

ABSTRACT

EXPLORING SERVICE WITHIN CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS: A MODEL FOR SERVICE LEARNING IN FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION

by Ashley M. Watson

My thesis describes a research-based analysis of a service learning model I implemented into my first-year composition course. The model addresses three common issues faced by instructors when implementing service learning into first-year composition: (1) the role of “service” may overshadow the department’s objectives for first-year composition classrooms, (2) first-year students are not prepared rhetorically for service learning writing, and (3) service learning in a semester-long course compromises chances for sustainable relationships with the community because the relationship lasts one semester. The model challenged students to interrogate the concept of “service” by participating in service organizations. By using campus organizations instead of direct community partnerships, there was no risk in creating an unsustainable partnership with the community. Further, the service component was less time consuming, allowing sufficient time to reach academic goals. Using student writings and interviews, along with my own experience, my thesis explores the effectiveness of the model.

EXPLORING SERVICE WITHIN CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS:
A MODEL FOR SERVICE LEARNING IN FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION

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CHAPTER ONE

SERVICE LEARNING AND FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION

I would first like to begin with a reflection on my undergraduate experience with service learning and English Studies. In my first-year composition course, the instructor assigned a social issue paper with the freedom to choose any topic of interest. I chose to focus on the digital divide and found that my research ignited a passion in me I had not yet experienced in any prior English courses. I felt my voice had some agency in this debate on computer access. I revised the paper several times, and my work earned overwhelmingly positive responses from classmates and my instructor. Inspired by this experience and feeling passionate about my topic, I founded a campus service organization in my junior-year. Along with a friend of mine, I worked for weeks drafting a constitution and completing paperwork to make Bridging Our Nation's Digital Divide (BONDD) an official campus organization. We were thrilled when we received the official go-ahead from the university, but soon this excitement became frustration.

We were able to recruit members through friendships and academic connections, but found that often these members were there for a superficial purpose: to get a line in their resume. We made several efforts to get BONDD off the ground: computer science majors created a website, our attendance was high, and our promotional materials were well-designed and brightly colored. Our meetings consisted of educational lectures (given by undergraduate members on the digital divide) and ended with brainstorming sessions. The high point of our organization was when we recruited a community partner in Chicago, a public school teacher in need of computers. We received a very large donation (about 10 computers) from someone's father. Unfortunately, the partnership fell through, and for over a year I had a large pile of computers in my home. After three semesters of struggle, hopes, and, ultimately disappointments, my friend and I disbanded BONDD.

The experience has always stayed with me, and I have continually gone over what went wrong. I think there are several reasons why BONDD failed, and in particular why BONDD's efforts to create community partnerships failed. First, the organization (and my friend and I as its leaders) had difficulty recruiting and retaining members who were committed to doing more than just showing up at a meeting. Second, we did not do enough to communicate with our potential community partner, to seek to understand their goals and to co-create goals together—we

approached things, I realize now, very much from a “server”/“served” binary (Flower 96). We did not do enough to alleviate a community group’s hesitation to partner with a brand-new campus organization led by a junior. Third, while BONDD addressed a focused, well-articulated social issue, we were not looking towards possible long-term solutions for improving the community.

Yet despite of or, rather, because of my experiences with BONDD, I sensed the general potential for service and service learning. Now a college composition instructor, I seek to understand service learning more fully. My goals are to develop an effective curricular model for service learning that can work and, importantly, be sustained in one semester, first-year composition courses. I research a model I created and developed within service learning pedagogy to integrate the everyday service practices of students, specifically the campus, student-run organization.

In this thesis I explore my efforts to instruct my first-year composition course using a curricular model for service learning I developed. My students joined a service organization of their choice and spent the semester analyzing the organizations and more generally the idea of “service.” Before elaborating on the elements of my new service learning curriculum, I will examine some relevant scholarship on service learning in composition, and more specifically first-year composition. I will also introduce the strengths of service learning that attracted me to the project, while enumerating some of the dissatisfactions with service learning in first-year composition that motivated my formation of a new pedagogical model.

Service Learning: Some Definitions and an Overview

Service learning initiatives have been flourishing throughout composition programs, and more generally throughout higher education. Service learning differs from other work outside the university in that it is not “volunteerism or community service, nor is it simply an academic internship or field placement” (Deans 2). Learn and Serve America’s National Service-Learning Clearinghouse defines service learning as “a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (“What is Service”). The Office of Community Engagement and Service at my own institution, Miami University, defines service learning as “an experimental pedagogical practice that uses action and reflection to meet needs

and enhance learning through mutually beneficial, reciprocal partnerships” (Office of Community 2).

The name “service learning” itself is up for critique, as expressed in the influential collection *Writing the Community*: “Some practitioners object to the term ‘service,’ because they feel that it locates service-learning in a tradition of philanthropy in which ‘superior classes’ magnanimously render service to their ‘inferiors’” (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters 8). Paula Mathieu argues that service learning is problematic because it functions in top-down models, which “originate inside the university first and then seek out community sites of service. This runs the risk of framing local communities as generic sites of need, eager to benefit from university largess” (90). Linda Flower also makes a strategic move away from the term service learning because it perpetuates roles of “servicer” and “served,” rather than working together as partners in inquiry (96). Despite these noted problems with the term service learning, I continue with this terminology because it is hard to ignore the encouraging reports from the field of service learning (Deans 2). As a new scholar in service learning, I hope to learn more about this pedagogical initiative; before seeking other possible terms to define it, I feel it is more productive for me to immerse myself in the scholarship of service learning. More importantly the organizations define their partnerships with the community as “service.” When navigating the Office for Student Activities and Leadership’s website (Miami University) one can find the organizations my students participated in under a “service” link. Essentially my students would be participating in a tradition termed “service.” Even though I may name my future partnerships I facilitate between classroom and community by a different name, I was utilizing the organization’s space—a space built upon the idea of “service.”

