In calling attention to the ways that classroom practices have institutionalized racial and class-based biases, the SRTOL also raised the possibility of reconfiguring educational spaces and institutional relationships to allow for reciprocity and mutual learning among writers who come from different cultural backgrounds and occupy different social locations (Smitherman, "CCCC's Role" 354).<sup>11</sup> When the profession passed the resolution back in 1974, the unspoken question was how those in rhetoric and composition would promote linguistic and rhetorical diversity in "public and professional settings" (Bruch and Marback 664).

The SRTOL resolution spoke for compelling social ideals—most notably human dignity, improved literacy education, and fair and equitable institutional practices. The challenge was how educators in an academic discipline would work within their spheres of influence to make public life more inclusive—a challenge that continues to engage some of the field’s most active scholars (e.g., Bean et al.; Bruch and Marback; Busch and Ball; Canagarajah “Place”; Gilyard Race; Gilyard *Voices*; Joyce Harris, Kamhi and Pollock; Kells; Kinloch; Marzluf; Parks; Tollefson; Smitherman “CCCC’s Role”; Wible).

As an heir of the SRTOL, community-literacy studies has instantiated the movement’s ideals by documenting two possibilities for situating vernacular literacies in public domains. The first possibility emphasizes students and other ordinary people *employing* vernacular literacies in public spaces. The second designs and tests rhetorical interventions to help students and other ordinary people use their vernacular literacies as resources for public *engagement*, building together new knowledge about shared issues.

### *Documenting and Theorizing Local Public Discourse*

In rhetoric and composition, researchers have documented ordinary people using vernacular discourses to go public in arenas more fluid and permeable than the sites that Graham Crow and Graham Allen describe as formal publics. And vernacular discourse still gets the job done here, and arguably more effectively than more sedimented practices (Cushman Struggle; Moss Community Text). Cushman documented this comparative advantage, for example, when an African American admissions counselor switched to BEV to signal to a nervous young admissions candidate that she could do the same—whereby inviting her to set some of the terms of the admissions interview (*Struggle* 187). Likewise, in “Negotiating the Meaning of Difference,” Flower observed that in crafting their public documents, teen writers at the CLC often used the help of writing mentors to devise text conventions for encoding BEV to address rhetorical goals (for dialogue, say, or commentary) that Standard Written English (SWE) alone could not have conveyed nearly as effectively (Flower, Long, and Higgins 229–53). Likewise, Barton and Hamilton attributed the success of the newsletters that Shirley wrote and distributed around her neighborhood to her skillful integration of vernacular and formal discourses (253).

Descriptive research has verified that such instances are not as rare as prescriptive standards would suggest (Higgins). Such research can be grouped into two categories:

- 1) ethnographies and other descriptive accounts of minority group practices. These accounts are typically concerned with documenting a whole range of group practices and, thus, draw upon a language of publicness to the extent necessary to describe distinct features within the larger set of group practices.
- 2) ethnographies that deliberately *set out to study* situated literacies *in the public realm*.

In the first set of ethnographies, researchers didn't set out to study public discourse but drew upon a language of publicness in order to describe and to interpret what they observed over the course of their studies. We can see this dynamic in *Ways with Words*, published in 1983. A language of publicness (in this case, coded in the theatrical language of public stage performances) let Heath contrast the language-learning rituals in Trackton with those of the neighboring white community of Roadville, but describing language-learning rituals, not public discourse, was Heath's first priority.

Likewise, when launching *Until We are Strong Together*, published in 1997, Heller sought a personally and professionally meaningful research project (10). So she positioned her ethnography within a women's writing workshop in San Francisco's Tenderloin District. At first glance, the workshop seemed to be expressivist in nature, emphasizing belletristic genres for personal expression. However, she soon found that the workshop's sponsors were committed to developing the writers' public voices. So as we will see in chapter 5, Heller employed a language of publicness to the extent necessary to describe specific public features within the workshop's overall orientation; for instance, workshop members represented the "larger public" (143) and neighborhood poetry readings created "public forums" (103).

Likewise, Beverly Moss and Deborah Brandt had other fish to fry besides documenting public discourses in their analyses of African American churches. In *A Community Text Arises*, published in 2002, Moss set out to document the intertextual composing process by which congregations and pastors co-created sermons as community texts. Moss drew upon a language of publicness to describe worship service as a "public" event (see also Moss, "Pew" 209). Published the previ-

ous year, Brandt's study of the African American church was part of a larger study entitled *Literacy in American Lives* analyzing how ordinary people born between 1895 and 1985 in the U.S. have learned to read and write. In both cases, Moss and Brandt drew upon a language of publicness in order to convey the significance of the church as public institution that circulates practices for personal and social transformation. While Moss explicitly classified her work as community literacy, Brandt did not. Either way, in documenting situated-public literacies, their work participated in the constructive process by which scholars both piqued disciplinary interest in how it is that ordinary people go public and also contributed scholarship to a growing body of literature exploring this question.

