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Toward a Model for Preparatory Community Listening

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Articles

Toward a Model for Preparatory Community Listening

Karen Rowan and Alexandra J. Cavallaro

Abstract

> While current community literacy scholarship foregrounds the importance of listening carefully to communities in the process of establishing, developing, and sustaining equitable and ethical community partnerships, the field does not yet offer explicit methods for practicing community listening, especially in the early, preparatory stages of the process. We address this gap by drawing on a case study of "preparatory community listening" in San Bernardino, California. In this project, we articulate an asset-based method for practicing community listening that emphasizes attention to discursive, material, political, and economic dynamics, particularly in communities shaped by deficit narratives.

If the scholarship on community literacy makes any single principle abundantly clear, it is this: Working directly with community members is of paramount importance in the process of establishing, developing, and sustaining equitable and ethical community partnerships. In developing community literacy projects, we cannot start with what we want to create, but rather, we must strive to understand better what the community values in order to develop programs that meet the needs they identify for themselves. Such a commitment to partnering with and respecting the community is all the more important in our city of San Bernardino given the negative ways that it is constructed regionally (as a "Broken City") and nationally (as the site of a recent shooting by terrorists). Such constructions, coming from both within and beyond the city, make the need to ground our work in community values, priorities, and interests all the more important.

In our context, our need to engage in careful listening is driven not just by narratives about San Bernardino but also by our own identities and relationships to the community. As teachers and scholars, we are committed to furthering social justice via writing and literacy education: Rowan's background is in writing center studies and anti-racist pedagogy, while Cavallaro's scholarship has centered on critical prison education. In our work together at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB), we have recognized a shared commitment to engaged pedagogy and an interest in extending our collaboration beyond our classrooms and campus, an interest that is driven in no small part by the values and commitments to community engagement that our students bring to our classes. Thus, we have begun the process of devel-

oping a center for community writing, one that might sponsor a range of community literacy partnerships. However, as white, queer, and (now) middle-class women who hail from the east coast, but who now call CSUSB our professional home, we recognize that we are outsiders to the larger community and must therefore listen to the community that much more carefully and intentionally.

As we began our initial planning, we turned to the scholarship on community literacy to inform how we might best approach listening to the community. We value the many messages we hear in the scholarship: the call to learn about and listen to community concerns and voices, the value of starting before we feel entirely ready, and the importance of doing our homework by engaging in community listening first. The work of community listening that we see implicitly articulated in the scholarship entails not only listening to individual community members and organizations but also developing a sense of the discursive, material, political, economic, and educational dynamics in a community, dynamics that will surely inform any community literacy project. All of the scholars we've learned from have done the "homework" of community listening in their own communities, as evidenced by their attention to the particular historical, political, economic, institutional, and cultural forces shaping their communities and community literacy interests. However, while the field clearly and necessarily values this sort of community listening, the scholarship doesn't yet say much about *how* to do community listening, especially in the early, preparatory stages of the process.

Thus, in this project, we share the explicit method for an asset-based approach to community listening that we developed so that we act not in *response to* but *in light of* majoritarian deficit narratives. Our theoretical framework draws primarily on Krista Ratcliffe's theory of rhetorical listening and Tara Yosso's model of community cultural wealth to account for both majoritarian deficit narratives about our community and the community cultural wealth that exists despite such narratives—and sometimes in opposition to them. We next describe the community context of San Bernardino, attending to the majoritarian deficit narratives that we must remain mindful of as we move forward in our work. Then we report on our approach to identifying community cultural wealth as one way of practicing preparatory community listening, describing our methods and findings. We end by articulating how our work will inform the way we will develop community literacy projects that are attentive to but not driven by deficit narratives and how we believe others might take up and adapt our approach to preparatory community listening in other contexts.

Overall, our essay contributes to community literacy scholarship by articulating a particular method for practicing community listening; by articulating a critical, asset-based theoretical framework to ground that method; and by focusing on the work before the work rather than on the outcomes of community literacy projects. As we noted above, the scholarship on community literacy consistently emphasizes the need for such preparatory work but says little about how to do it; this gap in the scholarship can leave many newcomers to community literacy work, especially those who do not have local mentors to consult, feeling daunted and unsure of how to proceed. We hope, then, that our attention to preparatory community listening will offer others in

the field a tangible starting point for their own work. Likewise, we believe that our emphasis on discursive, material, political, economic, and educational dynamics as a crucial element of community listening will help newcomers to community literacy work listen to individuals and organizations in more nuanced and ethical ways. While we developed our approach to community literacy with the particularities of our local campus and community contexts in mind, we believe that others will find it amenable to adaptation and replication in other contexts.

