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COMPOSITION STUDIES AND SERVICE LEARNING: APPEALING TO COMMUNITIES?

In her Richard Braddock award-winning CCC article “The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change,” Ellen Cushman draws upon notions of lost opportunity and community alienation in her hortatory call for scholars in rhetoric and composition to move beyond their roles as classroom teachers and to become activists within communities outside of educational settings. Arguing that members of the profession should explore “a deeper consideration of the civic purpose of our positions in the academy, of what we do with our knowledge, for whom, and by what means” (12), Cushman invokes notions of civic duty to “suggest ways we can empower people in our communities, establish networks of reciprocity with them, and create solidarity with them” (7). Given the enthusiastic reception that Cushman’s article received within the academic community, it’s clear that appeals for connections between the academy and “outside” communities are attractive to many in our discipline. Perhaps one of the most visible manifestations of this interest in community is the increasing conversation about the value of service learning projects within composition classrooms. The increased frequency of these conversations in our discipline is reflected by the recent publication of the AAHE edited collection *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition*, the winter 1997 *Writing Instructor* devoted to service learning, and service learning’s inclusion as one of three main topics for the 4C’s 1998 Winter Workshop. Whether they have students compose texts for non-profit or community organizations (Eddy and Carducci), connect social theories with the experiences of disenfranchised groups (Herzberg; Novak and Goodman), learn about literacy and community theory through tutoring experiences (Minter et al.; Gere and Sinor) or develop collaborative problem-solving partnerships (Peck et al.), composition scholars are clearly interested in conceptualizing how the discipline intersects with the goals and agendas of various service learning movements.

In this essay, we wish to examine more fully how service learning is being conceptualized by compositionists, particularly through the trope of *community*, to consider how it functions as a practice and topic in our discipline. Our interest in doing so stems from our interests in and experiences with service learning and our desire to more fully examine why the service learning movement has been so appealing to us—in terms of the social and cultural aspirations it embodies for us as teachers at our particular institution and as scholars within the discipline. We seek to explore some of the issues that Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters identify as crucial for the discipline to consider, namely “How do we position ourselves and our students as practitioners of service-learning, and what is the relationship of that learning to the academic endeavor?” (15). In doing so, we find it useful to examine the term *community* and what it implies as we go about conceptualizing the value of service learning projects in our classrooms. Our reading of composition literature about service learning suggests that despite invoking the need for reciprocity and empowerment for community members, arguments for the value of service learning are still primarily made to a professional audience of peers rather than to the public that these projects claim to serve. Current representations of service learning do not represent the learning of community participants or the impact of this learning on how we think about the value of service learning in our classrooms. The absence of these voices in our representations elides, both literally and symbolically, community participants’ roles in the service learning experience, and thereby limits our conceptions of “learning” for all participants.

Appeals for Service Learning

Within composition literature, the discourse of service learning seems to rely upon binaries opposing the metaphorical spaces of “the university” and “the classroom” against the “community” and the “real world.” For instance, Cushman’s call for compositionists to move outside the classroom in order to achieve social change relies upon the assumption that the classroom is a space impervious to dialogue because it is conflated with the values of the larger university in which it is situated:

[T]he very power and structure of the university makes it difficult to establish and maintain dialogue and solidarity. There’s only so much we can get to know about our students within the sociological confines of the academic composition classroom.... Yet when we approach the community, we maneuver around the sociological obstacles that hinder us in the classroom from communicating with our students in ways that show our identification with them. (19)

In this excerpt, the classroom is conflated with “the university,” and anything beyond the boundary of this metaphorical and physical space is termed “the com-

munity.” Similarly, Brock Haussamen describes the primary goal of service learning as bringing “the academic world and the democratic community into a closer relationship” (196). This opposition of classroom vs. community seems surprising given the ways that the term *community* has been so thoroughly problematized within composition literature (Harris, Trimbur). By positing these distinctions between the classroom and the outside, the heterogenous nature of any academic environment is ignored. Given the attention in composition to the ways that different discourse communities operate within the academy, it seems ironic that composition literature represents the classroom as divorced from the community and as solely one type of space that invariably represents university interests.