Meanwhile, another set of descriptive studies within rhetoric and composition identified from the outset the public realm as pertinent to their research, and deliberately situated their studies of literacy there. Among the first to carry out this line of research was Wayne Peck in his 1991 study of Bob, Althea, Buzz, and Barbara—community residents whom he documented “composing for action” (1). Based on the case studies of these writers, Peck defined the complex and persistent nature of the rhetorical situation that would come to define community literacy as a rhetorical act of shared deliberation and problem solving:

Whether the occasion for literate practice be a dispute with city housing officials, such as in the case of Bob, or a person trying to turn his life around by writing an action plan, such as the case of Buzz, community literate practices emerge as existential responses to problems that carry real consequences for the writers. Either Bob wins his case before the city or he loses his house and must go live in a neighborhood shelter. Either Buzz composes a workable plan for his life or he must move from the shelter to live on the streets. Community literacy practices are rooted in the life struggles of urban residents and are best understood as transactions or responses of people addressing dilemmas through writing. (20)

Peck's observation that community literacy is a literate response to pressing social and existential exigencies is not only relevant to Barton

and Hamilton's Lancaster Literacy Project, but it also provides a tighter frame than the sociolinguistic one that Tabouret-Keller used to describe the situations in which "ordinary people" in the IGLSVL's study practiced their language rights. The women in Dakar who assumed responsibility for their household finances (Tabouret-Keller 324), the farmers in North Cameroon who responded to newly mandated land-management practices (Gerbault 183), the Portuguese immigrants in France who invented a vernacular *immigrais* to aid communication under hostile social conditions (Gardner-Chloros 216)—in these instances everyday people pooled their literate resources to respond to pervasive and complex manifestations of poverty and disenfranchisement that UNESCO has long attempted to eradicate. Likewise, it was the rhetorical nature of such community problems that compelled Lorraine Higgins and Lisa Brush to position their research of personal narratives in the public realm. Their 2006 study "Writing the Wrongs of Welfare" examined "how subordinated rhetors [former and current welfare recipients] might enter into the public record their tacit and frequently discounted knowledge about poverty and welfare" (697).

As Peck's study indicates, as scholars in rhetoric and composition situated literacy studies in the public realm, their scholarship also developed theories of local public discourse. This is even the case, for instance, for scholars who positioned their work as a deliberate departure from some of the earlier community-literacy scholarship. In the first chapter of *Angels' Town*, Cintron noted the insufficiencies of sociolinguistic theory to get at "the broader cultural examination [he] aspired to" (10). Thus, he called his 1997 analysis of street life in an industrial city outside Chicago a "critical ethnography" by which he "bec[ame] a rhetorician of public culture" and "Heath as a theoretical lens [was] replaced by Michel de Certeau" (10). Throughout *Angels' Town*, Cintron drew upon de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* to account for the repetitive and unconscious aspects of everyday life that fuel how culture is both produced and consumed. Likewise, Cushman framed *The Struggle and the Tools* within the same French political philosophy, quoting, for instance, de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* in its opening lines. Focused on the private-public nature of the gatekeeping encounter, Cushman developed a theory of dueling dualities by which everyday people's hidden transcripts spar with the public transcript to unleash the noisy wrangling between political binaries. In important ways, European political philosophy has let rhetoricians infuse their

observations of literacy in the public realm with NLG's concern for issues of power and ideology. By drawing on political philosophies such as de Certeau's, literacy scholars have helped to characterize community literacy as a distinctive multivocal, multimodal local public discourse.

### *Features of Situated-Public Literacies*

Taken together, studies of literacy have identified distinctive features of the situated-public literacies that people use to go public. These studies confirm that—as Tabouret-Keller observed—although the vernacular-vs.-standard distinction carries important information, other features may be more instrumental in helping ordinary people go public. Some of these most prominent features are described below.

Situated-public literacies are performative. Heath needed a language of public performance to describe what was distinctive about the situated literacies she observed in Trackton. Here, youngsters' street performances called a public into being around the rituals that defined community life—and in the process, children learned their community's ways with words. Performance is a “magic[al . . . ] verbal art” capable of conjuring up discursive space, explains ethnographer Richard Gelb (323). Performance transforms passersby into members of a public who bear witness to performers laying claim to the integrity of their own lives as well as to their rightful share of resources needed to sustain those lives (Gilmore 79–80). Performance links the material and the symbolic (Cintron, Afterword 381), often challenging the status quo by mixing humor and critique for political, as well as dramatic, effect (Farr and Barajas 23).

