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EXPOSING HIDDEN RELATIONS: STORYTELLING, PEDAGOGY, AND THE STUDY OF POLICY

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ABSTRACT

Within a Technical Communication classroom, policywork has been used to teach students the vital discursive and conceptual skills valued by technical fields. However, given the move of technical communicators into the public sphere, these skills can and should be expanded to include diverse practices and modes of thought. As such, this article suggests that storytelling can be used as a pedagogical tool to help students think more critically about the (sometimes hidden) relationships that policywork inheres. This article articulates relational work as a target skills set for students and suggests specific activities and handouts for developing these skills.

INTRODUCTION

Recent discussions in both risk communication and public policy have stressed that public communication needs to be more inclusive of public participation and less focused on "delivering the word" to the people [1-3]. For professional and technical communicators, this concept requires alternative and new approaches to communication. But how do students in Professional and Technical Communication learn argument strategies that they can use in situations that require diverse approaches to public communication? Recent calls for diversifying the field might offer some response and certainly some service learning approaches provide students with a base for public communication [4, 5]. I add another approach grounded in an attention to relational work, or work that draws attention to the complex relationships among people, ideas, places, events, institutions, and things.

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The pedagogical approach I describe here is built out of research I have conducted with a Public Engagement Firm that helps governmental agencies and technical firms work with affected publics on policy projects. Their daily work involves making critical arguments, crafting and designing technical documents for print and the web, and a host of other activities traditionally adopted by technical communicators. However, their success in these activities relies on their ability to do relational work, to build relationships with citizens, and to understand the ways the citizens are connected to the place/city/landscape, the policy, and the other people involved. Through relational work, the consultants at the Public Engagement Firm, VCC, are able to situate the needs and narratives of the citizens within the broader policy projects, which are often developed within the context of Urban or Transportation Planning Projects. Drawing on this firm's approach to Professional and Technical Communication, I offer relational work as a means of facilitating these same skills with students.

However, a curricular approach to relational work seems unwieldy. How can we teach relational work when so much of the work is contextual and based upon person-to-person activities? In this article, I suggest that policy work and storytelling can be used as curricular tools to:

1. help students develop relational skills; and
2. expand the curricular base of technical and professional writing beyond the familiar, logocentric activities and criteria we often maintain.

After discussing the rationale for storytelling as a pedagogical tool, I present a pedagogical approach that focuses on exposing the hidden dimensions of the public as a way to teach and do relational work.

POLICY WORK AS EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Before discussing storytelling, I want to quickly discuss the strengths of using policywork as arhetorical context for the classroom. Public policies are unique documents because they present a discursive act tied to concrete action, drawing attention to the social, cultural, and political effects of technical communication. Smith has already proposed an approach to teaching with public policy, suggesting that "any setting of public policy action . . . involves the complex need . . . to integrate issues, expertise, viewpoints, practices, and ethics in contexts" [6, p. 78]. Beyond a cultural studies approach to writing, the use of public policywork in the classroom asks students to consider the legislative work of language—and the ways citizens are affected by such legislative work. The recent special issue on Technical Communication and the Law in *Technical Communication Quarterly* works toward highlighting the importance of "legal dilemmas related to workplace activities" [7, p. 1], and scholars like Smith and Grabill, among others, have focused on policy within the classroom and the community, respectively [6, 8]. In short, the benefits of working with public policy in the technical

communication classroom have already been well-established. This article adds to these approaches by refocusing on relational work as a means of understanding the risks and effects of policy work.

STORYTELLING AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL

Storytelling has its roots in oral traditions, and as a knowledge-making activity, it continues to be maintained in non-Western, particularly African, cultures. Although Western thought has moved from orality to literacy, as Ong has clearly articulated, storytelling and narrative are still upheld by some as legitimate modes of communication, thinking, and development [9]. Within various societies, "Storytelling is a longstanding strategy for socializing the young ones" [10, p. 42], which suggests that stories have instructive value, even at a young age. Gates offers storytelling even more power: "The stories that we tell ourselves and our children function to order our world, serving to create both a foundation upon which each of us constructs our sense of reality and a filter through which we process each event that confronts us every day" [11, p. 17]. To the extent that Gates is correct and stories have ontological and epistemological power, sites of storytelling and the act of storytelling can offer rich opportunities for scholars interested in the way discourse functions—even technical discourse.