In their article “Service Learning and English Studies: Rethinking ‘Public’ Service” (1998), Aaron Schutz and Anne Ruggles Gere briefly mark the origins of service learning. Schutz and Gere write, “Fueled by renewed calls for volunteerism within the larger culture as well as increased interest in experimental learning, service learning has flourished on some campuses” (129). The origin of service learning is attributed to student- and faculty-sponsored “volunteerism” and a variety of disciplines outside, yet associated with English Studies (a “newcomer” to service learning): education, social work, sociology, and psychology. Service learning has certainly flourished in composition, in what Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Anne Watters call a “microevolution.” A number of schools have implemented service

learning and have reported “radical transformations of their experiences and understanding of education and its relation to communities outside of campus” (1). Although, as the editors write, “we also have to call it a ‘micro’evolution [...] because despite the growth and success of service-learning in the Composition discipline, a great number of composition instructors know little about it” (1). To allow such a “microevolution” to evolve successfully, composition instructors need to read current service learning scholarship and contribute to it their own experiences teaching it. I hope my study can contribute to such an evolution, because as scholarship has shown us, service learning can help meet and expand the goals of composition courses.

Service learning “combines community work with classroom instruction” in a way that emphasizes “reflection as well as action” (Schutz and Gere 129). These combinations differ course to course and instructor to instructor, but most often the students create documents (such as promotional materials or organizations’ histories) or provide services (such as tutoring) to the university’s surrounding community. Contact with the community fosters opportunities for dialogue, which in turn allows students to develop critical consciousness and an opportunity to enhance their rhetorical skills through work with actual public audiences. In the introduction to *Writing the Community*, the editors open with several arguments for service learning, one of which is that “The kind of written record produced in service-learning courses, with its concomitant reflection and analysis, can help to move the school and the surrounding community toward a greater consciousness of their connected places in larger social systems” (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters 5). Although some scholarship finds service learning initiatives doing the opposite, proponents argue that service learning still “can increase students’ conception of the social far more effectively than either textbooks or experience alone” (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters 5). Service learning differs from volunteerism in the fact that it fosters the development of rhetorical, composing, and critical thinking skills. Service learning opportunities provide students contact with real-world, public audiences. Further, these public audiences expect a service in return, thus students’ writing has more at stake than a grade. Students are in direct contact with real audiences, making in-depth audience analysis necessary and more challenging. Overall, students are held more accountable for their work and see how their writing can promote change in their lives in and outside the academy.

Service Learning in First-Year Composition

Gregory Jay defines service learning “as an educational assignment which students meet the academic learning goals of the course through the experience of working on behalf of others” (255). I work with this definition throughout my work because it is service learning at its simplest. As I address in this section, service learning is difficult, but becomes even more complicated when incorporated into a one-semester first-year composition course. The main question motivating my research is: Can service learning be successful in first-year composition classrooms? Much of the scholarship on service learning focuses on upper-division courses, so in my discussion I will be drawing from that research as well as research focused specifically on service learning in first-year composition.

What scholarship on service learning has shown is that there are a number of problematic issues that arise, including the difficulty of developing students’ critical and reflective inquiry (or lack thereof) when engaged in service learning, the difficulty in intertwining successfully the goals of service learning with other goals in composition (particularly teaching academic writing), and the difficulty of sustaining community partnerships.

Reflection and Critical Inquiry

The beneficial goals of reflection and critical inquiry in service learning curricula are largely associated with the work of Paulo Freire, particularly his pairing of action and reflection. Moving beyond John Dewey’s call for civic participation, Freire works towards a radical critique, “critical consciousness,” and “praxis” (Deans 39). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire writes “Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed—even in part—the other immediately suffers” (75). Deans notes that Freire paired reflection and action because “the sacrifice of action leads to verbalism, vacant words; the sacrifice of reflection leads to activism, uncritical behavior” (41). Freire argues that the only effective social change in the world must be fostered in dialogue between all people, which cannot truly happen without critical thinking: “thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and men and admits of no dichotomy between them—thinking which perceived reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity” (Freire 81). Classrooms cannot simulate critical thinking, because students need to make contact with the world beyond the academy in an effort to foster a dialogue between all people. Deans

further reiterates this point when answering Freire’s call, arguing that “service-learning more immediately casts students as writers and social agents, thus ushering into practice the ‘action-reflection-action’ dynamic celebrated by Freire” (Deans 45).

Reflection allows students to recall and return to experiences with the community in an effort to enlighten their experiences, but also provide the instructor an idea of what work the students did and how they responded to it.¹ Service learning reflections can become valuable resources for student projects, by providing a fresh perspective on social issues. Unfortunately, and in too many cases, reflection works as proof of participation. Scholars, such as Bruce Herzberg and Chris Anson explore alternatives for reflection in effort to encourage critical thinking.

In his groundbreaking article, “Community Service and Critical Teaching,” Bruce Herzberg asserts that reflection can be enlightened when paired with course readings, such as Mike Rose’s *Lives on the Boundary*. In his article, Herzberg shares his experiences teaching a two-semester service learning composition course, which placed sociology students in their community as writing tutors for adults. Herzberg hoped to fix several problems he saw with the traditional sense of “reflection.” Reflection tended to be too “personal:”

Students report that their fears and prejudices diminish or disappear, that they are moved by the experience of helping others, and that they feel a commitment to help more. This is a remarkable accomplishment, to be sure. But it is important to note that these responses tend, quite naturally, to be personal, to report perceptions and emotions. This is where my deepest questions about service learning lie. (308)

Although service learning introduces students to the community, “questions about social structures, ideology, and social justice” are not raised by service alone (Herzberg 309). Although service introduces students to the social structures outside the classroom, reading pushes students to critique why such social structures exist—to find the source—moving from pure emotions to possible solutions. Herzberg writes, “Students will not critically question a world that seems natural, inevitable, given; instead, they will strategize about their position within it. Developing a social imagination makes it possible not only to question and analyze the world, but also to

¹I focus on student reflections in this section, but reflections can also be written by community partners and instructors.

imagine transforming it” (317). There are more ways of incorporating academic practices into student reflection, also.