Situated-public literacies are also collaborative. This feature means that situated-public literacies need to be nurtured in supportive environments like the women's writing workshop in Heller's *Until We Are Strong Together* or the workshop for Mexican immigrant mothers in Janise Hurtig's “Resisting Assimilation.” These and other ethnographic studies of literacy workshops highlight the importance of facilitators who support the nascent ideas of inexperienced writers. Just as importantly, they identify the invaluable role that these same writers play for one another as readers and members of a local public, taking one another's ideas seriously and responding to them with respectful candor. To the extent that community-literacy scholars share a common *crie de coeur*, I would think it's their shared commitment to collabo-

ration (in any number of configurations) as a joint response to socio-political mechanisms that otherwise exclude ordinary people from the processes of public dialogue and decision making. Collaboration is a means by which ordinary people make their voices heard. Collaborative also refers to the complex ways that multiple readers and writers, speakers and listeners may move among interchangeable roles within complex networks to co-create literate texts (Moss Community Text; Comstock 59).

Situated-public literacies often strike a problem-posing stance. It was Freire who most eloquently articulated the humanizing consequences that follow from theorizing local public discourse in praxis. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire advocated problem-posing teams (or culture circles) where participants learned to read the world as a site of colonialism and class struggle. Freire's method motivated "members of the community to exchange ideas, to understand a specific problem, to find one or more solutions to it, and to determine a programme with a timetable, using specific materials" (Gerbault 153). Freire's pedagogy has informed ethnographic efforts to document situated-public literacies (Sleeter and Bernal 240–58). Its problem-posing feature is prominent in the adaptations that re-invent for American classrooms Freire's pedagogy designed for resilient peasants (Finn; Shor and Pari). The problem-posing feature of situated-public literacies has also compelled scholars to augment Freirian pedagogy with additional problem-solving rhetorics, including John Dewey's civic ideals (Coogan, "Community Literacy" 106); Alinsky's community-organizing principles (Coogan, "Service Learning"; Faber; Goldblatt "Alinsky's Reveille") and Flower's social-cognitive rhetoric (Peck, Flower, and Higgins; Flower "Talking Across Difference").

Situated-public literacies also tend to be sponsored—that is, affiliated with institutional sponsors that circulate not only texts but practices for interpreting and composing texts (Brandt *American*; Brandt *Involvement*). Brandt calls this circulatory process sponsorship—the process by which large-scale economic forces [. . .] set the routes and determine the worldly worth of [. . . a given] literacy (*American* 20). Sponsorship helps account for how knowledge is distributed within organizations (Hull "Hearing Other Voices") and households (Moll and González), how people navigate social networks (Farr "*En Los Dos Idiomas*"), and how institutional design can promote social change (Grabill *Community Literacy*).



Finally, situated-public literacies often comprise alternative discourses affiliated with no single homeplace or public institution. Alternative discourses may be an inventive hybrid (Barton and Hamilton 122) that laces together discourses of the street and school, policy talk and political activism (Peck, Flower, and Higgins 210). In other situations, the alternative discourse may be a “hidden transcript” in direct tension with the standards and assumptions of a public institution’s bureaucracy (Cushman, *Struggle* 139) or a city newspaper’s petty bourgeois bias (Cintron, *Angels’ Town* 193). Alternative discourses support transcultural repositioning, the “self-conscious[. . .]” process by which members of minority culture move among “different languages and dialects, different social classes, different culture and artistic forms” (Guerra 8). As such, alternative discourses support strategic border crossing, at once linguistic, symbolic, literal, and political (Lavadenz 109).

#### SITUATING THE STUDY OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

As literacy scholars took issue with the dominant autonomous model of literacy, in a similar fashion, public-spheres scholars have critiqued the dominant, abstract, and idealized (though skewed) version of how democratic discourse works. Most notably, in 1990, Fraser sounded the call for the study of “actually existing democracy” (109).<sup>12</sup>

Fraser sought to complicate the abstract democratic theory that Jürgen Habermas issued in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, published in German in 1962 and circulated in English by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1989. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas described the method (deliberating claims and adjudicating evidence) by which private citizens (propertied men) set aside (bracketed) their individual interests and differences in order to discuss the most pressing issues of their day (the common good). Habermas identified a method by which public talk supersedes force or coercion in efforts to determine matters of public concern. He also designated a discursive space (*the public sphere*) separate from that of commerce or the state where people participate in democratic public life through talk. What Fraser objected to were the exclusionary aspects of the Enlightenment-era, bourgeois public sphere that informed Habermas’s theory. In “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” published in

1990, Fraser argued that this sphere restricted the access of “women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians” (123). She argued that a better model would configure the public sphere not as singular but multiple, and would recognize that in democratic deliberation differences are not bracketed but rather inform the very terms of discussion. She called scholars to attend to the conditions that thwart or make possible intercultural communication (121).