Compositionists have attempted to invoke Mary Louise Pratt’s much-used metaphor of the contact zone to tout the value of service learning and its intersections between classrooms and communities. Pratt describes contact zones as spaces where “disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination” (4). Similarly, compositionists invoke service learning projects as spaces where students can enter contact zones of difference, especially for those students who normally wouldn’t venture into such a zone on their own. For instance, Cynthia Cornell Novak and Lorie J. Goodman suggest that “Service learning creates a safe/r contact zone of critical thinking and writing because students focus their energy on processing the new, often baffling experiences they share together rather than prematurely facing-off with each other on a given subject” (67), while Anne Ruggles Gere and Jennifer Sinor describe service learning experiences as spaces for students to “rethink assumptions and negotiate new positions for themselves” (61). For these compositionists, service learning programs can be a site for university students not only to “make a difference” but also to learn about and engage with difference (with difference usually assumed to be the experiences of people of color or those who are socially marginalized in some way).

Using the classroom as a site for students to explore and negotiate difference is not new. Given the changing demographic face of the United States, it’s not surprising that compositionists view the classroom as a site where productive conversations and learning about difference can and should take place. But using the classroom as a space where students physically encounter people who are marked as different and who serve them in some form of partnership is relatively new. As we have both experienced in our own classrooms, service learning experiences constitute rich and productive contact zones that students might not normally experience. What we both wonder about, however, is the absence of discussion about how these contact zones are encountered and experienced by the *community members* with whom students are in contact. While Pratt explicitly examines the politics of self-representation enacted by participants in terms of “copresence, interaction, [and] interlocking understandings and practices” (7), most discussions of service learning within composition focus primarily on students’ experiences within these zones. Apart

from Linda Flower, who argues that community literacy programs “must also confront some philosophical and social tensions within the enterprise itself and within the relationships it builds not only between organizations but between college writers and community contacts, between tutors and students” (96), few compositionists seem interested in representing the voices of community members who participate in these projects or discussing more fully the ethical issues and obligations that these projects sometimes raise. In this regard, we share concerns with Lorie Goodman, who argues that current conceptions of service learning in composition “have less to do with the well-being of those ‘served’ and much more to do with educational outcomes in those ‘serving’” (60).

Given the audience for composition scholarship, it’s not surprising that most discussions of service learning focus on what students learn through their service learning projects and issues that teachers face in conceptualizing and implementing their pedagogical goals. For instance, Bruce Herzberg’s often-cited essay “Community Service and Critical Teaching,” focuses on how students in his composition course (which was paired with an introductory sociology course) studied literacy and schooling issues prior to working as adult literacy tutors at a community shelter and the ways that their consciousness about the social forces shaping literacy changed over time. But there is not much mention in this essay of how the adults at the Pine Street Inn interpreted or benefitted from the experience. The only reference to the community members’ participation occurs in a single paragraph:

The tutoring, as best we could imagine, appeared to be productive for the learners at the shelter. In many ways, the best help that tutors can provide in such a setting is to come regularly and respond sensitively to the learners’ concerns. The learners are coming to the literacy program at the end of what is typically a long series of personal and social failures, and though they expect—and often demand—a school-like experience again, the tutors are there to humanize it as much as they can. (65)

We do not mean to quibble with the value of Herzberg’s description of his students’ experiences. We find this essay’s commentary about the difficulty of engaging students with the social forces at work in people’s literacy practices to be important for our own thinking about how a service learning project within a composition course might look. But we are struck by the absence of the community in this text, the ways that the voices of the Pine Street Inn literacy learners are erased. The discourse of composition in general emphasizes how students benefit from service learning—usually in terms of how their belief systems change or the ways that their writing changes—but there is not much discussion of what community members learn from these encounters. Do they continue their lives unchanged? If not, how do they articulate the benefits? Why are their voices not represented alongside our students’ voices? Who discusses with community mem-

bers, as teachers discuss with students in the safety of their classrooms, what they learned from a particular day’s experience or how to process several months of conflicting experiences? Shouldn’t service learning projects be productive contact zones for community members as well? And what is the result of their entering such zones? Are they ever given opportunities to determine the extent to which their “difference” is used, and perhaps exploited, by students and teachers?

The issue of composing and the types of reflection that students are encouraged to engage in with respect to service learning might also be more fully considered. We are concerned with the ethics of representation involved in students composing and sharing their community experiences—and thereby composing representations of community members who often have no say or voice in what these representations are or for what end they are used. What are the ethical issues involved for how students represent community members in their texts, and what opportunities do community members have to speak back to these representations (or should they even have such opportunities)?