This may be why storytelling is an accepted and oft-used research method in management studies. However, within Professional and Technical Communication (PTC), the power of stories seems to have been overlooked or downplayed, with a few important exceptions. Blyler and Perkins, for example, edited a collection tying the power of narrative to Professional and Technical Communication [12]. In their introduction, they explain that narrative and stories "may lead academic and workplace researchers to . . . less objectivist forms of writing that may be more suitable to the kinds of knowledge some scholars wish to convey and to the politics of their research situations" [12, p. 22]. Within ethnographic studies and similar field-based research, elements of narrative have certainly become more prevalent within Professional and Technical Communication. As I explain later, Faber is an apt example [13]. Nonetheless, Perkins and Blyler's prediction that, by 2009, narrative will become a prevalent and well-respected mode of knowledge-making has not come true—at least not within the field of PTC. In fact, after their 1999 book and a subsequent special issue in *JBTC*, the issue of narrative and storytelling fell to the wayside in PTC.

Faber does not focus on stories, specifically, but he posits organizational narrative as productive for restructuring organizations [13]. As a consultant, he collected various narratives in order to understand competing narratives generated from various stakeholders. He then worked with the organization to create a new narrative that was "designed to compete with and displace the antagonistic narratives created and employed by students and instructors" [13, p. 103]. In understanding the structure of an organization through narratives,

Faber was able to reconstruct the organization by restructuring an alternative, more representative narrative. Faber's research demonstrates the power of narrative, but his analysis remains at the structural and organizational level; he doesn't unearth the relational power of stories.

Faber's sense of narrative overlaps with the work done on storytelling with Management literature. Boje, like Faber, writes prolifically about the importance of narrative in understanding organizations [14, 15]. Because "storytelling is the preferred sense-making currency of human relationships among . . . stakeholders" [15, p. 106], Boje suggests that managers and organizational leaders can benefit from learning to become better storytellers. Boyce extends the potential for stories and storytelling into a more activist realm [15]. She sees possibility in storytelling, suggesting that it can be effective in problem-solving/action research, during the co-creation of organizational vision and strategies, and a number of other change-inducing activities. She writes, "Story researchers, managers and practitioners can use story and storytelling in organizations to describe and sustain the current power of structure, or to nurture and fuel creativity and liberation and to develop new meaning of work and personhood by individuals and groups" [16, p. 11]. Boyce's move here is appealing when considering storytelling within the public sphere. It draws attention to the power of the story to make change and describes storytelling as a liberating activity.

Within management literature, other scholars discuss storytelling as useful for adjudicating disputes or finding critical incidents that illustrate corporate problems or culture. In this scholarship, storytelling becomes a tool that works toward understanding and sense-making, which are valuable within the public realm as well as corporate spaces. However, the ways storytelling has been framed has been limited. Generally, neither the immediate act of storytelling nor the role of the listener in storytelling is given critical attention. Such discussions have been more readily taken up in literature about oral culture, sociology, and other literature that falls outside of the realm of the technical.

Within the technical realm, stories have been given primarily structural and generic attention, with a limited focus on the ways stories function as relational tools—that is, tools that help us build and see (the possibilities for) relationships. Within VCC, where I've been conducting my research, relational work and stories in particular provide consultants with fodder for public communication that is effective across a diversity of public(s). The need for diversity within technical communication has been well-articulated in recent years [6, 7], but we have yet to develop pedagogical tools to help students adopt strategies that respond to diverse situations. My study provides an apt base for developing these tools for two reasons:

1. many of the communities VCC serves are racially and culturally diverse; and
2. seven of the eight women who work at Vector are of African descent.

Both their internal diversity as well as their understanding of their diverse clients and community stakeholders are assets as they approach policy projects. Let me give a brief example.

In Springfield, IL, VCC has been hired to facilitate public engagement on the Springfield Corridor Study (SCS). The SCS is a study of the current railways in Springfield, railways which will be expanded to accommodate twice the amount of rail traffic by 2020. A professional engineering firm has been hired to compose an Environmental Impact Statement and provide the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDoT) with a recommended approach to the expansion. One of the primary concerns in the study is the effect the rail traffic will have on the citizens and their communities; as such, Hanson (the engineering firm) has employed VCC to conduct the Public Engagement portion of the study. As with many of their projects, VCC joins a team of engineers, developers, and urban planners in the research on and reconceptualization of Springfield, IL, and its rail traffic.