In 1999, Gerard Hauser added that it’s not enough to situate studies of actually existing democracy in contemporary, large-scale media-driven conceptions of the public—what this volume refers to as *formal publics*. These conceptions tend to limit the participation of ordinary people to the voting booth, opinion poll, and jury box (*Vernacular* 190–91). When scholars assume public life pertains only to large-scale politics of the state, it’s easy not only to view the populace as apathetic (Eliasoph 1), but also to sever the study of democracy from “the dynamic context in which democracy is experienced and lived” (Hauser, “Rhetorical Democracy” 3). Instead, Hauser called for scholars to take an “empirical attitude” toward the “untidy communicative practices” that shape local vernacular public life (*Vernacular* 275).

### *Ideas about Actually Existing Democracy*

In heeding the call to situate the study of participatory democracy in actual practice, public-spheres scholars have contributed to our field’s understanding of local public discourse. Instead of theorizing about “the public sphere” where citizens bracket their differences and follow the rules and style of rational-critical argument in order to deliberate over common concerns, Fraser identified a multiplicity of alternative publics “formed under conditions of dominance and subordination” (127). Because late-capitalist societies like the United States fall short of their democratic ideals, alternative or counter publics are immensely important. Not only do they offer safe havens to minority groups who within these spaces can develop and articulate their shared interests and identities, but they also persuade the dominant culture to think and behave differently about issues that affect the counterpublic’s members. Fraser credited feminist alternative subalterns, for example, with making domestic abuse a public, rather than solely familial, issue.

In *Vernacular Voices*, Hauser clarified that it is vernacular voices—the “street-level give-and-take of contrary viewpoints”—that promote

discussion and provide insights that matter most to public discourse, not the opinions of “institutional actors” nor some abstract standards of logic, disinterest, or rationality (89). These vernacular voices make public discourse more interesting, lively—and, yes, untidy—than Habermas’s idealized versions. Scholars can’t make valid claims about public discourse without tapping into how everyday people—those “not privy to official sites or are marginalized”—engage in “society’s multilogue on issues that impact their lives” (276).

The problem-solving dimension of democratic discourse carries real consequences, for example, for designing treatment programs for pregnant addicts or writing (or obstructing) laws to recognize the plurality of family forms. This was Iris Young’s point in *Inclusion and Democracy*, published in 2002. She argued that public discourse affects the very quality of our lives, the terms by which we know our existence and exercise our citizenship.

In *Publics and Counterpublics*, first published in 2002, Warner distinguished counterpublics from publics according to the discourses each circulates. Warner claimed counterpublics circulate politically charged alternatives to rational-critical discourse that call attention to the exclusionary politics of the dominant culture. In order to maximize their oppositional identity-building capacity, these counterpublics circulate countervailing, performative discourses that the public mainstream may consider hostile and indecorous.

In *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*, published in 2005, West cautioned that given the force with which imperialism and materialism threaten American democracy, going public requires of ordinary people nothing short of a tragicomic commitment to hope (16). West commended a deeply critical and intensely energetic “vision of everyday people renouncing self-interest and creating a web of caring under harsh American circumstances” (95).

### *Rhetorical Interventions to Support Democratic Engagement*

Rhetorical interventions serve as sites for situated theory-building that test, refine, and extend ideas from public-spheres studies. These interventions also scaffold public engagement—often by drawing on vernacular discourses as a resource for deliberation. Rhetorical interventions tend to fall into three groups: activist educational initiatives in the community, pedagogical practices in college courses, and *techne* for designing local publics—particularly as partnerships be-

tween community organizations and universities. In practice, these interventions are often integrally connected. Take Pittsburgh's CLC, for example. As a collaborative, it was intentionally designed to serve both community and university interests. Likewise, its design supported activist educational initiatives like INFORM and other literacy projects; furthermore, specific classroom pedagogies prepared college students to work as writing mentors with urban teens in these literacy projects (Peck, Flower, and Higgins). For the sake of clarity, however, in the analysis that follows, I separate interventions into these three categories.

*Activist Educational Initiatives.* Activist educational initiatives are community-based literacy projects that support mutual learning among participants and writing that "makes a difference" (Stock and Swenson 157). These projects are part of a long history of university-outreach programs that attempt to respond to the social and economic conditions of neighborhoods beyond the borders of (especially urban) universities (Hull and Zacher). Community-literacy initiatives, however, have introduced a distinctive focus on transactional writing that draws upon learners' local knowledge and supports the rhetorical action of participants. Exemplars include the following:

*ArtShow* (1989–1999). Youth-based arts programs in New York, Boston, rural California, and Kentucky engaged young people through the arts in social entrepreneurship and community-building. For example, in a project called TeenTalk, youth worked with subject area experts to develop knowledge-rich scripts which the youth performed to draw audiences into focused discussions on such topics as illegal drug use, parental neglect, and sexual abuse (Heath and Smyth; McLaughlin, Irby, and Langman).<sup>13</sup>

*CLC Projects and Derivatives* (1989- ). Affiliated with Pittsburgh's CLC, the Community House Learning and Technology Center, and CMU's Center for Community Outreach, these projects build intercultural working relationships and use writing to support personal and public inquiry and deliberation (Flower "Intercultural Knowledge"; Flower "Negotiating"; Flower "Talking Across Difference"; Long "Community Literacy"; Long, Peck, and Baskins; Peck, Flower, and Higgins). Such projects include the following:

**ARGUE:** an inquiry-driven project using problem-solving strategies to address controversial open questions around such issues as landlord-tenant relations, drugs, and school suspension.