These questions emerged for us when we developed service learning components for two classes that we teach: in Amy’s senior and graduate-level course Literacy and Community Issues and in Kevin’s first-year composition course Composition and Community Inquiry. We wish to discuss some of the issues that emerged from these courses with respect to the representation of community members and the reciprocal benefits that they did, or did not, receive from these service learning projects. We believe that these issues are important for compositionists to consider as they develop classroom service learning ‘components. In particular, we believe that the discipline of composition needs to consider the implications of the absence of community voices within its literature regarding service learning.

Both of the projects we describe involved literacy tutoring partnerships. In Kevin’s course, first-year students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln participated as writing partners with fifth-graders at a local elementary school. In Amy’s course, UNL undergraduate and graduate students developed their own literacy projects, but here she examines one group who worked in a tutoring program for elementary students. As Anne Gere and Aaron Schutz discuss in their *College English* essay “Service Learning and English Studies: Rethinking ‘Public Service,’” literacy tutoring is often a vexed activity for service learning participants. Gere and Schutz critique the tutoring relationship as a space where university students can productively study and theorize literacy practices—a critique which we find useful. But in describing our students’ experiences, we wish to move beyond critique of the tutoring relationship itself to consider some of the larger issues of representation and reciprocity involving community members.

Reciprocity: Creating Forums for Dialogue

In the fall of 1997, Amy taught Literacy and Community Issues, a new course designed to introduce students to various theories of literacy and the relationships

between communities and peopled literacies. As part of the course, students were asked to participate in a literacy service learning project at least one hour per week (they could receive more credit hours depending upon the number of hours that they committed to each week). Students either designed their own projects based on their interests or they selected programs that were already ongoing at various community agencies. Overall these students' projects were diverse: one designed a web page for a local literacy program; one designed a brochure for a pediatric clinic where she already volunteered, two tutored ESL students; one worked with a women's refugee literacy program; one set up an after-school reading program; and still another designed an employee handbook for his workplace. For the most part, students were genuinely engaged with and committed to their projects and found the class readings and discussions important and useful in theorizing their service learning experiences. However, the relationship between students and community members was not always so positive and unproblematic. One project involved three white students who chose to tutor in an Americorps-funded, after-school program at a local African American community center. These students' written and oral comments about their experiences raised important questions for Amy about the role of reciprocity and dialogue within service learning projects and the ethical obligations she has as a teacher for how community members are represented in her students' work.

Amy selected this program as a possible project for her students because the center had recently received nationally distributed Americorps funds to develop an after-school tutoring program, and the new director of this program was desperate for volunteers. Three of Amy's students chose to participate in this program because they were interested in its goals and its after-school format fit their schedules. Each week the students worked in the gymnasium of the center helping children ranging from kindergarten to sixth grade with their homework. After several visits to the center during the first weeks of class, these three students began to express frustration with their placements. In general, their complaints focused on two issues: 1) their sense of a lack of organization for the tutoring program, with no orientation and few guidelines provided by the director for how to help students in a systematic way; and 2) their sense that their work wasn't valued by the "regular" volunteers at the center, volunteers who were predominantly African American and who were working long-term at the center. In particular, Amy's three students said that they were viewed as "drop-in university tourists" who did not care about the welfare of the children as much as the regular volunteers.

In one sense, these students' experiences provided rich fodder for the metaphor of the contact zone with respect to service learning experiences. Since an important component of Amy's course was examining the relationships between literacy and communities—particularly in terms of race and privilege—this particular project seemed especially relevant. And when Amy's class discussed the politics of entering into and attempting to "serve" communities that are not one's own,

these three students were able to talk about the politics of entering the Center and the ways that they had to prove their commitment, not only to the students' learning but also to the larger philosophy of the center itself: providing a safe and nurturing space for African American community members who are clearly outnumbered and disenfranchised within the larger city (less than 3% of the population). These students' experiences cycled back into the course in ways that connected with the academic topics that the class was discussing about the politics of literacy. For instance, when the class read David Schaafsma's *Eating on the Street*, a study of a summer literacy program for urban youth in Detroit, these three students made explicit connections between their experiences and issues that teachers in Schaafsma's book faced. The students did seem to understand why they were treated, in their eyes, so poorly, even as they attempted to respond to the director's request for help. The students' reading of their experiences highlighted how "the community" of this particular center was not monolithic: the Americorps leader's agenda was to find a set number of tutors to help the program succeed; the regular volunteers were more interested in providing a social and cultural environment that supported the Center's goals than in helping children complete homework; and the children's main motivation to participate in the tutoring was the reward of recreational activities that followed. When Amy's students discussed their experiences in class, they were conscious of how each of these group's agendas shaped their notions of what their roles at the Center could be. In this respect, Amy's students seemed to understand one of the underpinning assumptions of the course: the importance of cultural context to literacy work.