Chris Anson in “On Reflection” agrees with Herzberg in that instructors need to reexamine the roles of journals in service learning courses. He argues that the tradition of journals fall into three categories, “sometimes tacitly”: (1) the *expressivist* tradition that emphasizes the expression of individuals in which journals “exist for their own sake,” (2) the *scientific observation log* with an “emphasis on associative, exploratory writing” that involves “jotting down empirical data from close observation,” and (3) *prewriting* journals that serve as “rehearsals for refined writing,” with an emphasis on a final product (170). In courses these traditions can blend together or students may have different ideas of what a journal actually is. As instructors we need to start “describing the characteristics of successful reflection in students’ writings” (170). Although he cannot pinpoint an easy definition of effective reflection, Anson concludes:

To some extent the concept of change requires that students conceive of their journal writings not as a place for idle contemplation or the passive recording of feelings, moods, or new experiences but as a place to actively explore difficult problems in which they, as members of their culture and community, may be implicated, if only by their inaction. (172)

By utilizing readings to create “frames” for student reflections and developing “more strategic critically reflective ways to *respond* to students’ writing,” students will be held accountable for what they write (175). If they are challenged by readings and instructors, their contemplations will not remain idle, but will continue throughout the course. As Anson and Herzberg argue, service learning reflections are enhanced by critical readings, classroom discussions, and teacher response. Enhancing reflections can in turn enhance other assignments. Reflections, in an effort to incorporate academic goals with service, can serve as content for research papers or projects on particular social issues their community may face. Though this relationship between academic and service goals sounds great in theory, it is difficult to implement it in a practical sense, as my next section suggests. When designing my own model I was concerned students would not effectively reach the goals of reflection Herzberg and Anson have laid out. My course was only one semester and I had other goals required by the first-year composition program at Miami

University, issues not so uncommon in service learning initiatives. Reflection, especially in my case, is useful in assessing the effectiveness of the course in promoting critical thinking.

Enhancing Writing and Reaching Academic Goals

In addition to helping meet goals of reflection and critical thinking, service learning has been used to meet college composition course goals, particularly rhetorical goals of writing for “real” and public audiences. The English 111: College Composition course at Miami University, the course in which I integrated service learning, dedicates an entire sequence to public discourse. Unfortunately, as much as we can create public writing opportunities in the classroom, without a real public audience expecting deliverables, such opportunities are just simulations. In their seminal work *Audience Expectations and Teacher Demands*, Robert Brooke and John Hendricks explore the contradictions in assigning students to write for audiences other than the teacher, when both the teacher and students know that the teacher is actually the one assessing the writing. Brooke and Hendricks write, “As writing teachers, we need to help students come to understand ‘writing for an audience’ if we are to help them become better writers. But, as teachers and students, we all interact in an institutional setting that may work against any direct application or understanding of this idea” (xviii). Although service learning initiatives in the first-year composition classroom cannot eliminate the instructor and the grade, the addition of a community stakeholder who will actually benefit from the students’ product adds more challenging demands. Further, instructors can work with community partners to assess students’ work. While service learning creates challenging opportunities to work with real-world audiences in order to enhance composition’s work to create public intellectuals, service learning does require more time.

In “Sustaining Service Learning Programs,” Ellen Cushman calls for increased professor participation via teacher-researcher for service learning pedagogy to flourish in composition studies. Cushman is skeptical, though, that service learning can be successful in first-year composition (which may be why she uses “professor” rather than “instructor” or “teacher”). In her section “Service Learning curricula: task integration,” Cushman argues that effective task integration can help reach the goals of composition course. She sees four factors hindering effective task integration: lack of connection among tasks, unreasonably demanding tasks, appropriateness of tasks, and empty tasks. When explaining the issue of appropriateness of tasks,

she notes that service learning detours composition instructors from the course's intended lessons in developmental issues. In this case, first-year composition may be too much for first-year composition courses to handle:

Unless students can self-select into these courses, I remain unconvinced that the first-year writing course is the place to develop sustainable service-learning initiatives. The culture shock that students encounter upon entering the university should not be yoked to the culture shock they often encounter when entering community sites. The disorientation first-year students experience makes the learning situation difficult as it is and should not be compounded by first-year writing courses requiring service. (Cushman 49)

Even with self-selection, though, I believe there are still difficulties in intertwining service with a key goal in first-year composition: preparing students to write for academic audiences. Editors of *Writing the Community* write: “But we also need to help both students and practitioners of service-learning understand that we have some responsibility to help students get through college, as well as operate outside it [...]” (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters 7). In first-year composition, balancing these two goals—operating inside the academy and outside the academy—are complicated further when you have to work in the actual time it takes to complete the service component. What do we compromise when taking time away from course time for service time? As I described in the last section, service experience can enhance academic goals. Students, though, can use service experience as content for academic writing. Students can explore the broader social issues and immerse themselves in public debate through the genre of the argumentative academic paper. Their service not only provides content for such work, but gives more meaning to it. While students and teachers benefit from a relationship with the community, it is the duty of the instructor to make sure the community benefits and is not put at risk for academic goals.

Sustainable and Reciprocal Community Partnerships

Service learning pedagogy adds another stakeholder—the community—and with this comes the risk of severed relationships with the university. What happens to the relationships between community and university when these partnerships end horribly or simply don't work? Is Paula Mathieu correct in saying: “that while much of the recent scholarship in service learning has gained in complexity and sophistication over recent years, it still tends to prioritize student

and institutional needs over community needs” (90). By creating relationships over time with the community partner, the instructor establishes trust with the community. Though, if the relationship is short-lived or unsuccessful we risk creating unsustainable community partnerships.

In *Writing the Community*, the editors assert that “the most immediate effect of service-learning is to rearticulate the college or university as part of rather than opposed to a local community” (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters 4). Though, unsuccessful service learning courses can further the gap between community and university. Oftentimes relationships are cut short due to one-time projects, academic calendars, and instructor relocations. Is this risk worth taking? Paula Mathieu shares in her book *Tactics of Hope* a story about a relationship cut short. She worked with a community newspaper called *Spare Change*. Fran, the director, received a proposed project from a graduate student and advisor from Communications to create a documentary video on the organization. Fran saw this as an opportunity to get something the organization could really use. The project, though, took more time and effort of the organization than proposed. As Mathieu writes, “As of this writing, more than two years after the video was promised to the organization, nothing has arrived. Repeated efforts to contact the student and her advisor have resulted in promises but no video; the student received her master’s thesis but the organization received no film” (103). Pointing out that these things happen too often, Mathieu writes the following in response:

When instructors set up projects that advocate “writing for the community” (Deans), how careful and sure are we that the final work arrives and is assessed by the organization? Once grades are handed in and we move on to the next semester or project, how carefully do we follow up to be sure student work has met a specific need? (103)

Although instructors and students can devote a sufficient amount of time and effort to a project, the academic calendar oftentimes prevents the relationships from continuing. Academic calendars run on a semester or quarter schedule, but the community and their problems are always there. A possible constant is the instructor. Thus, it is the instructor’s duty to make sure these partnerships, if best for the project, are carried on to the next class or passed along (fully) to another eager instructor. Even in this case, new students will be coming, placing more pressure on the instructor to communicate effectively with the community partner. More importantly, instructors can be more successful in creating strong community relationships when

they truly become a stakeholder. Instructors when in the role of researcher create stronger attachments to their work:

Trust. Commitment. Consistency. Professors in service learning initiatives garner trust from community members, at least in part, when they show a consistent presence in the community and an investment in creating knowledge with and for community members. The researcher's consistent presence and—when invited—offers of help, reveal his/her commitment to the community or organization. The researcher's consistency offsets to some degree the high turnover of students in these collaboratives because students typically only show up for some preassigned number of hours over the semester, then they're gone. However, if the researcher contributes, listens, hears, validates findings, and shares writing over the summer, between the semesters, and during the school year, then the community members have the reliable presence of a university representative in whom they can potentially place their trust and with whom they can genuinely collaborate. (Cushman 58)

Further, when the instructor is also a researcher, the students see him/her on site, students see the instructor's dedication to the project. The instructor is a fellow researcher. The students benefit from the knowledge the instructor has gained: effective skills in communicating with the community partner, an understanding of the needs of the community partner, and their own experiences to share with students. What I find interesting in Ellen Cushman's article is that she continually uses the word "professor" instead of "instructor." In my case, I wonder if graduate students should be facilitating service learning courses. In most cases, this would be a first-year composition course. Graduate students, especially master's students, will at some point *leave* the university—risking a split from community partners. I am not saying Cushman intended this with the use of "professor," but the graduate student instructor as service learning facilitator puts at risk community partnerships since they are not a permanent fixture of the university. As a master's student, I created the service learning curricular model, as I introduce in the next chapter, with this issue at the forefront.

CHAPTER TWO

A MODEL FOR SERVICE LEARNING IN FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION

In this chapter, I will present the model I developed to address issues associated with service learning in first-year composition classrooms. In his work *Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning in Composition*, Thomas Deans writes, “A dizzying range of courses and programs march under the banner of service-learning. Just as approaches to teaching composition vary widely, so do the ways that teachers combine writing instruction and community action through service-learning” (15). I will explain the three popular models in service learning as outlined by Deans along with an additional model created by Deans that inspired the creation of a new curricular model. Finally I outline my model, with attention to contextual considerations: the English department’s and Miami University’s goals for first-year composition.

Three Models for Service Learning

The three models that Deans outlines are writing-*for*-the-community, writing-*about*-the-community, and writing-*with*-the-community. Each model differs in their primary sites, privileged literacies, valued discourses, learning relationships, institutional relationships, goals, and assessment.

Writing for the Community

Writing-for-the-community models most commonly promote writing as service, often for the time span of one project or a semester-long community partnership. This course model is popular in higher-level English courses that prepare students to write in their field. The community partner often serves as a real-world “client” for a career-oriented project (e.g., building a web site, preparing public relations materials). When describing this model, as he does throughout the book, Deans describes both his own experience teaching the models and his observation of others’ use of the models in their own courses. As an example of writing for the community, Deans provides an example from Laurie Gullion’s junior-year, writing-across-the-curriculum course Writing in Sports Management at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst (1996).

Gullion’s leading objective of the course was to make sure “students have an exposure to a real client relationship where they’re tailoring their writing to an exceedingly clear audience”

(Deans 59). The course assigned students unfamiliar, non-academic projects for a community agency, projects such as brochures, grant applications, etc. The audience of these projects was the community, but each student kept a writing log, created proposals and memos, and gave an oral presentation at the end of the semester for Gullion as the instructor. Thus, the course required that students move between academic and workplace environments and literacies. This movement is difficult, since students are often grounded in purely *academic* writing by their prior educational experiences. Deans believes such a course can bring “the ‘real world’ squarely into contact with the academic world, foregrounding their contrasts and opening the door for metadiscourses on the differences between academic and nonacademic writing processes, and on the movement between school and workplace literacies” (60).

Brevity of a projects' duration is an issue in most service learning initiatives, and writing-for-the-community models are not an exception. Often, these partnerships span one semester or only one project, which is often not enough time for students to fully familiarize themselves with an unfamiliar discourse community. In an attempt to address the time issue, service learning instructors often choose projects that require less background knowledge and rhetorical sophistication (62). However, Deans suggests that instructors should embrace student confusion as a “productive starting point for learning” (62). These moments of confusion create opportunities for fruitful discussion and reflection, opportunities the next model hopes to improve upon.

Writing about the Community

The writing-about-the-community model is designed to “ask students to do community service, then reflect on their community-based experiences in writing” (85). Deans observed Bruce Herzberg’s Bentley College composition course, from which Herzberg's article “Critical Teaching and Community Service” (which I addressed in chapter one) was written. Herzberg’s course was planned around critical analysis: “It includes community service work, emphasizes a rhetoric of cultural critique, and aims for improved academic and critical literacies” (Deans 86). The course was a two-semester “learning community” course; the students took the course along with philosophy in the first semester and sociology in the second.² The first semester developed

² As Deans explains, this course is part of a long-standing tradition in service at Bentley College.

skills in academic discourse across the disciplines. The second semester explored education in America through individual research reports.

Herzberg's course sought to intertwine service and academic writing effectively. Through course readings and discussion Herzberg sought to facilitate critical literacy by "helping learners comprehend the social forces—among them class, gender, race and ideology—that shape both our culture and the lives of individual" (Deans 94). Herzberg assigned readings, such as Mike Rose's *Lives on the Boundary*, with an application of a Neo-Marxist approach perspective, in order to push students beyond a "deeply ingrained belief in individualism" in their analyses of the illiteracies they see in their service tutoring (Herzberg 312). Unlike writing-for-the-community, "these research papers [were] *not* public documents," and instead were "*about* pressing social issues, but written in a rhetoric of academic critique and argument, and intended for an academic audience, primarily the teacher" (Deans 97).