Framing Preparatory Community Listening

Our preparatory work has been deeply informed by the scholarship on community writing, especially the field's commitment to listening to the community and developing collaborative and reciprocal relationships with community partners. However, we have time and again found that the methods of enacting community listening in preparation for launching projects are rarely foregrounded. Instead, community literacy scholarship attends more to the details and outcomes of the community writing projects themselves. For example, Jeffrey Grabill's work on participatory institutional design yields the concept of a "listening stance," which understands access as more than "'a place at the table,' [but also] the rhetorical ability to participate effectively and the structured requirement to listen to what others say" (124). Drawing on his long and diverse experience teaching and working in Philadelphia, Eli Goldblatt challenges the university-centric motives and methods of some community writing work, contending that academics can—and should—contribute to our communities, but must do so in ways that are driven by communities' interests and needs. Through his historical account of his community writing work in Philadelphia, Steve Parks articulates a critical understanding of the tensions between community writing and community partnerships, disciplinarity, and the possibilities and limitations for institutional transformation (*Gravyland*). Similarly, Tiffany Rousculp's account of the Salt Lake City Community Writing Center's evolution yields a useful articulation of a "rhetoric of respect" that is grounded in community collaboration and action. We could point to more examples of such scholarship, but our interest here is to establish a pattern we've noticed in this body of work: that the scholarship tends to feature retrospective narratives of well-established or completed community writing projects, and, through analysis of those projects, develops theoretical implications and/or best practices. To be sure, this scholarship offers us much in the way of learning from past community writing projects, and we value the shared commitments to community-oriented partnerships that attend to the specific histories and contexts of particular locations, to deep listening, and to ethical and just action that emerges from this collective body of work. This scholarship likewise guides our thinking about how we might position and understand our work theoretically, pedagogically, politically, and pragmatically. And yet, what we do not find explicitly articulated here is a methodology for engaging in the preparatory work that must be done *before* our own community writing projects can be developed and launched.

Thus, as we began our project, we sought to develop a theoretically grounded method for community listening that is both informed by key theories and commitments in community literacy but that also extends the field in new ways. As we have worked, we have articulated a framework that both draws on articulation of rhetorical listening, a familiar but nevertheless meaningful reference point in community literacy, and extends that model via Tara Yosso's model of community cultural wealth. Yosso's work, informed by critical race theory, requires that we both recognize the influence of majoritarian deficit narratives about our community context and identify community cultural wealth that exists despite such narratives. By attending to community cultural wealth as means for enacting rhetorical listening and cultivating counterstories, we lay a foundation for collaborative imagination (Feigenbaum) to emerge as a focal point for our future community literacy projects. Here, we explicate how we have conceptualized this theoretical framework before sharing how it has guided our preliminary research in the subsequent two sections.

Ratcliffe's model of rhetorical listening, familiar to many in community literacy studies, offers an important starting point for our approach to community listening given her attentiveness to the tensions between listening, action, and ethics. Ratcliffe describes rhetorical listening as "a trope for interpretive invention" (196), one that "ties the personal (claim) to the political (the cultural logic)" (209). Attention to these cultural logics is not just about listening for *intent*, however, since that so frequently absolves people of responsibility for the oppressive cultural logics embedded in their words. Rather, this method requires a particular kind of understanding—what Ratcliffe calls "standing under"—the discourses that surround us: "Standing under discourses means letting discourses wash over, through, and around us and then letting them lie there to inform our politics and ethics" (205). Rhetorical listening is particularly suitable for our work because it emphasizes the need to listen beyond individual intentions to "historically situated discourses" and to make political and ethical assessments of these discourses' impact and our own responses to them in the work we undertake (208). We must hold these two things in tension as we act in the world and in our local context, where discourses are often fraught, conflicting, and contested.

Ratcliffe writes that enacting rhetorical listening "means first acknowledging the existence of these discourses; second, listening for the (un)conscious presences, absences, unknowns; and third, consciously integrating this information into our world-views and decision-making" (206). As outsiders to San Bernardino, standing under these discourses about the city is particularly important because it allows us to "listen for that which we do not intellectually, viscerally, or experientially know" (206) in our own lives and to then act ethically as we work toward community writing projects. While Ratcliffe's model resonates with our own rhetorical and ethical commitments, we nevertheless recognized in her work an opportunity and need to articulate a particular method for realizing those commitments in the context of community literacy work.