For citizens of Springfield, news of the added rail traffic was not necessarily good. Although the doubled train traffic might bring increased revenue to the city, the traffic delays, noise pollution, and vibration would also increase, if not double. In order to draw out the concerns of the citizens, VCC immediately distributed calls for advisory groups, met with key stakeholders and visited the three rail corridors currently moving through the city. Through their initial engagement process, VCC was able to discern the major concerns of the citizens and quickly realized that, in part, citizens were concerned about the racial division that could be exacerbated by the increased rail traffic.

Through interviews and community meetings, acts that include storytelling and require relational work, VCC learned that the citizens east of the 10th Street train tracks (literally on the East Side) had been scarred from past attempts to "revive" the city. Historically, revivification processes had discounted the east side, claiming economic prosperity would reach the entire city, but actually affecting only the west side (and white) citizens. According to the VCC consultant, Sarah, this learned exclusion dated back to the 1908 race riots, where Black citizens in Springfield had to fight to be considered at all. After the VCC consultants on the project conducted a number of interviews, they embarked on a new approach to understanding the community. Pushing the boundaries of what technical writers and consultants typically do, Sarah and Mariah took a walk through the East Side corridors, listening to community members' stories about the train tracks, the neighborhood, their families. Sarah describes:

> They said, "We want you to come here. Walk through these streets and see what we're talking about." So we did. And I'll tell you—you wouldn't believe. They came up to us afterwards and hugged us. . . . They said, "We are so glad you're here."

This short example demonstrates how storytelling—in various instantiations—helped VCC work successfully to build relationships with the citizens they were

working with. The ability to listen carefully to stories as valid parts of knowledge-work and the ability to situate those stories within larger projects are valuable skills that the consultants have developed over time. This relational work occurs through stories, which serve not only as "research" but also as generative elements of public engagement processes. That is, the stories help the consultants make decisions and build unique approaches to policywork.

Based upon previous storytelling research as well as the work of these consultants, I have developed a pedagogical approach to technical writing that functions within a policywork-driven classroom. Students are challenged to consider the ways technical communication can be expanded through the consideration of hidden stakeholders and those stakeholders' stories. By engaging in storytelling and relational work, students develop skills that help them navigate complex rhetorical situations. Within the classroom, students can gain relational skills by seeing the possibilities in stories, by going to the places where stories happen, and by identifying the ways various stories and histories speak to one another. This article presents a sequence of activities, reading, and assignments that help students consider stories as valuable sources of knowledge work.

The activities are scenario-driven, asking students to engage with local places and citizens. Scenario-based education has been well-established in usability studies when users are asked to interact with technologies in given scenarios [17], and scenario-based learning techniques have been adopted throughout various disciplines, including composition, where context-driven writing is encouraged. When faced with scenarios, students are given an opportunity to think through the steps of policywork and enact the steps of storytelling laid out by the research I have done at VCC. Because storytelling is an oral tradition, the use of scenarios increases students' opportunity to collect, respond to, and relate various stories.

PLACE, PURPOSE, AND PEOPLE

After reading sections of policy and work surrounding that policy, students work toward identifying the diversity of stakeholders involved in places, projects, or policies (see Appendix A for the full project assignment). When working with policies, students often initially focus on the most obvious and familiar stakeholder groups and struggle to see the hidden or less apparent stakeholders. The process by which a Public Engagement Firm identifies these silent stakeholders is expensive and time-intensive—clearly beyond the scope of a classroom project. However, after they have engaged with the policy text and its surrounding literature, students benefit from interacting with an emplaced policy, considering the material effects and histories of the given policy. Thus, the second step of the sequence is to investigate the stakeholders through place, purpose, and the people affected by the policy.

For example, when my students were investigating the formation of new policies that respond to the problem of Childhood Obesity, they spent several

weeks observing places that might be affected by the changed policies. Students were expected to take note of the people who frequented the location, the purpose of the place, and the physical make-up of the place. Through their observations, students learn to trace local expectations and effects of policy. Students can use the handout in Figure 1 to draw out the stakeholders of a policy-driven project. The handout takes a single place as the focus of the investigation, but ultimately asks students to consider the places affected by the policy, the purpose of the policy, and the people involved in the policy. By focusing on a place, students consider the concerns of community members and rather than imagining the stakeholders, they are encouraged to see the policy as it affects local citizens.

Handout: Platial Examination

Step One: Brainstorming
Before you go to your site of observations, spend some time brainstorming what you anticipate you'll find.

Places Affected by the Policy	Who Frequents this Place?	What activities do they do there?	Who pays for the place? Who maintains it?