Deans next discusses the notion that service learning is "an *intervention* in the world beyond the academy," an argument for service learning often used by service learning advocates (99). Herzberg's course had students tutor in the community, rather than create writing as service. Deans describes the intervention of Herzberg's course as a "disruption of dominant public discourses" (100). In the "Going Public" assignment (in the second semester) Herzberg asked students to

analyze the various constraints of public discourse. His students [needed] to locate a viable public forum in which to voice their concerns—the editorial page of the paper, a Web site, a radio spot. They [needed] to analyze the opportunities and constraints of such a forum and adjust their rhetorical stances with respect to genre, audiences, ethos, accepted conventions and so on. (101-102)

The project was effective in developing rhetorical strategies for public discourse, but was only *conceptual* as an intervention: "While the assignment [prompted] students to venture outside academic rhetorical territory, what the students [wrote] [remained] hypothetical—an imagined rhetorical performance of an imagined audience" (102).

Herzberg's course is only one example, and Deans uses the remainder of this section to explore other courses using this writing-about-the-community model, particularly in terms of reflection. Some writing-about-the-community models include assigned journals to promote greater opportunities for reflection. Deans points out that such journal writing can lead to

interesting personal narratives. While some instructors prefer expressive personal reflection, and some—such as Herzberg—prefer working beyond “personal,” Dean prefers an interactive or dialogic use of journal writing: “students record and reflect on their community experiences, followed by teacher response and reflection, and continuing back and forth as a structured written dialogue” (103).

Writing with the Community

Deans largely associates the writing-with-the-community model with Linda Flower’s work with the Community Literacy Center (CLC), a partnership between Carnegie Mellon University and the Community House in Pittsburgh. CLC teens work with CMU college mentors “to develop skills in intercultural collaboration, problem-solving, and writing” (110). Deans further describes their collaborative activity as “aimed at addressing pressing community problems by means of oral and written intercultural communication, problem-solving strategies, and rhetorical performance—what CLC researchers gather under the term *literate social action*” (112). They prefer such terms over “service learning.”

Such a model is best for well-established community-university relationships, an experienced instructor, and higher-level students (all necessary). The CLC is a well-established partnership that Ellen Cushman (mentioned in chapter one, whom Deans included as a possible writing-with-the-community proponent) would surely call “sustainable” (113). Deans writes that the CLC is the result of a constellation of forces, which unfortunately, are not often readily available in most university-community pairings: significant commitments of senior university faculty and key community members; a respected community center with which to work; a long-term, stable partnership of two institutions; funding from without (foundation grants) and within (university commitments of personnel and resources); and a companion graduate program to supply a cadre of graduate students who provide able management and research assistance (140).

Flower’s with-model works well because of time. The university and community have already established a trustworthy, reciprocal relationship. This model would not work as a first time attempt to instruct a service learning course in composition. Even when creating his own model, which intertwined the about-and for-model, Deans avoided the with-model.

Deans's Model: Writing for and about the Community

Deans's experience teaching service learning courses inspired him to create a type of hybrid model, which intertwined the for-model and the about-model. "However," he writes, "in referring to generative combinations I do not mean courses that meld multiple pedagogies into one single new amalgam, but instead those that weave distinct but complementary strands of the three paradigms" (147). Deans' initial goal was to introduce students to real-world audiences, much like Gullion's course. While the course was effective in introducing Expository Writing III: Writing and College Community students to nonacademic discourse and providing students motivation in their writing assignments, Deans was concerned students were "overlooking important social and ethical issues attendant on outreach work" (148). Deans reflects:

I feared that while the writing-for service-learning component was a productive rhetorical addition to my course, there was too much sentimental emoting ("I feel good about helping the less fortunate") and not enough critical thought and reflection devoted to the complex ethics of community and service. In other words, my concerns mirrored those of Herzberg [...]. (148)

Though, Deans did not want to unyoke the component of working with workplace literacy altogether: "My own solution has been to keep the writing-for assignments in my syllabus but to limit their scope so that groups of students can complete smaller projects within a few weeks rather than pursue larger projects over an entire course of the semester" (148). When weaving the two paradigms together, Deans warns that they should complement each other rather than complicate things further. Deans further warns: "Particularly in first-year writing courses, instructors who want to include more than one paradigm run the risk of rushing to fit everything in, but doing no single thing well" (148).

Like Herzberg, Deans wanted to incorporate an academic writing project, a research essay on a social concern. In Deans's course, students select research questions which vary based on their majors and personal concerns. Some examples of questions include: "Why doesn't our town have a curbside recycling problem? Do senior citizens get adequate care at long-term care facilities? What strategies do chain stores use to draw business away from small-town retailers?" (150). The students do library research and interview members of the community. Deans has "two ulterior motives: to discover which kinds of social problems are of most concern to the

class [...], and to invite students to get invested in, and more familiar with, their chosen topics” (149).

The second essay Deans develops asks that students recast the essay in a different genre and audience, from academic to public. Deans challenges his students by stating the following in the assignment sheet: “For this assignment you will need to choose a particular audience and genre and then revise your essay as appropriate. You might opt to transform your research essay into a journalistic article or a letter to the editor so that it can reach a wider audience” (151).

Deans finds the project is effective in: (1) teaching audience analysis, (2) practicing revision and editing, (3) building a vocabulary for talking about writing as a social process, and (4) providing a trial run in code switching and genre switching (152). The skills developed during this project help prepare students for the next project.

While this project was concluding, students are assigned groups (based on their personal rankings) and paired with a non-profit organization. The groups will “craft high-quality documents that meet the specific needs of local community agencies” (154). The project also assigns two supplementary deliverables: an agency profile and a project log/dialogic journal. The agency profile introduces students to their agency and develops a better understanding of their audience. Also, as Deans puts it: “[...] one cannot write for an organization until one knows something about that organization” (156). Since students are “nudged into unfamiliar territory,” Deans sees the project as an opportunity for interesting reflection (155). The log/journal provides students an opportunity to reflect on their process, and more importantly their experience working with the agency.

Deans’s model resonates with the goals I had in my own service learning in first-year composition course. His model incorporates service without compromising the academic goals. Deans uses service as content for academic writing. Further, especially by writing *for* the community agency, Deans introduces students to public discourse with a real-world audience. Inspired by Deans’s effective model, I adapted it to another goal I had—to avoid creating an unsustainable relationship with the community.

Inspiration and Considerations for a New Model

When creating my own model, I took into consideration the department's and university's goals for English 111: College Composition. When designing this model I had to take into consideration multiple facets of the first-year composition course: the Miami Plan's goals, the department's goals, and the theme for the course.