**DIGITAL STORYTELLING:** a group of computer-supported initiatives (e.g., STRUGGLE and Voices from the GLBT Community) helping youth, adults, and faith-based organizations to use digital tools to tell their own stories on their own terms.

**HANDS-ON PRODUCTIONS:** a literacy project using video and multimedia tools to dramatize teens' perspectives on a broad range of issues, including school reform, teen stress, and risk and respect.

**INFORM:** a literacy project bringing urban teens and college students together to take action on urban issues. Over the course of each 10-week project, teen-mentor pairs draft articles for a newsletter and host a problem-solving dialogue with other stakeholders, including city officials and other members of the community.

**Carnegie Mellon's Community-University Think Tank:** a culturally diverse body of problem solvers committed to bringing wider perspectives and collaborative action to urban issues. The think tank creates a structured dialogue in which people from Pittsburgh's urban community—representing community residents, business, regional development, social service, and education—meet to construct and to evaluate workable solutions to workplace and worklife problems.

*Write for Your Life* (1994- ). Housed in Michigan State University's Writing Center, the Write For Your Life (WFYL) project supports a consortium of teachers in Michigan, Wisconsin, New York, Georgia, Texas, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania as they develop curriculum that students use to examine local issues that influence student health, literacy, and learning. Though the program started several years earlier, WFYL began to flourish in 1994 when its curriculum started asking students not

only to research local issues that mattered to them, but to write and to implement proposals for social action that addressed these issues. Over more than a decade and around the country, students have implemented numerous proposals to improve the quality of life in their communities—for instance, by testing regional water quality, instituting cross-generational mentoring programs, and implementing recycling campaigns. Like DUSTY (below), WFYL has roots in the National Writing Project (NWP), a nationwide professional development program for teachers.<sup>14</sup> Within the history of the NWP, WFYL represents the effort—under Dixie Goswami’s leadership with the Bread Loaf Teacher Network—to move classroom instruction from expressivist objectives to transactional ones through which “students’ writing can accomplish beneficial social work” (Stock and Swenson 155; see also Benson and Christian).

*New City Writing Institute* (1998- ). New City Writing supports a collaborative network among Philadelphia schools and community organizations. With support from Temple University, the institute “focus[es . . . ] on community-based writing and reading programs that lead to publications as well as educational ventures whereby schoolteachers, neighborhood people, and university-related people can learn together” (Goldblatt, “Alinsky’s Reveille” 283). The institute supports New City Press which publishes documents, including a magazine called *Open City*, that feature local writers and the perspectives and interests of specific communities in the area, ranging from disabilities activists to rural farm workers who work just west of the city. The institute also supports arts initiatives throughout the city, particularly with African American and Asian communities (Parks and Goldblatt).

*Digital Underground Storytelling for Youth*, or DUSTY, (2001- ). DUSTY is University of California at Berkeley’s computer-based outreach project. It began in the basement of a community center in West Oakland and now operates in several public schools. With partners worldwide—from Norway to India—DUSTY connects youth through their digital work across racial, linguistic, cultural, geographic, and political borders. Using digital technologies, youth produce stories in which they position “themselves as agents in and authors of their lives locally and globally” (Hull, “Transforming Literacy” 40). The program takes as its central question, “how [should educators]

transform schooling and its principle activity and means—literacy—so as to engage young people and sustain their participation?” (Hull and Zacher par. 16). DUSTY responds to this question by offering youth the opportunity to communicate via multiple modalities (Hull and James; Hull and Katz).

Such initiatives stake claims about how vernacular discourse contributes to public discourse—but not the same claim. Take the WFYL curriculum, for instance. It has learners start with what they know and how they would typically talk about issues among their peers. Over time, the curriculum directs them toward wider funds of knowledge and more formal textual expectations to produce competitive proposals that meet professional standards (Stock and Swenson 159).