Step Two: Observational Notes
Describe as fully as possible what you see as you observe your site. You might find it helpful to create a structure for taking notes. Specifically, who do you see? What are they doing there? What do you think their interest is in place?

Step Three: Mapping a place
Draw a map of the place you observed, disregarding its physical aspects. Then place the groups of people who interact with the place close to the location. Locate the people who are affected by the place but do not directly interact with the place outside the box. If there are stakeholders who have a large impact on the place (or who are greatly impacted by the place) create a thick double line in order to show this connection. If there are stakeholders who might be negatively impacted by the place, draw a slash across the line or the box that connects or represents the group. Map the activities you saw as well.

Who lives close to the place? Who walks by the place? Who wants to go to the place but might not be able to? Map these individuals as well.

Figure 1. Student handout for examining a place.

DEVELOPING PERSONAL STORIES

After students have begun developing their theories of hidden stakeholders, students work more intensely to consider the sharing and telling of stories as part of the technical development of policy. Within the work of public engagement, storytelling occurs as a two-way process. The VCC consultants are not merely collecting the stories of stakeholders, but they actually build relationships by also sharing their own stories with citizens. This, perhaps, is the difference between storytelling and using interviews to conduct research. Whereas interviews are a technique that helps collect qualitative data, storytelling is a technique that helps build and see relationships (while also collecting qualitative data). Thus, before drawing out stories from citizens, students investigate their own relationships with the policy at hand. They are asked to articulate their own narratives in relationship to the policy or the specific place of observation—and they're asked to do so orally.

The sharing of personal stories draws students' attention to the way the oral delivery of a text can affect meaning. Additionally, this activity draws attention to students' preconceived notions about a policy, a place, or even the people involved in the complex development of the policy. Students are asked to work reflexively and examine their own assumptions and preconceptions, a move encouraged by critical researchers [18, 19]. However, they are also asked to explore their own ability to share and be vulnerable with others, acknowledging that relational work requires an examination of our own positions. In other words, working with students' stories shifts the expectations of technical writers, who often relegate their work to the logocentric realms of manual-writing, data analysis, and usability testing.

FOCUS ON STORYTELLING: LISTEN, EMPLACE, AND RETELL

The crux of the success VCC has had as consultants lies in their ability to relate to citizens, assess citizens' relationships with the landscapes, and locate the relationships among the various institutions involved in the policy projects they work on. Such relational work represents a way of understanding the complexities involved in public work, particularly urban or transportation planning. Relational work includes relationship-building, which requires interpersonal abilities that we often talk about with our students but don't necessarily teach explicitly. Relational work also includes the ability to see the possibilities for relating institutions, people and places. The VCC consultants use storytelling in three relational ways: they

1. listen to and share stories as a means of building relationships;
2. emplace those stories as a means of connecting stories to the landscape, city, or place; and

3. they synthesize and retell the stories to relate steps (1) and (2) to the larger project at hand (see Figure 2).

Within the classroom, students are challenged to think in nontraditional ways about the ways relationships converge and diverge with the development of policy. The scenario-based activities ask students to follow the work of these professional Public Engagement consultants, as they listen, emplace, retell, and synthesize stories.

After students have located valuable stakeholders in a policy scenario, they are asked to collect stories from stakeholders about the policy. In part, they use the stories as research about the policy; as Meredith Zoetewey notes, sometimes students "need information that isn't written down" [20]. Because the actual act of storytelling is a focus, however, students are asked to focus on building relationships through stories and seeing the relationships of value to the stakeholders whose stories they listen to. It's tempting for students to consider this kind of activity a mere interview, but using the language of storytelling draws attention to the practice of listening *and* sharing. Rather than collecting data, students work on building a dialogic relationship with the citizens and work to develop strategies for building and seeing relationships. After focusing on the act of storytelling, students connect the stories with their research on the physical place and the policy itself. Because policies have local and material risks and effects, students then work to understand the way the physicality of the place (including buildings, finances, environmental changes) might be related to citizen concerns about the policy. In other words, students emplace the stories mapping and identifying the places changed by the policy. Finally, students work to retell the stories they've collected and then synthesize the collective stories. In the following sections, I focus in on each of these steps, providing a rationale and an activity for each of the steps (see Figure 3).

Storytelling Step	Relational Context
Listening to the stories of citizens	Creates a relationship between the citizens and the consultants Gives value to the lived experiences of the citizens
Emplacing the Story	Reveals the relationship between the citizens and the landscapes, city, town
Retelling and synthesizing the stories	Responds to the relationships revealed in the storytelling process Completes the storytelling circle, so that citizens see their stories in the place and in the end result

Figure 2. Storytelling practices and their relational contexts.