The Miami Plan is a core curriculum required for Miami University students, with College Composition being one its foundation courses (part of a required 36 hours). I considered these Miami Plan goals and described them in detail in my own syllabus:

The course follows the Miami Plan (MP), which is described in your *College Composition at Miami* book on page 1. The MP goals of critical thinking, understanding of contexts, engaging with other learners, and reflection leading to informed action are centrally entwined with course goals and pedagogy. You will practice critical thinking as you learn to evaluate arguments and to locate and organize evidence to support your own written arguments. You will learn to understand contexts by studying the rhetorical situation out of which a text arises. You engage with other learners and share different points of view in small group work, class discussion, and peer workshops. Reflection is a key component of each sequence and of the final project, which asks students to reflect on their learning in the course and on their futures as writers.

I also took into consideration the English department's idea for a successful first-year composition course at Miami University: the course outcomes and the theme. The course outcomes are explained in full in the *College Composition at Miami* reader, a publication that collects student writing from the year prior and is required for 111 students. The instructors also receive the outcomes in the *Miami University Teacher's Guide for English 111 & 112*, a handbook distributed to instructors. The Student Learning Outcomes of First-Year Composition (which is adapted from the Writing Program Administration Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition) are separated into two categories: composing skills and rhetorical knowledge. Table 1 delineates these outcomes.

Table 1. College Composition Outcomes at Miami University 2009

Objective Category	Outcomes
<p>Composing Skills:</p> <p>“By the end of the first year, composition students should be able to:”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop flexible strategies for inventing, researching, drafting, getting feedback on, revising, and editing their writing. • Analyze their own and others’ writing effectively. • Collaborate with others to develop writing projects. • Recognize the purpose of assigned writing and discover their own aims in writing. • Choose appropriate conventions of form, structure, voice, tone, and diction and appropriate technologies that assure accessibility to a range of audiences. • Find, evaluate, analyze and synthesize appropriate primary and secondary sources. • Integrate others’ ideas in developing an argumentative thesis. • Practice appropriate and ethical ways of documenting sources. • Refine their style, and gain increased control over surface features such as grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
<p>Rhetorical Knowledge:</p> <p>“By the end of the first year, composition students should understand:”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How particular audiences, genres, and technologies shape reading and writing. • How multi-modal elements of texts (images, sound, design) can have rhetorical effects. • How to choose, critique, and experiment with multi-modal elements, genre, or a mix of genres for a rhetorical purpose. • How to use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating. • How rhetorical, collaborative, social, and technological aspects of writing processes and products overlap. • How language carries the power to shape perceptions and construct knowledge.

I incorporated these outcomes into my own course objectives, which I list in the next section. Along with expected outcomes, 111 course instructors work with a course theme, which in 2009 was “Writing and Place.” The Writing and Place theme is described in detail in the *Teacher’s Guide*:

This year’s theme asks students to examine how place shapes and is shaped by cultures, communities, places and technologies. Students explore topics such as citizenship, memory, language, technology and national and transnational identities. They begin by investigating and documenting a familiar place and reflecting on how that place has shaped them. Through writing as inquiry, students explore how identity is constructed through language, how to negotiate different perspectives, and how to represent themselves to an audience. (Updike 118)

Since my service learning course focused on service on campus and in the community, the concept of “place” was not difficult to incorporate into my own model. My first-year students would become familiar with a new place—Miami University and the surrounding communities—through service learning lenses. The “suggested” structure of the course was also easy to adapt to. The theme is interwoven through five sequences: (1) Ethnographies of Place, (2) Rhetorical and Visual Analyses of Place, (3) Entering Public Discourse, (4) Designing Your Own Project, (5) Reflecting on Your Writing (see table 2). While all these components must be addressed thoroughly, instructors do not need to follow the particular order of sequences, and are even allowed to combine sequences. Below I have explained the goals of each sequence and the proposed project as expressed in our *Teacher’s Guide* (Updike 124). I took these goals into consideration, along with Deans’s hybrid, when developing the new model.

Table 2. Miami University First-Year Composition’s Project Sequences

Sequence	Project
Ethnographies of Place	“Students begin with a field research project—practicing methods of field research such as keeping journals, interviewing, systematic observation and note-taking, capturing significant thick description, and map-making—resulting in a writing project that describes with primary evidence the culture, history, uses, and/or visual layout of a place/space”
Rhetorical and Visual Analyses of Place	“[...] students investigate how both verbal and visual rhetorics work to construct identity and shape public understanding of a place. Students learn to use textual citations, apply rhetorical terms, engage in multiple understandings of text, and compose a rhetorical analysis. Students may write about any of the following: a literal place, a web site, or a film’s or ad’s representation of place/space.”
Entering Public Discourse	“Students develop an idea by engaging in research, negotiate the multiple stake holders in a public issue relating to place, and support their views with well-documented evidence [...] This sequence builds on students’ abilities to analyze and effectively use arguments, to consider audience and purpose, and to incorporate source material into their own texts.”
Designing Your Own Project	“Students learn how to approach open-ended assignments and how to frame and deliver their own critical questions [...] This sequence lends itself to collaborative group projects.”
Reflecting on Your Own Writing	“This sequence encourages students to critically analyze their writing projects across the semester and articulate how they have grown as writers and thinkers.”

Working within this theme, I molded each project to suit the needs of the service learning course. In the next section, I will incorporate these considerations into the making of my own

model. I also considered definitions of service learning and what definitions I wished to work with as I planned my service learning model and curricula.

As described in chapter one, Gregory Jay defines service learning “as an educational assignment which students meet the academic learning goals of the course through the experience of working on behalf of others” (255). The definition chiefly emphasizes two elements: “academic,” firstly, and secondly, the partnership—“working on behalf of others”—which sounds rather uncomplicated and also unbalanced, placing an emphasis on service as a means of achieving academic goals rather than community goals. In order to incorporate service learning into my course, I had to remember that I had an academic obligation to the university and to my students. This meant that the service component and reflections had to buttress, and at times be set aside for, my academic obligation.

Thus, I hoped to address three concerns I found with service learning in first-year composition courses: (1) the role of “service” may overshadow the department’s objectives for first-year composition classrooms including academic writing, (2) first-year composition students are not prepared rhetorically for service learning writing (particularly for completing client-based writing projects), and (3) service learning in a semester-length course compromises chances for sustainable relationships between community and university because the relationship forms and ends within one semester.