Yet, as Amy read these students' journals, she observed that these same three students seemed to go to great lengths to defer or ignore issues of race in analyzing their experiences. In their writing, these students tended to focus on their desire to "avoid the race thing" so that they could "just help the children." Despite the course readings and discussions, these students continued to assert that race shouldn't matter, either in conceptualizing how they might approach the children individually or in interpreting their overall experiences at the Center. The lengths to which students sought to defer interpreting their experiences through this lens came to the fore in their final project, in which two of these students decided to co-author a memo suggesting how the director of the program could improve the experiences of outside volunteers, with pragmatic tips on keeping regular volunteer times, organizing an orientation session, and notifying tutors if the day's events were canceled. In presenting their text to the rest of the class, these two students said that although they didn't want to "sound like big-time college students," their final project was an attempt to problem-solve and provide meaningful suggestions to the director on how the program might be improved.

As a textual representation of their experiences, this memo illustrates how the students attempted to sidestep the role that race played in their conflicts with the full-time volunteers, thereby displacing the role of community context that Amy

viewed as a key focus of the course. In a sense, the same issues of white privilege represented in the students' negotiations as volunteers became replicated in the text of their final project. The first two paragraphs of this memo illustrate these students' attempt to describe the conflict they faced without contextualizing it in terms of race:

The [Carver] Center is a place where the children in the neighborhood go to work and play with their friends. The center is also a place where children can get love, support, and guidance from the people in their neighborhood who want them to succeed.

The other group of volunteers seem to make a full time commitment to the center. Most of these people appear to be part of the community. We have speculated that these volunteers are there because they want to help out the children in the community. They could be friends, family, or neighbors, but we feel that they have a *demographic tie* to the center which leaves them with a *sense of ownership*, (my emphasis)

Within these paragraphs, the students' descriptions of the Center do not name racial identity as part of its mission, except for in coded references such as "their neighborhood" and "demographic tie." Such a context-free analysis allows the students to interpret their experiences in terms of interpersonal conflict rather than racial tension:

We believe that we are made to feel unwelcome at the center because of the full-time volunteers. From the first day we arrived at the Carver Center the full-time volunteers have not been helpful or friendly. Many of the volunteers have been rude and seem to resent us for being there. For example, we have asked questions and introduced ourselves to full-time volunteers only to be ignored and brushed off.

Amy was particularly surprised by this paragraph because during class discussions these students had noted most of the conflict between the volunteers was rooted in the fact that all of the university volunteers were white while all of the regular volunteers were African American. Yet, in this passage, no mention is made of race. There is no attempt by the students to theorize why the full-time volunteers might resent their presence. Their uncomfortableness with addressing race as a possible source of conflict is illustrated further when they discuss how the conflicts between volunteers might have an impact on the children being tutored: "It is difficult to want to go to the center to tutor the children because we feel unwanted and sometimes not even like we are needed. This also makes for a difficult learning environment for the children in the program because there are so many issues that surround them which they need not be involved with." Interestingly, Amy's students view race as an issue that the children should not be concerned with, despite the fact that the children are also African American and, as illustrated in these stu-

dents' own journals, were highly conscious of the differences between the tutors and themselves in terms of race. For instance, in describing the first day of his tutoring experience, one student wrote that the third-grader with whom he was working asked him, "Are you a racist?" Despite these experiences and the discussions and readings about relationships between literacy and race, though, Amy's students' were unable or unwilling to name in writing the role of race as it affected their participation in this service learning project.

As Amy reflected upon the issues of representation raised by her students' memo, she also wondered about the ways that the regular volunteers at the Center were not privy to the conversations that took place throughout the semester and thus were not given a space to process and understand their frustrations or to engage in discussions about the role of the university students at the Center. While the director was happy to have the volunteers, it was clear that the regular volunteers were less than enthusiastic about their presence, yet there was no forum for discussing such possible conflicts or for speaking back to how they were being represented orally and textually by Amy's students. Certainly such dialogue would have complicated Amy's students' representations and understandings of their experiences. Such a forum might also have given regular volunteers a means for critiquing the tutoring program and revising it in light of what they consider the needs of the children to be. Amy's students' experiences highlighted the complex ethical issues regarding representation and reciprocity that service learning projects often raise.