Our questions about how to enact the rhetorical listening that Ratcliffe calls for led us to Yosso's model of community cultural wealth. This model emerges in her critical race theory-informed counterstory about Chicanx parental perspectives on

KAREN ROWAN & ALEXANDRA J. CAVALLARO

and engagement with their children's experiences in public schools, part of her larger project on the experiences of Chicanx students in the educational pipeline (21-51). We are drawn to Yosso's work for a number of reasons. First, her focus on Chicanx students resonates with our own local context and community, particularly given that our own university is a Hispanic-Serving Institution, and that many of our students, like the composite characters portrayed in Yosso's research, have and continue to fight to survive and thrive in educational institutions that were not designed for them. Second, Yosso's grounding in critical race theory and her use of counterstories to challenge the cultural logics of majoritarian deficit narratives about Chicanx students, their families, and their communities both aligns with and moves forward our commitments to such work. Finally, as we explain below, Yosso's articulation of community cultural wealth offers us a useful heuristic through which we can operationalize community listening in robust and critical ways.

Yosso's community cultural wealth model draws on Bourdieu's articulation of cultural and social capital while challenging the pervasive cultural logics that understand Chicanx students as lacking any kind of cultural capital because they do not have the "right kinds" of cultural capital (37). As the characters in her counterstory contend, Chicanx students bring to school a wide range of capitals—social capital, to be sure, as well as aspirational, familial, navigational, linguistic, and resistant capital. Together, these forms of capital create community cultural wealth, which offers a fuller sense of the scope of communities' and individuals' resources, often not recognized by dominant cultural deficit approaches. Though Yosso's work is focused on educational contexts and experiences, we have drawn on her model as a culturally relevant and culturally sustaining framework (Paris and Alim) to guide our efforts to begin to familiarize ourselves with San Bernardino's community cultural wealth. To that end, this model offers us a way to begin to identify and name the many discourses that circulate in our local context and to critically assess the ways such discourses account for the community's assets and/or are grounded in majoritarian deficit frameworks about the community.

In what follows, we describe how we have begun to enact our approach to community listening as the work before the work, an approach to community listening that is informed by rhetorical listening and attentive to community cultural wealth. This approach, we believe, offers us a means by which we may engage Feigenbaum's collaborative imagination, which requires that we "cultivate expansive and diversified capacities to imagine alternative worlds—more just, more tolerant, more compassionate, more sustainable—from that which exists in the present and then to employ mutually derived, rigorous methods for realizing these worlds" (5-6). Feigenbaum, like Ratcliffe and many community literacy scholars (e.g., Rousculp), argues that such work entails more than envisioning a better world, but rather, using that vision as "an ethical guide for the practical work that must be done in the here and now" (5). To that end, our approach to community listening calls on us to simultaneously listen to multiple discourses in our community in ways that attend to the often oppressive, majoritarian logics that inform those discourses, and also to recognize multiple forms of capital that contribute to community cultural wealth, both of which we believe are

necessary parts of the process of developing an ethical approach both to listening and acting.

"Broken City": The Public Representation of San Bernardino

In our efforts to develop an ethical approach to community literacy that does not reinforce dominant deficit discourses about San Bernardino, we began not by ignoring those discourses but by paying careful attention to them. Following Ratcliffe, we sought to understand them by *standing under* them. To that end, we undertook a study of the most prevalent representations of San Bernardino, representations that have a material impact on the lives of its residents. Locally, San Bernardino's former glory as the home of the original McDonald's restaurant and the 1977 All-America City award winner has been overtaken by narratives about its long economic decline after the 1994 Norton Air Force Base closure, the rise of drug use and related crime, urban decay, and corruption. Nationally, when people beyond Southern California have heard about San Bernardino, they've likely heard only about headline-grabbing events like the city's 2012 declaration of bankruptcy, the 2015 terrorist attack at a nonprofit resource center, and a 2017 school shooting. By glossing over the city's past and current assets and foregrounding its challenges, these narratives have contributed to San Bernardino's construction as a "broken city," a description bestowed by a series of *L.A. Times* articles. In what follows, we draw on those articles as well as other sources to illustrate how these narratives, which we see as majoritarian deficit narratives, play out in public discourse about San Bernardino and inevitably shape perceptions about what kinds of community literacy work is wanted, needed, and possible.