The CLC projects take a different tack by making room for the rhetorical power that urban teens bring to the table. Flower poses this goal as a question that turns on the meaning of literacy:

How can a literacy program that works with black youth, for instance, balance this presumption [what is it?] with an awareness of the indirect but analytical tradition of African-American vernacular, the logical structures embedded in street talk (Labov 1972), or the rich expressive literate practices such as signifying (Gates 1988; Lee 1993), in which white volunteers find they are illiterate (Flower 1996)? (Flower, “Partners” 97)<sup>15</sup>

DUSTY also emphasizes communicating across borders. But here, learners not only draw from vernacular discourses to describe their social worlds, but they also trade in a wide spectrum of geographic, spatial, and multi-modal genres through which they construct “tellable” selves (Hull, “Transforming Literacy” 33). In fact, youth often trade among these genres and discourses much more skillfully than the participating academics. Through such initiatives, vernacular discourses infuse situated-public literacies, and learners themselves instantiate legitimate public alternatives to rational-critical models of deliberation.<sup>16</sup>

*Pedagogical Practices.* *Pedagogical practices* refers to interventions designed to help college students participate in local public life. When

Thomas Deans published *Writing Partnerships* in 2000, what distinguished community-literacy pedagogy was the emphasis on “writing *with* the community” in contrast to other service-learning pedagogies supporting college students writing *in* or *for* the community. Years later, it is possible to distinguish at least five distinct kinds of pedagogies that fall under the category. (For an extended discussion, see chapter 9.)

Interpretative pedagogies: students venture somewhere new, building relationships to confront and to revise familiar stereotypes (e.g., Canagarajah “Safe Houses”; Coogan “Counterpublics”; Goldblatt “Van Rides”).

Institutional pedagogies: students learn professional research methods to elicit and to represent the interests and expertise of community residents (e.g., Grabill and Simmons; Swan).

Tactical pedagogies: students learn to circulate their own public writing that challenges the status quo. These often boisterous public acts activate shadow systems that mimic and critique the dominant culture (e.g., Mathieu *Tactics*; Pough; Welch).

Inquiry-driven pedagogies: students learn to deliberate pressing social issues with community partners; they circulate documents that serve as catalysts for social change (e.g., Coogan “Service”; Flower “Literate Action”; Flower and Heath; Long “Rhetoric”; see also [www.cmu.edu/thinktank/docs/29.pdf](http://www.cmu.edu/thinktank/docs/29.pdf)).

Performative pedagogies: students learn to engage as rhetors with others to gain the practical wisdom required to build inclusive communities for effective problem solving (e.g., Coogan “Sophists”; Flower Community Literacy; Lyons; Simmons and Grabill).

Taken together, these pedagogical practices stress that for college students, going public entails not only crafting one’s own public arguments (Charney and Neuwirth), but also assessing one’s institutional position and from that position listening to and representing the expertise, interests, and agency of others (Flower *Community Literacy*; Simmons and Grabill; Swan).

*Techné for Designing Local Publics.* Historically, the kinds of problems that have brought universities and communities together are the te-



nacious, structural issues of poverty, illiteracy, and social fragmentation. In response to problems of this magnitude, universities have often assumed their expertise, research agendas, and curricula could be readily exported to the community. Not so. History is rife with examples of failed experiments and disappointed working relationships. Conversely, community practices have their own limits that can shut down active inquiry into complex problems. One of the central challenges of designing local publics is figuring out ways to encourage participants to suspend default strategies that have thwarted community-university partnerships in the past so that participants may put their differences into generative dialogue and productive working relationships that support rhetorical action. As a model for personal and public intercultural inquiry, Pittsburgh's CLC drew upon the pragmatism of Dewey and upon the principles of cognitive rhetoric to design problem-solving strategies for eliciting situated knowledge, engaging difference in dialogue, and evaluating options as tools for collaborative rhetorical action.

In 1997, when Flower argued for making collaborative inquiry central to service-learning initiatives, she said the point isn't for universities to deny their power, skills, and agency ("Partners"). Rather, the challenge lies in figuring out how to offer these resources to community partners in ways that are genuinely useful. Writing in the *Service-Learning in the Disciplines* series published by the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), she emphasized collaborative inquiry grounded in "the logic of prophetic pragmatism and problem solving" (101). She laid out a plan by which university faculty teaching "ordinary classes"—not necessarily those involved in "a long-term stable collaboration such as the CLC"—can sponsor community problem-solving dialogues. Such dialogues "bring together students, faculty, community leaders, and everyday people [. . .] around the kind of issue that is both (1) an open question with no single answer, and (2) a problem with immediate and local impact on lives" (105).

If Peck, Flower, and Higgins defined the central challenge and promise of community literacy (Grabill, *Community* 89), in a series of subsequent publications, scholars cast their own interpretations of the most pressing challenges that such partnerships pose and the techne—or rhetorical interventions—that would allow activist rhetoricians to respond deliberately and wisely to these challenges.