To address these three concerns, I adapted Deans’s model described above. What drew me to Deans’s model in the first place was his emphasis on academic discourse, which was a topic that could not and should not be displaced in first-year composition, moving between discourse communities, and reflection. The model I created was inspired by Deans’s, but altered when considering my own class, department, and university. My model differed from Deans’s model in a variety of ways: (1) the type of “agency” or “community partner,” (2) the arrangement and requirements of the projects, and (3) in our own goals (only slightly). Instead of working directly with the community, I used student organizations on campus as vehicles to experience service in a less time-consuming way. I used very similar projects, but instead of doing the Agency Profile later in the semester—because the students would be working with their organization the entire semester—I assigned it as the first project. Lastly, inspired by the theme, I had students critique service in their new place—campus.

As mentioned, the model that I used in my English 111: College Composition course required that students become active participants in campus organizations that emphasize local service. Because the campus organizations have already made connections with community partners, this model was less time consuming than other models, allowing students ample time to still reach the objectives laid out by the English department and Miami University. Further, even when the class ended, the campus organizations remained, reducing the risk of broken relationships between community and the university.

Throughout the semester students participated and critiqued approaches to service. Simply put, the course sought to define and interrogate the concept of “service.” I felt that such an endeavor would be worthwhile, since many of the students would be participating in this type of service initiative otherwise. Instead of creating a partnership for service, I utilized a familiar service situation: collaborative student-run, volunteer work. When the class concluded, I hoped that my students would reevaluate their idea of service, creating meaningful work in their service organizations, whether the ones they participated in during the course or not.

After sending out an email to a number of campus organization that emphasize “service,” I received a number of volunteers. I collected their information, including goals and website URLs, and created a sheet that informed students about each student organization. The students were asked to fill out a sheet, listing their top three choices (in order), along with a few sentences on why this organization would be best for them. Students were free to pick organizations on the sheet, or organizations they had come across that I had missed. While students based their decisions on their future plans, majors, and overall interest, many of my students were athletes and had a tighter schedule than most, so some had to choose simply by what could fit their schedule. Students were divided into groups based on the campus organization in which they were placed. The students would be working collaboratively in these groups for the first project, but for the rest of the semester the group served primarily as a support and feedback system but not for further collaborative writing.

The organizations students participated in varied in the social issues they addressed, their idea of service participation, and goals. The chart (see chart 3) below outlines the organizations the students chose³. As I discuss in the detail in the next chapter, the students found that three

³The students chose from a larger list than what is listed in the chart below. Although the course was two sections, the students from both sections ended up choosing the same organizations to participate in.

popular, reoccurring models appear in campus service organizations. First, the students noticed what we term “the buffet style”: members of the organization do not really have *one* social issue they address or even *one* community partnership, but rather have members pick and choose a variety of service opportunities they come across. Second, there is the model in which the organizations’ service is narrowed down to one particular community issue or partnership. Lastly, one talked about the least, were organizations that focused on personal development (such as leaderships), and included service as an important component to their overall goal. By looking at the chart below, you can begin to see how the organizations split into these three categories. Again, the next chapter addresses the two most prominent categories as well as interesting conversations students had on the effectiveness of each.

Table 3. Campus Organizations

Organization	Description and Service Overview
Adopt A School	Not on the original list, but requested by my students, Adopt A School creates opportunities for college students to volunteer at local schools. Students devote time each week (a minimum of 1 hour) to assist teachers from grade levels K-12, in whatever capacity needed. Further, as specified on the Adopt A School description on the Student Activities and Leadership website, volunteers “have the opportunity to make a difference in the life of a child by interacting with children one-on-one and helping them to achieve their goals in school” (“Adopt A School”).
AIESEC	The AIESEC mission is to “contribute to the development of our countries and their people with an overriding commitment to international understanding and cooperation” (<i>AIESEC Miami</i>). Like Circle K (below) this organization does not necessarily emphasize service alone, but sees service as a crucial component for making a well-rounded member.
Big Brothers/Big Sisters-Butler County	A chapter of a nationally-known organization, Big Brother/Big Sisters of Butler County pairs adults with children in need of a mentor. A separate entity on campus serves as a facilitator between campus and Butler County’s Big Brothers/Big Sisters. The student organization promotes Big Brothers Big Sisters of Butler County’s efforts and recruits mentors for the Butler County chapter. My students had the choice of whether or not they wanted to be a mentor, because this required much more effort than other organizations. Two students chose to be mentors.
Circle K International	Circle K is associated with and sponsored by Kiwanis Club. The organization is “a co-educational service, leadership development, and friendship organization” (“Circle K”). To reach such potential, service is an important component to being a Circle K member.
Cords	Cords is a small organization that promotes service exploration, meaning members volunteered for a variety of projects. Their service projects run along a long spectrum: ranging from painting the community center to helping other organizations with their service initiatives. Members suggest service opportunities, they vote, and if the vote passes they volunteer their time.
First Book	First Book is a relatively new organization to Miami University. First Book provides new books to children in need, which they believe addresses one of the most important factors affecting literacy—access to books.
Green Oxford	Along with environment-based service projects (such as trash pick-up), Green Oxford seeks to educate campus about living “green.” To make members educators in their communities, every meeting involves a presentation about environmental issues.
Optimist Club	Like Cords, Optimist Club seeks a variety of service activities and is not necessarily attached to one particular cause or community partner. The type of service is narrowed to children specifically, for example reading books to local children groups.

Projects and Service Logs

As Deans and others have warned, sometimes the combination of service with the academic goals of first year composition can be too much to handle for the students and instructor. Knowing this, I promised myself to be flexible with the projects. For this reason, the

last two projects (Public Discourse and Reflection) were intertwined since the course was behind on the anticipated schedule. I will describe the effectiveness and issues of these projects and reflections in following chapters using student work and notes from my teacher's log. But before diving into the projects, I wanted to first list the specific course objectives I developed to guide the creation of my projects and reflection (via service logs). These objectives were created after consideration of the course objectives, Miami Plan, and the English 111 theme.