Storytelling Step	Classroom Activity Steps
Listening as Technical Writing	1. Identify hidden stakeholders 2. Invite stakeholder for storytelling meeting 3. Write up narrative and reflect on storytelling act 4. Share narrative with stakeholder
Emplacing the Story	1. Identify landmarks, places, things, and other platial elements of the stories 2. Work in groups to map platial elements on a geographical map 3. Mark up the relationships citizens have with platial elements 4. Add other group members' platial elements 5. Write about similarities and disparities among citizen stories
Retelling the Story	1. Retell stakeholder stories to the class 2. Analyze the stories based upon differences, similarities, etc. 3. Write an analysis memo using anecdotal and narrative as evidence 4. Construct a brief retold narrative

Figure 3. Classroom activities for storytelling.

LISTENING AS TECHNICAL WRITING

In their process of developing public engagement processes, the VCC consultants generally use stories to generate a space for citizens to speak. In order to do so, they must create a disposition that is open to dialogue; they sometimes share their own stories, and they facilitate a stance of "rhetorical listening" with the citizens [21]. As they interact with citizens, they work toward identification with the citizens, clients, and other stakeholders they interact with. Particularly with citizens, stories can be the most generative and successful approach to building relationships.

Professional and technical writers are often expected to network and build relationships without having practice at doing so. Certainly efforts toward service-learning and collaborative work attempt to do so, but, as Hannah points out, students are not often trained to think and communicate with diverse populations [22]. Relationship-building is often blackboxed, or seen as a self-evident method, idea, or action. In working with stories, students are asked to focus and reflect on the act of storytelling, to hone their listening stills. One step toward

building relationships is practicing astute and genuine listening. Obviously, genuine listening cannot be taught in whole-piece. However, practicing engagement with other people and reflecting on that engagement can help students begin considering the way relationships are built and maintained.

> *Activity:* Within the classroom, students build their own relationships with citizens as a means of developing relational skills. Students invite one of their identified stakeholders to discuss the policy scenario over a meal or a cup of coffee, focusing on stories about the place. Rather than record the interview, students take notes and block time to reflect and write after the interaction.

This activity lacks the long-term relationship-building typically done in public engagement projects. However, it draws attention to one of the skills needed to work with diverse public(s): an openness to listening. Information about citizen needs and concerns doesn't often come in neatly packaged responses to finite questions. Rather, through stories, knowledge can be built about the place, the policy, and the people.

EMPLACEMENT AND POLICYWORK

In addition to the relational work done through the act of storytelling, stories can help students understand the ways citizens develop relationships to the landscape. This is particularly true when policy overlaps with urban and transportation planning projects, where policies are being built that affect the way place is constructed. In these cases, the stories become more than structural or generic tools, as is often articulated in the storytelling literature, and they become keys to understanding the way material place matters to citizens. In part, this step in storytelling work reveals my own interest in place as a key component of public work; my research at VCC supports Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom's argument that "place matters," especially as citizens "move down the economic ladder" [23, p. 4]. As consultants in public policy projects, VCC collects citizen stories as a strategy to unearth the often unspoken relationships citizens have with material place.

In order to unearth hidden policy risks and effects, stakeholder stories are laid upon the physical landscape of the site. This has been particularly useful in Springfield, for example, as VCC used citizen stories to articulate the relationship between the transportation project and the citizen concerns. This act of emplacement draws attention to the lived memory of the material city, allowing the consultants to understand the concerns of the citizens in a more holistic way. Within the realm of Professional and Technical Writing, we often talk about stories as spatial—we learn to identify and understand key organizing structures in a particular space. But in the case of public engagement, many stories are

platial, highlighting the physical barriers or features of a place. A platial story draws attention to the importance of the material and physical landscape of a place. For example, the stories gathered during the East Side tour in Springfield helped the VCC consultants understand that:

1. the current railway functions as a material lived memory for citizens; and
2. the new railway would physically reconstruct the landscape to keep the Black communities on the East Side from entering the West Side.

Such conclusions were only drawn after listening to and emplacing citizen stories. Thus, where stories can sometimes be seen as merely discursive acts, the cognitive work of emplacement pushes the stories into the physical realm, they can be mapped and understood in relationship to the landscape.