Writing *Community Literacy and the Politics of Change* in 2001, Grabill argued that the most effective rhetorical intervention would attend to issues of institutional power. Invoking the ideological model of literacy, Grabill emphasized that institutions have power, and through this power they imbue literacies with their meaning and social value. So the most responsive community-literacy program would ask community residents to help shape the programs in which they wish to participate. Drawing on Iris Young's political philosophy, Grabill designed an intervention called participatory institutional design to support a "group-differentiated participatory public" (I. Young qtd. in Grabill, *Community Literacy* 123).<sup>17</sup> Drawing on his background in usability testing and human-centered design principles, Grabill commended community leaders at the Harborside Community Center in Boston for designing and hosting forums for client involvement during which participants themselves named the literacies and kinds of instruction that would be meaningful and efficacious for them. Grabill commends participatory institutional design as a systematic approach for drawing out "the expertise of participants, particularly those thought to lack such expertise" (119).

In 2002, Brenton Faber published *Community Action and Organizational Change*. He argued that if universities are to reclaim their relevance "to the publics and constituents they represent, serve and support" (5), university researchers need to work as change agents "forming academic and community alliances" (13). Such change agents could effect the greatest change by supporting stories, particularly the narratives organizations tell about the work they do and the purposes they serve. When such stories are intact, organizations may use them to launch practices that "challenge oppressive practices" and "work towards [. . .] positive social change" (11). Faber stresses that as "critic, consultant, and [. . .] community activist," the change agent "play[s] a self-conscious, direct role in change [. . . and has] a real stake in the projects" of the partnering organization (12–13). Like the observation-based theory behind the CLC's approach to rhetorical problem-solving, Faber's rhetorical intervention is an "*empirical-yet-activist discourse of change and community action*" (6, emphasis added).

Also in 2002, Linda Flower and Julia Deems directly addressed the key question that Habermas's theory of the public sphere had raised: *how does difference figure into democratic deliberation?* Should it be bracketed, as Habermas suggested? Suppressed in search of a com-

mon good? If participants *do* put their differences on the table, how can these differences serve as a resource for intercultural knowledge building, rather than the source of competition and strife? “Conflict in Community Collaboration” reports findings from a literacy project called ARGUE that brought together a group of landlords and tenants. With Lorraine Higgins as project leader, the participants addressed a set of related concerns, ranging from irresponsible tenants and negligent, insensitive landlords to unkempt and abandoned buildings that eroded property values and neighbors’ sense of safety. The project introduced a rhetorical intervention called collaborative planning which committed participants “on the one hand, to articulating conflict—vigorously representing a competing perspective on inner city landlords or tenants—and on the other, to supporting and developing each other’s position in planning and writing a useful document” (99). Unlike strategies that forge consensus, collaborative planning provided a method for “identifying and elaborating on new and unheard positions” (104). The intervention structured and supported negotiated meaning making, placing “writers within the midst of multiple, social, cultural and linguistic forces [that] introduce competing attitudes, values, and bodies of knowledge” (107).

But how would a writing teacher or program administrator go about forging partnerships in the first place? Peck, Flower, Higgins, and Deems described a partnership several years in the making. Grabill recommended his design principles to existing organizations—a United Way organization and other community centers. Faber marketed himself as a change-management consultant to organizations actively seeking his services and looking to change. How could university types—aware of the complex terrain on which they are about to tread—initiate such partnerships? Two studies, published in 2005 and 2006, respectively, depicted activist rhetoricians in the process of public making, using rhetorical interventions to chart their way through complicated rhetorical terrain and then commending their interventions to others. Though Goldblatt and Coogan set their sites on different priorities within the partnership-building process, each offered a rhetorical intervention for building consensus among university and community partners.

In “Alinsky’s Reveille: A Community-Organizing Model for Neighborhood-Based Literacy Projects,” Goldblatt asked, *how can university partners leverage the resources that a university has to offer without con-*

*trolling the terms of agreement?* As a knowledge activist, Goldblatt nurtured a neighborhood-based initiative to serve the mutual benefit of community and university partners. The knowledge activist enacts a “deeper level” of Alinsky’s community organizing technique in which partners “talk through conflict and negotiate [. . .] tensions” in order to reach consensus regarding future joint action (Goldblatt, “Alinsky’s Reveille” 289). The knowledge activist becomes an active/activist listener who builds relationships with community leaders and studies their understanding of a community’s needs. With Goldblatt’s patient guidance, members of the Open Doors Collaborative identified a shared problem from which they developed a two-part strategy for providing literacy instruction to adult non-native English speakers in North Philadelphia.