Reciprocity: Beyond Audience and Artifact

The experience of Kevin's students with service learning projects differed from traditional service learning projects in their approach as well as the manner in which they evolved. Students in Kevin's first-year composition course volunteered one hour a week as writing partners with fifth grade students at Lincoln Elementary School, a public school located in a diverse downtown neighborhood, to do community inquiry writing projects. The idea for the writing partnerships emerged initially from a recognition of the potential educational opportunities for both the elementary and university participants. In contrast to many service learning projects in which a member of the university community seeks out a target area or agency within a local community, Kevin first met the fifth grade teachers, Tom and Tami, when he was team-teaching a summer session of the Nebraska Writing Project, a five-week writing workshop for K-12 teachers modeled on the National Writing Project. During the Nebraska Writing Project, Kevin, Tom, and Tami realized that they shared many of the same interests in their approaches to using writing in their classes—especially the valuing of students' writing about their communities. The writing partnerships between the UNL and Lincoln students developed as a result of their discussions and the relationships built upon their experiences during that summer session. Rather than asking university students to tutor or study a student as literacy learner, Kevin, Tom, and Tami approached the writing partnerships as a shared inquiry that could benefit each instructors' thinking

about the teaching of writing as well as the learning of the students at UNL and Lincoln. Many service-learning coordinators do not have the luxury of building upon these shared backgrounds, resources, and perspectives, but because all of the instructors were committed to the project and convinced of its worth, they were able to provide learning opportunities in which all of the students' voices were heard.

During their initial meetings at the elementary school, the one-to-one writing partners brainstormed sites in the surrounding community that they wanted to investigate. The partners then researched and observed their sites, interviewed "experts" at those sites, and wrote about their experiences before presenting their findings either to their classmates or other suitable audiences. While not engaged as "writing tutors" for the fifth graders, a relationship typical in many service learning settings, Kevin's students were gaining insight into literacy and community issues while writing with their partners. Rather than confining the university and elementary students within traditional tutor-tutee roles, the writing partnerships required critical reflection on their experiences from both participants in the partnerships. While Kevin's university students recorded their observations in weekly literacy journals and discussed their projects in class, Tom and Tami conferenced with their students each week about their experiences with their writing partners. The Lincoln students reported to Tom and Tami about what they had discussed and written with their writing partners each day; after their conference, the students wrote goals and plans for their next meeting in their field notebooks. By conferencing with their students and asking them how working and writing with a university writing partner had affected the writing they had done and how their thinking about that writing had changed, Tom and Tami ensured that the Lincoln students experienced almost as much (if not more) critical reflection about their experiences as Kevin's students did.

When the writing partners interviewed members of the community, Tom and Tami made efforts to invite those members to class presentations and celebrations, allowing them opportunities to see how their interactions, experiences, and interviews were applied to the classrooms and to the students' lives outside the classroom. Tom and Tami's attention to their students' learning enabled those members of a service learning project who are typically seen as "being served" to have a voice, to share equally in the dialogue concerning and shaping the scope of the writing partnerships. Schutz and Gere note that university students and their tutees frequently fail to become equal participants in their relationships. The fact that the Lincoln students were investigating their own community, coupled with the fact that the one-to-one partnerships were not constructed as tutor-tutee relationships, enabled each elementary and university partner to provide a different form of expert knowledge. While some form of hierarchy cannot be avoided because of the age differences, the "partner" relationships created a space for more honest dialogue between individual writers. Admittedly, the placement of the writing part-

nerships within the educational setting of the elementary school enabled and fostered this focused attention to learning on the part of all the participants. Service learning advocates within community agencies and civic centers may not have the training, time, or resources to dedicate to each participant's voice—or even the confidence to assert the significance of those voices.