In a series of *L.A. Times* articles written from June 2015 to December 2015, reporter Joe Mozingo describes San Bernardino as a city that is broken, representing "a distillation of America's urban woes." He reports on the impact of the meth epidemic and the presence of homeless people in a once beautiful park, the notorious corruption of City Hall officials, the challenges facing immigrant families, and the precarious life for the children who live in the city's many cheap, run-down motels. Each article is accompanied by a collection of graphic photographs: a child playing with a cockroach he pretends is a pet turtle, a mother weeping in the doorway because her daughter is missing, homeless men and women smoking meth in a city park, or housing lots overgrown with weeds and overrun with trash. These photographs, with their saturated colors and prominent placement on the page, invite readers to witness the deep cracks that have caused this city to break, putting the hardships of the city's residents on display.

While Mozingo is certainly not alone in representing San Bernardino this way, these widely circulated articles illustrate the discourses that dominate representations of the city. The "woes" that Mozingo captures are, of course, very real. A local motel owner—whose motel is described as "a way station for broken people in a broken city"—lists San Bernardino's most notorious accolades in an interview: "the county assessor arrested on charges of meth possession, the city attorney challenging the police chief to fight at City Hall, one City Council member arrested on charges of per-

jury, another on charges of stalking, and a federal indictment of the developer who was supposed to transform the airport into a source of civic pride" ("Broken City"). Just as Mozingo is not alone in constructing these narratives, narratives about broken and dying cities are not unique to San Bernardino. We see similar discussions of Rust Belt towns, of Detroit, and even Rowan's hometown of Palatka, FL. However, unlike Rust Belt and dying cities whose conditions have caused people to move out, "San Bernardino's economic implosion is sucking people *in*: immigrants, parolees, Los Angeles gang members and those . . . who can't afford to live anywhere else in California" ("Broken City"; emphais added). Here, San Bernardino's brokenness is depicted as a black hole attracting an endless supply of bad news stories and society's "undesirables." What's more, this narrative problematically gives immigrants, parolees, and the working poor the same billing as gang members, a common conflation that further elides San Bernardino's assets. In these ways, deficit narratives about San Bernardino not only offer distorted portrayals of the city and its residents, but also run the risk of helping to sustain the conditions that gave rise to the narratives in the first place.

Amidst these discourses, there are sometimes concessions to San Bernardino's efforts to put itself back together. For example, in a follow-up article, Mozingo cites CSUSB's success at helping first-generation students to graduate college, the esteem of the San Bernardino Symphony, the innovative business ventures, or the "hidden gems" of historic homes he describes as "a world apart" from the "squalor" of the other parts of town ("I'm Listening"). But concessions like these say little about the community, about the people working to make the most of the resources amidst San Bernardino's problems, rather than those that stand at a metaphorical precipice, resisting the forces that threaten to pull them off the edge. These concessions tend to be viewed as "random acts of excellence" ("I'm Listening") rather than evidence of community wealth, and they foreclose visions of a different future; it's not a dying city that can be resuscitated and brought back, but one that is already broken beyond hope.

While Mozingo's stories help to highlight the way outsiders typically construct deficit-oriented narratives of San Bernardino, community members and organizations also regularly draw on such narratives. For example, in the years since Mozingo's articles were published, discourses about immigrants and their place in San Bernardino have become even more fraught, due in no small part to Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies. While many organizations are actively working to protect immigrants, particularly undocumented immigrants, not all community members share their commitments. This rift was foregrounded in February 2017, when city officials wrote a letter to the Trump administration asking for federal support to address ongoing issues with violent crime related to drug trafficking ("Letter to President Trump"). While this letter doesn't explicitly address immigrants, activist community members and organizations made the connection, arguing that the city's efforts to foster a partnership with the Department of Justice risked putting San Bernardino on the federal radar in ways that would be dangerous for undocumented immigrants (Esquivel). Indeed, several months later, Attorney General Sessions listed San Bernardino as one of four cities targeted by the DOJ for providing sanctuary to undocumented immigrants…despite the fact that San Bernardino was not (and is not) a de-

clared sanctuary city and does not operate any jails (Tanfani, et al.). In this way, some community members and officials trade on deficit narratives to argue for resources for the city, while other community members challenge both the narratives and the consequences, intended and unintended, that follow from them. In the next section, we attend more closely to the diverse sources of cultural capital that contribute to San Bernardino's community cultural wealth and how community members draw on that cultural wealth to challenge political and material conditions that give rise to these deficit narratives.