> *Activity:* Students work to emplace the stories they've collected by working in groups to literally place the stories on a local map. As they read the stories, they take note of the physical landmarks, things, and places mentioned by the citizen. If the citizen mentions a crosswalk, or a curb, it goes on the map. If they mention a local school or a park, it also goes on the map. Then, students mark citizen commentary as positive, negative, neutral; often, they develop their own categories. Within their group, each citizen is color coded on the map, and students are asked to write about similarities among the stories, the places, and the citizen feedback.

In order to encourage students' understanding of stories as having relevance to projects, we can assign emplacement activities alongside storytelling. The emplacement of a story is a method of analysis and of relational work. Here, we begin tying stories to place and understanding the concerns of citizens as they are related to the potential for change in a given policy scenario. Such work helps expand the bounds of storytelling possibilities and directs students' attention toward the ways places matter.

RETELLING AND SYNTHESIS

Retelling stories is tricky. As we've learned from ethnographers and critical researchers, representing someone else's story presents an ethical dilemma. However, as technical and professional writers in the public sphere, the VCC consultants are often challenged to decide whose voice matters, which story gets heard, and how the story is heard. Because the consultants function as a liaison among a number of institutions, community groups, and professional organizations, they have a unique access to the decision-makers. Thus, in board room meetings and steering committee caucuses, the consultants work to retell stories in ways that will be well-received and comprehensible. They synthesize the concerns of citizens, but they often use anecdotes and stories

to make their points clear and cogent. The retelling of a story requires a sense of the ways citizen concerns can be combined and made powerful because of shared experience.

As they work with various stakeholder groups, the VCC consultants put the various stories and concerns in relation with one another, drawing upon the various stories to summarize and synthesize the stories. They see the differences in concerns, stories, and preferences, and they create a narrative of the overall diversity of concerns. In some cases, they retell the stories and the concerns to one another or to the project teams.

> *Activity:* Students retell the stories they've heard from citizens and also listen to their colleagues' retell citizen stories. They write an analysis that attempts to synthesize the citizen concerns using anecdotes and story excerpts as evidence. Based upon their analysis, students deliver a 1-2 minute overview of citizen policy concerns.

Through the synthesis of stories, citizen stories become more powerful. Jackie Jones Royster uses "streams" as a metaphor for the ways narratives, histories, and stories combine to be powerful and meaningful representations [24]. Through the collection of multiple stories, students begin to reflect on the way meaning is made through nontraditional modes of argument.

CONCLUSION

Relational work is important for technical and professional writers, particularly those who enter the public sphere. Relational work requires an ability to interact with people in a respectful and productive way; it requires an ability to see the relationships among institutions, people, events, projects, and things; it requires an ability to respond to the potential for relationships among these same items. We need to develop strategies for effectively doing and teaching relational work, and this approach toward teaching technical writing suggests that storytelling can help students learn relational work.

Storytelling has been used in management literature in order to identify the structure of and problems within organizations. Within the classroom it can be used to unearth the ways policy changes can affect stakeholders. Additionally, they can be used to broaden the scope of knowledgework activities done in professional and technical writing. Students who use storytelling are encouraged to expand their notions of how knowledge is built and to diversify their understanding of the ways we learn about technical projects. Because storytelling had its roots in oral traditions, students who build knowledge through storytelling engage in activities valued by different cultures and are encouraged to value those activities in their class work.

Certainly, more work needs to be done to investigate the other uses of storytelling within professional and technical writing. And within this article, the theoretical and practical advantages of engaging in relational work have not been fully articulated. Nonetheless, if we want to diversify the field and expand the boundaries of how we think and work as technical and professional writers, we must start somewhere. Because relational work and storytelling are key aspects of the diverse work that VCC does, I posit this pedagogical approach—which draws from their work—as one way to respond to the call to diversify the field.

APPENDIX A: Sample Scenario

Use a current policy or development in your city, or use this scenario:

The local government is considering building a regional airport 8 miles east of town. In order to do so, they need to determine the concerns of citizens as this change is made. Some initial concerns include: sound, vibration, traffic, residential displacement, and economic development. You have been assigned to a consulting team whose objective is to determine citizen concerns about the change in local landscape.

Possible Activities:

Activity: Brainstorming Pertinent Locations
Activity: Observations of Locations
Activity: Stakeholder Grid (see Figure 1)
Activity: In-class Storysharing

Possible Writing Assignments:

Writing: Reflection on Storytelling Collection
Writing: Speaking a Story, an Oral Recital of Personal Stories
Writing: Analysis of Policy Situation
Writing: Retelling a Story

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