Even with this focused attention to the community perspective, many of the writing partnerships interviewed people who never saw the result of the writing based on those interviews. Many of the members of the more public community sites, such as volunteers at the local soup kitchen, may have been accustomed to groups of students touring the building on a one-time basis. Other community members simply trusted the students who interviewed them because they, too, were members of that community. When Rebecca, one of the Lincoln students, interviewed her aunt, a Native American beadwork artist and educator, about beading and its relation to her culture, her aunt appeared pleased to have her interview videotaped and presented along with Rebecca's writing about the interview to the class. Rebecca's aunt was comfortable in this instance that her voice had been heard and would be presented accurately by her niece. Yet for many of the people interviewed, there was not the same level of reciprocity, the understanding of how the writing the students did about them "fit" into their sense of the community. In several instances, community members at the soup kitchen, officials at the university athletic facilities, and community activists were not contacted beyond more than a follow-up interview or perhaps a thank-you note, leaving them unaware of what had been done with the information provided or how they had been represented to other audiences.

For Kevin, this absence of a focused follow-up illustrated that even when the needs of one community—or even several communities—are being addressed, there are frequently members of intersecting and related communities whose reflection is not being recognized or appreciated. Even as Kevin attempted to address reciprocity in terms of the immediate participants, the circles of intersecting communities continued to spiral outward to include a growing number of contributors. Kevin became even more aware of this spiraling outward after reading his students' writing about their community inquiries. While Kevin was fascinated by the voices of his students and their writing partners, he noticed the absence of any other community voices within that community writing and wondered how that absence limited the representation of the sites. For example, one writing pair decided to write about a soup kitchen located in the community. During the first few weeks, Julie, the university student, and Catherine, her writing partner, did some prewriting about their expectations. They also generated questions each wanted to answer during their research at the site. Alisha, another student at Lincoln who had eaten at the soup kitchen with her family, helped them in their thinking and prewriting about the upcoming field trip by describing her experiences and what she knew about the organization running the kitchen. After their research at the

site, Julie and Catherine both wrote about their experiences. Kevin noticed that both Julie and Catherine's writings focused more on their voices of individual response to the kitchen than the voices of the people they had encountered at the site. Although she visited the site with Julie and Catherine, Alisha chose not to write with them about her visit, this time in the role of student and community researcher, and thus her voice, which would have been powerful and striking, was lost. Kevin could not help but wonder how Alisha's voice would have complicated both Julie and Catherine's writing and thinking about their experiences. How would foregrounding the voices from the soup kitchen have affected their conception of their experiences? And how does the meaning and significance of their community inquiry shift with the omission of all those voices? The absence of their voices and perspectives from the dialogue reveals the challenges of ever addressing reciprocity fully in any service learning environment. Do we imagine reciprocity as community members merely becoming audience members or artifacts for students' presentations? Can we ever accurately represent the experiences of every service-learning participant?

Incorporating Community Perspectives into the Curriculum

In a response to Lorie Goodman's review of *Writing the Community*, Thomas Deans argues that compositionists need to adopt a pragmatic orientation moving from experience to theory: "Service-learning advocates need to spend just as much time researching the consequences of community-based projects in action as we do explicating our first principles" (125). This essay is our attempt to build theory about service learning in composition from our own experiences. In particular, our experiences have spurred us to ask, "How might composition teachers provide a space for listening to and learning from community members' voices within service-learning initiatives?" and "How might composition literature encompass more fully different participants' experiences in service learning projects in ways that help build and inform composition theory?" Because the service learning projects we describe took place more than three years ago, it is impossible to recapture the experiences of the community members who were involved in them. But the questions and issues that troubled us during these projects have compelled us to think about how we might structure future service learning projects differently.

As Amy prepares to teach Literacy and Community Issues again next spring, she has begun to imagine ways to incorporate community members' perspectives more fully into the curriculum. One model that Amy plans to incorporate is described by Flower as the community problem-solving dialogue (CPSD), a forum in which students and community members convene around an open question with no single answer, a problem with immediate and local impact on the participants' lives. Prior to these dialogues, she also plans to structure assignments that call for students to research the community contexts in which they will be working and including community members' perspectives as part of the reflective writing and