San Bernardino's Community Cultural Wealth

Our analysis of majoritarian deficit narratives about San Bernardino reflects an important part of our community listening process. Here we have made a concerted effort to "stand under" these discourses as Ratcliffe calls us to do, while also continuing to work to tease out the cultural logics that undergird these narratives, a particularly important step as we consider just how these narratives will inform our politics and ethics and how we will act not in response to but in light of deficit narratives. Even as we recognize the importance of attending to these dominant narratives about San Bernardino, we also realized that they do not offer us a full or accurate understanding of the community. As a way to complement and counter our analysis of deficit narratives, we drew on the idea of community cultural wealth to develop a systematic method for familiarizing ourselves with San Bernardino's resources and assets and to analyze how those assets are shaped by and seek to shape the community's discursive ecologies and material realities. In this section, we first describe our process and our findings and then analyze the intersections of majoritarian deficit narratives and asset-based approaches.

In order to identify San Bernardino's assets, we began by researching online and via personal contacts to identify relevant organizations, institutions, individuals, and events. In the process, we used a snowball approach for identifying organizations. For example, we were aware of the Progressive Alliance of the Inland Empire through our involvement in local activist events before we began our research, and then we were able to use the organization's list of affiliated organizations to expand our list of organizations. We not only used social media to research organizations that use such platforms more so than websites to advertise their work, but we also benefited from the algorithms that suggested additional organizations based on our search history and follows. In this way, we quickly identified several dozen organizations that contribute to San Bernardino's community cultural wealth, a list we add to as we continue our work.

Next, we began grouping these organizations using Yosso's model as a foundational framework. However, as we worked, we found that we needed to adapt Yosso's model to our particular purposes. Whereas Yosso focused on educational contexts, we are looking at the forms of community cultural wealth that organizations (as well as individual people) contribute to the city. Our larger purposes are similar—we, like Yosso, use this model as a way to highlight assets in ways that make them legible and

actionable—but our foregrounding of organizations means that some of the sources of capital in Yosso's model are not always immediately applicable to our purposes. Likewise, we identified some sources of capital that are not fully reflected in the original model, as described below. Finally, many of the organizations we identified reflect and contribute to two or more forms of capital, though we highlight organizations in only one category below because our goal here is to exemplify the kinds of organizations that contribute to community cultural wealth, not to precisely enumerate the specific organizations themselves. Likewise, we limit ourselves to one or two organizations to exemplify each form of capital even though we could certainly point to many others.

As we analyzed organizational contributions to San Bernardino, familial and linguistic capital proved to be the most difficult to identify given our approach and purpose. This difficulty is not, to be clear, because such capital does not exist, but, rather, because these forms of capital are not easily accessible via our particular research methods. This was particularly true for familial capital, "the cultural knowledges nurtured among familia" (Yosso 48). Likewise, Yosso's articulation of students' linguistic capital—"those intellectual and social skills learned through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (43)—did not apply neatly to our focus on organizations. Even so, programs like the CSUSB-sponsored Students and Coyotes: Instruction in Poetry and Prose (SCIPP), actively draw on and honor students' full range of languages and styles, as well as their life experiences and cultural knowledges, in lesson plans for creative writing. SCIPP, which is run through local public schools, also attends to the whole family, offering tutoring and workshops for parents applying to college while students participate in creative writing workshops. Further, many organizations provide resources in multiple languages, primarily English and Spanish, in ways that reflect and sustain the community's linguistic capital. As a result of our research, we also extended the community cultural wealth framework by including artistic capital as well as linguistic capital. In addition to the San Bernardino Symphony, organizations like the Garcia Center for the Arts, the Inlandia Institute, and the San Bernardino Arts Walk are actively working to support and grow the community's artists and, in so doing, sustain and cultivate the community itself.

Turning to social and navigational capital, we found many organizations that build, extend, and sustain networks of people and community resources. Social capital is cultivated, for example, by a co-working space for young professionals and community organizers, and by several organizations devoted to supporting local nonprofits and grassroots organizations so that they can expand financial and human resources and continue to develop knowledges and skills essential to community organizing and activism. Navigational capital is foregrounded in the many organizations, both nonprofits and government-sponsored programs, that help community members learn how to "[maneuver] through social institutions" (Yosso 44). For example, while parolees are often identified as one of the many challenges San Bernardino grapples with (e.g., Mozingo, "Broken City"), some organizations support formerly incarcerated community members through programs like Project Rebound, which helps students gain admission at CSUSB and succeed while there. Project Rebound

and other similarly oriented programs recognize "that individuals have agency even though their decisions and actions take place within constraints" (Yosso 44).