What motivated Coogan’s “Service Learning and Social Change: The Case for Materialist Rhetoric” was the need to locate current arguments in their larger historical and political context. In a partnership with a community organization in a Chicago neighborhood called Bronzeville, he served as a rhetorical analyst mobilizing ideological fragments in an effort to forge consensus among disparate parties (see also Coogan “Public Rhetoric”). Coogan based his *techne* on Michael McGee’s materialist rhetoric in which ideographs “represent in condensed form the normative, collective commitments of the members of a public, and they typically appear in public argumentation as the necessary motivations or justifications for action performed in the name of the public” (Condit and Lucaites qtd. in Coogan, “Service” 670).<sup>18</sup> To make this concept of ideographs more concrete, one need look no farther than community-literacy studies. Within this body of scholarship, <local>, <public>, and <literacy> operate as ideographs—“icebergs” indicative of larger arguments and ideologies (Coogan, “Service” 670). One of the tasks of this book is to map how, as ideographs, <local> and <public> have assumed their “formative power to contain our commitments” (Coogan, “Service” 670). In fact, <local> was one of the ideographs that wielded tremendous rhetorical power in the public arguments over school reform in Bronzeville. When tethered to <control>, however, it harkened back to an earlier era of fractious local politics and dissipated contemporary public support. In contrast, when associated with <responsibility>, <local> assumed an altogether different, more positive valence “persuading parents [and other stakeholders] to take a more active role in [local] children’s edu-

cation” (Coogan, “Service” 688). Coogan found his and his students’ efforts to mobilize action to improve local public schools far more successful once they had conducted a materialist rhetorical analysis.

If Goldblatt and Coogan show how systematic interventions can help community partners build knowledge and consensus, two recent publications challenge the field’s understanding of *techne* as it relates to community literacy: Mathieu’s *Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in English Composition* and Branch’s “*Eyes on the Ought to Be*”: *What We Teach When We Teach About Literacy*, published in 2005 and 2007, respectively.

Mathieu’s sensitivity to academic hubris leads her to distinguish sustained, systematic—or strategic—approaches for public making from a tactical approach that “devis[es] timely and spatially appropriate relationships in the streets” (20). Grounded in the work of de Certeau, *Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in English Composition* offers a postmodern reading of rhetorical *techne*. Mathieu urges university types to consider “questions of time, space, credibility, knowledge, and success” (21)—or “Who speaks? Who pays?” (66). These questions are designed to spark tactics of hope—rhetorically responsive actions grounded in humility, “radical patience,” and courage (47). “[C]lever uses of time” erupt in the politically charged spirit of the moment and often influence public opinion in ways that not only defy easy prediction and measurement but are themselves “mysterious and unknowable” (48).

Branch prefers the term *métis* over *techne* to describe the dynamism characteristic of the Highlander Folk School that Myles Horton founded in 1932 with a colleague named Don West.<sup>19</sup> Among its achievements, the school practiced crisis education that subverted Jim Crow laws by teaching African Americans to read and write. In response to its unwavering commitment to building a more democratic society, the school understood its practices to be revisable and its ends in sight to be provisional. Branch explains: “The ‘crisis moment’ was an educational tool that provided motivation and direction, but it did not provide the ends of the educational process, ends which were always fluid, always growing” (152). Consequently, the “Highlander’s project could never have predetermined shape, one of the reasons that Horton was famously dismissive of identifying a Highlander method. [. . . T]he basis of Highlander’s program [. . .] came from a dynamic relationship between current conditions and future goals” (167). For Branch, the

legacy of Horton's crisis education inspires a trickster consciousness that "use[s] hunger and cunning [. . .] to work in the service of covert, situationally grounded, and always constrained action" (189).

Just as descriptive studies of community literacy have documented ordinary people interjecting their vernacular discourses into public spaces, rhetorical interventions—including Mathieu's tactics of hope and Branch's trickster consciousness—have drawn upon vernacular literacies as resources for public engagement. This feature is perhaps most explicit in the rhetorical model for community literacy that Higgins, Long, and Flower described in their 2006 article, "Community Literacy: A Rhetorical Model for Personal and Public Inquiry." In commending practices that enact a vernacular local public, this model of community literacy doesn't privilege vernacular discourses; rather, it makes sure they have a place at the table. The model responds to an issue central to public-spheres studies: "how to deal with the volatile presence of diversity" within deliberative democracy (Higgins, Long, and Flower 29). In addressing this question, the model creates a distinctive kind of counterpublic. Rather than cultivating and safeguarding oppositional identities in the ways that Warner associates with larger-scale counterpublics, a community-literacy counterpublic "aspire[s] to an intercultural, cross-hierarchy composition" (29). This distinctive kind of counterpublic is "less about building oppositional identities than about using difference to articulate silenced perspectives. Rather than dichotomize groups, it challenges the normative exclusionary practices of public talk" (29). The model also circulates distinctive texts that enact a new, inclusive practice for public discourse—one in which vernacular discourses articulate with policy discourse, regional talk, academic analysis, personal testimonials, and narrative to create an alternative discourse for local public deliberation. Through such texts, a rhetorical model of community literacy supports public transformation by modeling and dramatizing "an alternative kind of dialogue in which marginalized voices bring significant expertise to solving a shared problem" (31).

As this retrospective suggests, the history of community literacy is still in the making. The next chapter features Heath's *Ways with Words: Language, Life and Work in Communities and Classrooms* where performative literacies bring an impromptu street theater into being. A classic study of situated literacies, *Ways with Words* continues to offer important implications for current views in community-literacy studies.