research that students do. In particular, she hopes to focus students' attention explicitly on issues of representation and reciprocity. One possible model for such an assignment emerged from a photographic-essay project that one of her students, Jennifer Gleason, produced in the previous Literacy and Community Issues class. Jennifer's service learning project involved tutoring a nineteen-year-old man, David, who wanted to improve his reading skills so that he could get a community college degree. For her final project of the semester, Jennifer chose to research the literacies used within the Malone community, the Lincoln neighborhood in which David grew up. Jennifer spent several days walking through the community, photographing literacy artifacts (billboards, traffic signs, posters, for rent signs, graffiti, store and church signs, etc.), interviewing community members, and collecting different documents about the community written by the Malone neighborhood organization and the city's Urban Development office. She also reviewed local newspaper articles that described conflicts between residents of the Malone community and the larger city of Lincoln, particularly concerning animosity toward the university, which had purchased large tracts of land in Malone during the sixties for a thoroughfare project that was abandoned, leaving the community literally divided. Jennifer's analysis culminated in a collage of photos and text that illuminated how Malone community members use literacy to represent themselves, to participate in (and sometimes resist) the goals of the larger city of Lincoln, and to combat misperceptions of how others represent them. By focusing explicitly on issues of representation in her analysis, Jennifer gained a larger sense of the issues facing Malone residents as they struggle to gain a voice in city-wide debates, and, as well, a better understanding of the community context in which David participated on a daily basis. While Jennifer's project occurred at the end of the semester, in the future Amy hopes to incorporate similar research projects early in the semester so that students will have a better awareness of the complex contexts in which they are operating. Such projects could also be incorporated into the CPSD forums, with further opportunities for community members to respond to, extend, and complicate the students' understandings and analysis.

Beyond changing the models of service learning projects in which students are engaged, we also believe that compositionists need to attend more carefully to how such projects are represented within composition literature. Compositionists need to become more reflective about how current service learning discourse prioritizes *student* learning and the consequences of these priorities for how we imagine the possible work that such initiatives can accomplish. One possible way to do so is to reframe discussions about service learning in terms of "public intellectual" or "engaged citizen" work. To describe such projects as "community work" and students as being "engaged citizens" might help to reframe the positionalities of students, community members, and teachers involved in such work. Another way to incorporate community voices into the discourse is by encouraging the use of multivoiced texts. We need to include community members' voices in addition to the traditional voices of teachers, researchers, and students. Such a

reconceptualization also requires recognizing the worth of multivoiced texts within composition publications. Not only should there be institutional reward for this type of scholarship equivalent to any form of “scholarly” work, but such scholarship should be recognized as a significant contribution to the discipline’s—and the larger public’s—body of knowledge. Failing to recognize the credibility and value of such multivoiced, collaborative work within our discipline will only ensure the continued reliance upon single-voiced, single-perspective texts that narrowly describe the communities teachers, researchers, and students enter to do service-learning projects.

Of course, professional journals are not the most valued form of reciprocity that can be provided to community members with whom our students work. As Peter Mortensen, Elizabeth Ervin, and Ellen Cushman suggest in their calls for compositionists to be “public intellectuals,” the forms of and audiences for our scholarship must also take into account the needs of community members with whom we work. Mortensen’s discussion of the ethics of representation for public intellectuals applies to the representation of voices within service learning as well: “[A]n ethics of representation should engender respect for that which heretofore has not been assimilated into representation. One unassimilated realm we should take more seriously than we do is that which exists beyond our discipline and outside the academy” (188). Rather than attempt to reach greater numbers of the same audience, we need to address and publish to a greater number of audiences. Cushman reminds us: “[Publishing to a greater number of elite audiences works more to bolster our own positions in academe than it does to widen the scope of our civic duties as intellectuals” (“Public” 330). Elizabeth Ervin’s experiences engaging academic and non-academics in public and private forums cause her to question whether academics really want authentic public discourse or whether we want simply to own and dispense knowledge in a public forum in a form of pseudo-debate. Her experiences with the antagonisms between academics and non-academics in Wilmington, North Carolina, challenge us to consider what kind of discourse and what kind of discussions we desire between participants and larger audiences. Within those dialogues, will we remain scholars and teachers “offering our superior knowledge to the unenlightened” (“Public” 330) as Cushman terms it, or will we imagine ourselves as participants in a more egalitarian discussion?

Failing to recognize the need for a continuing dialogue between all the participants in a service-learning experience, we limit the enormous potential for learning on the part of all the participants in these powerful learning environments. If we are at a crossroads where the academy must be transformed to accomplish the radical possibilities of service learning, as the editors of *Writing the Community* suggest, then how we define and imagine “community” will, in part, determine the direction we take. We hope that this discussion of our experiences, while it appeals specifically to composition scholars, contributes to theory-building within service learning discourses in ways that might eventually foster broader dialogue between all participants in service learning projects.

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