Finally, we turn to aspirational and resistant capital, forms of capital that are distinct even as they are inextricably linked. Yosso defines aspirational capital as "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of barriers" (41) and resistant capital as that which "draws on [a] legacy of resistance to oppression in Communities of Color and refers to those knowledges and skills through behavior that challenges inequality" (49). Organizations that foreground aspirational capital include those that recruit and train progressive women to seek and win political office (Catalina's List), those that focus on the educational and career success of teens and young adults (Youth Action Project), and those that are working outside the parameters of typical nonprofit structures to harness the talents, interests, and energies of community members to foster civic engagement (San Bernardino Generation Now). Organizations that foreground resistant capital actively defend community members and resources and resist oppressive practices and policies. In San Bernardino, such organizations include Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC), a long-standing faith-based community organizing group; the Inland Empire Water Defenders, a coalition of environmental justice activists seeking to preserve San Bernardino mountain water for local communities; and many organizations committed to defending immigrants, particularly undocumented immigrants. One such organization, The Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective, is led by and serves undocumented youth and has been vocal in educating undocumented youth about their rights and options in response to increasingly anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies. Even as we have highlighted different organizations to exemplify these two kinds of capital, we are mindful of the extent to which aspirations are often a form of resistance, not distinct from resistance. The overlap between aspiration and resistance is further heightened in our current political climate and is exemplified by DREAMers' and undocumented citizens' insistence that they are "here to stay."

Though our initial (and ongoing) survey of San Bernardino's community cultural wealth has enabled us to develop a more detailed and nuanced understanding of San Bernardino's assets, we also have recognized that an ethical approach to community listening requires us to attend to how these assets exist in tension with, and in response to, majoritarian deficit narratives. To simply replace deficit narratives with a focus on community cultural wealth would yield a partial and naïve understanding of the community. Thus, we conclude our analysis of community cultural wealth by attending to two examples of the interplay between deficit narratives and community cultural wealth perspectives.

As we described above, many in the community draw on deficit narratives as a way to garner resources for San Bernardino, as was the case with the city council's appeal for federal resources to fight drug-related crime. In response to that appeal, members of the community organized a town hall meeting, co-hosted by ICUC and San Bernardino Generation Now (Victoria, "Community"). The goal of the town hall was to provide a forum for the community, including city council members, other elected representatives, local activists, and interested residents, to gather to discuss

strategies for improving San Bernardino for all residents. While the city council's letter to the president provided the exigence for the meeting, the focus and process of the town hall drew on previous public gatherings and sustained engagement with city leaders, and the organizers explicitly articulated an asset-oriented, inclusive approach to the meeting, recognizing San Bernardino's resources as well as its challenges and working to ensure residents have a voice in decision-making processes and outcomes. In this meeting, as well as other public responses to the council's letter (Victoria, "Residents"), community members draw on resistant capital to challenge not just deficit narratives themselves but also the consequences of those narratives. Likewise, community members draw on and create aspirational capital in their contention that San Bernardino has been, is, can be, and will be a community that residents are proud to call home.

Throughout our research, we have sought examples of organizations that respond to the community's challenges without centering deficit narratives. One such organization is San Bernardino Generation Now (SBGN), which exemplifies local efforts to cultivate asset- and action-oriented counternarratives. SBGN describes itself as a movement that began in response to San Bernardino's 2013 declaration of bankruptcy (San Bernardino Generation Now). Founding members sought to develop an alternative model, outside the constraints of nonprofit structures, to create positive change in the city, sponsor civic engagement (especially among younger residents), and increase voter turnout through community events, partnerships with existing organizations, and civic research and education efforts. In this way, SBGN does not ignore the community's challenges but, instead, leverages individual and community resources to address those challenges using an approach that is grounded in respect rather than in deficit discourses. No doubt, we will encounter more examples of asset-oriented organizations and individuals as our work shifts from preparatory community listening to ongoing community listening.

As we have drawn on the model of community cultural wealth to guide our approach to community listening, we have remained mindful of both Ratcliffe's reminder that such listening comes with "an ethical responsibility to argue for what we deem fair and just while simultaneously questioning that which we deem fair and just" (203) and Rousculp's argument for respect rather than tolerance as a primary standpoint. Tolerance fosters a framework in which we must accept any and all community narratives because they represent the community in some form, even if we disagree with those narratives and actions. In a tolerance-oriented framework, then, the deficit-driven rhetorics hold the same standing as asset-oriented rhetorics, and the grounds for critique are thus limited. By contrast, respect fosters a framework in which we can and must make principled choices. Enacting a rhetoric of respect requires that we attend "to how we use language in relation with others: how we name and classify, how we collaborate, how we problem-solve" (25). In this way, then, our own approach to community listening, informed by a rhetoric of respect, must entail critical reflection not only on the narratives we use to frame our work but also on those narratives that our potential partners enact. That is, we must carefully attend to what we deem fair and just in these narratives and to ensure our work is informed by

that assessment, even as we continue to critically reflect on our assessments of fairness and justice and our own work. While we highlight this work as part of preparatory community listening, such reflection must be integrated in all phases of community literacy projects. As part of that process, we must remain mindful of deficit narratives, continuing to stand under those discourses, without becoming so focused on them that we lose sight of the real work we seek to do with and in the community.

Next Steps: Extending the Possibilities of Preparatory Community Listening

The nature of our project—developing an approach for preparatory community listening—means that we cannot conclude by summarizing our results or assessing the success of our project. That is, we cannot yet say if our approach *works*. Rather, we understand this project as the beginning of a much larger undertaking, and this article as the end of the beginning of that work. Here, then, we conclude by articulating, first, how others in the field might draw on and adapt our approach to preparatory community listening and, second, the principles and goals that have emerged from our preparatory research and that will guide the next phases of our work.

We believe that our model of preparatory community listening has the flexibility to be taken up by others in the field. To be sure, the shape of such work will always need to be adapted to the particular circumstances of local contexts, and, by necessity, such work can never be fixed and stable, but must instead be ever-evolving and adaptable. Nevertheless, our work has been informed by a series of questions about San Bernardino's narratives and assets that we believe are broadly adaptable to other contexts: What are the community assets and the community challenges, and what is the interrelationship between them? What are the majoritarian narratives about the community and how are they historically and politically informed? What counternarratives challenge these majoritarian narratives? How can community literacy educators stand under the community's discourses to identify the cultural logics that have already shaped the web of relationships between assets and challenges in the community? Not only are these questions portable, but we also hope others will find that our approach to pairing rhetorical listening with community cultural wealth research is as generative as it is adaptable. Thus, we hope that other community literacy scholars and educators will develop their own situated approaches to preparatory community listening in ways that take up, challenge, and extend our work in San Bernardino.

While we have framed our approach to community listening as preparatory, we also contend that such listening does not stop once a project has been developed and launched. Rather, our approach to community listening must be ongoing, reflective, and subject to revision. We must continue to engage in these listening practices throughout all phases of community literacy work; to reflect on our own positioning in relation to the discursive, material, political, economic, and educational dynamics that shape our communities and community literacy work; and to revise our understandings of our communities and our work as we learn more.

As for us, this project evolved from our recognition that the prevailing discourses about San Bernardino are fraught and needed our explicit attention before we engaged directly with the community. The "homework" we have done thus far has left us feeling far more prepared to begin developing community partnerships that are both asset- and action-oriented and that are grounded in an ethical stance with respect to San Bernardino and its residents. To be sure, our approach to preparatory and ongoing community listening must function as a springboard, not a blueprint. While we have developed a more robust understanding of San Bernardino's community cultural wealth and the discourses that will necessarily inform the next phases of our work, we also recognize that our understandings will continue to evolve, even as our listening will continue to be guided by the framework developed here. We are committed to remaining mindful of how majoritarian deficit narratives circulate in and around San Bernardino and the damage that they do without centering those narratives in our work. That is, our goal is not to develop projects that are centered on either deficits or deficit narratives, but, rather, to collaborate with community members to develop projects that are informed by San Bernardino's assets and that address their needs and interests. Importantly, this approach does not mean that we should overlook San Bernardino's challenges; such an approach would not be ethical or honest. We will, instead, work to follow the lead of asset-oriented organizations and to develop partnerships and programs that do not shy away from recognizing the challenges the city faces, but that also do not assume that the community needs "saving," least of all by us.

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