- To explore the meanings, experiences, rhetorics, and varieties of place
- To use writing, reading, and service as a source for inquiry
- To reflect on our roles as students, community members, and service participants and the transitions between such roles
- Also, to challenge the established roles of “served” and “server”
- To reflect on the differences, similarities, and relationships between academic and public discourse
- To examine how we adapt conventions of form, structure, voice, tone, diction and mediums to different audiences
- To examine how organizations function (meetings, constitutions, objectives, etc.)
- To articulate Miami's various definitions and functions of service, and the tensions between these varieties
- To use online repositories (wiki, Blackboard posts, GoogleDocs, etc.) to garner resources, insights, and definitions
- To promote a respectful community of writers where insights can be shared safely
- To refine style, and gain increased control over surface features such as grammar, punctuations, and spelling
- To introduce ourselves to campus resources, technologies, and services

The following projects were developed in an effort to reach these objectives: the Agency Profile, Rhetorical Analysis of a Key Document, the Social Issue paper, and a Reflecting to Different Audiences project.

Project 1: Agency Profile

As I stated in the agency profile sheet I gave to students (see Appendix A), the purpose states: “We can't work well with an organization until we get to know that organization. The purpose of the Agency Profile is to help you better understand the student organization with which you will work; it also will give you experience in collaborative writing and field research.” The students were asked to explore five groups of questions/discussion prompts: (1) more general/description-based questions about the organization, (2) how the organization functions, (3) the future of the organization, (4) the social issue they are addressing, and (5) the students' initial thoughts and concerns via reflection. The students used field notes from

meetings and performed interviews to become both familiar with the organization and with ethnographic practices (as the “Writing and Place” theme intended). Lastly, I hoped the project would get the class groups comfortable with working with each other.

Project 2: Rhetorical Analysis of a Key Document

The 111 course requires that students develop skills in rhetorical analysis. To do so, I had students analyze documents others had created in relation to their organization’s social concern: such as other organizations’ websites, key speeches concerning the issue, opponent’s articles, etc. Class time was used to teach the lessons in rhetoric, including visual rhetoric, as the department’s goals had required. Along with teaching lessons on rhetoric, the students also created repositories within their groups of research on their social issue, research they could use for their next project.

Project 3: Social Issue Paper

The students next wrote an academic argumentative paper addressing an argument associated with their social issue. The audience of this paper would be me, but more generally the teachers they would be writing for in the academy. I hoped for my students to bring in their service work from outside the class into an academic sphere, and be able to talk about it within an academic context. Unlike Deans I assigned this project third, because I was required to assign a rhetorical analysis project. I like to have students see how others use rhetoric, before practicing rhetoric on their own. Below in Figure 1 is a copy of the project assignment sheet.

Project 3: Social Issue Paper (Academic Discourse)

Length: 5-6 pages (or more)

Deliverables:

- Paper with work cited page
- MLA format
- Proof of Writing Center visit (for 5 extra credit points)

Okay, so your organization is addressing some sort of social issue, I want you to explore that more. Your thesis should be your stance on the issue, or your answer to a question. So, you may have to do some research to narrow down your topic. There are a lot of debates going on in your particular social issue “sphere.” So you may start there, and then choose a side (or argue that there is another option or a place to meet in the center). If your organization does a variety of projects, you could possibly explore Miami’s relationship with service, a particular service project you did, or just come talk to me. Try to choose different theses within your groups. You will be using one of your papers for the next project.

Your audience is me—or more generally—future teachers that you will be writing academic research papers for. This means, you should look at *The Everyday Writer* closely, making sure to follow MLA rules.

Your paper should cite at least **five** sources. Carefully evaluate the ethos (credibility) of your sources, as this will affect *your* ethos in the paper. What kinds of sources would best influence your audience? I suggest trying to find at least two books and three journal articles/essays. If you would like to use a website, do carefully consider if it is the best source to support your argument. Remember, if you are unsure, you can always ask.

Much of our class time will be devoted to helping you write your paper. So make sure to take notes.

Figure 1. Assignment Prompt for Social Issue Paper

Project 4: Public Discourse/Reflection

I originally planned to have the students recast their social issue paper to a new audience, much like Deans’s assignment. But due to time constraints, a given in service learning class in first-year composition, I had to readjust the schedule. Thus, I combined it with the last reflection project. The students were asked to reflect on their experience to three different audiences in three different genres: (1) a formal business letter to the organization’s leadership, (2) a Prezi presentation for prospective members, and (3) an informal reflective essay for the instructor. The formal letter was written as a group after a short lesson on writing business cover letters. The Prezi presentation was an idea that grew out of concerns students had about the effectiveness of their organizations’ recruitment and promotional practices. The final reflective essay for the instructor was the initial final project, but it was shortened due to time constraints.

The students had to adapt their experience to a variety of audiences, considering what the audience found informative and what they would respond best to. For example, the students used the formal letter for the organization's leadership as an opportunity to provide their input for possible improvement, but faced the challenge of addressing the leadership respectfully. The essay to me, the instructor, was the most honest. The students provided input for improving my own model, which I address in later chapters.

Service Logs

In my model, the students are assigned service logs for three primary reasons: (1) to provide the instructor evidence of their service participation outside of class, (2) to provide students a place to reflect, and (3) a method for collecting data to use in their service-related projects, like field notes (see Figure 2). Since each campus organization ran on their own schedule, I ran into the issue of making sure that students were doing the same amount of work outside class. Thus the students were asked to participate four to six hours every two weeks, turning in service logs every two weeks. Students also met with me if their service organization was having a "slow" week, and were allowed to make up hours the in next service log. In following chapters I will use students' service logs both to capture their experiences, but critique this method of reflection.

Service Logs

Purpose: To create service logs that document your service work outside of the classroom so that I have an understanding of what you are working on **and** so you have field research for your projects (including the portfolio).

Description: These service logs are documents that prove your participation, attendance, and engagement with your service. You will be **posting the logs every two weeks by SUNDAY @ 12 am**, and there will be a **total of three service log checks during the semester**. Even though I may not be grading every two weeks, I will be checking Blackboard to see that your logs are posted. So I recommend that you post them on time. Remember you should be doing 3-4 hours of work every 2 weeks. If this isn't happening...**come talk to me**. Please provide the following information so that we can all benefit from your field notes.

1. Date and Time (start and stop time, too)
2. Purpose of Log Entry (org meeting, group meeting, service event, etc.)
3. Agenda (brief description of goals of the event)
4. Members present
5. Thick description; which includes
 - a. What happened
 - b. Who said what
 - c. How you contributed
 - d. What was accomplished
 - e. What happens next (agenda for next meeting, to-do list, etc.)
6. A brief reflection
 - a. Do you feel satisfied with this meeting? Why or why not?
 - b. Did something you remind you of something that happened in class, a reading, etc.?
 - c. Did you consider this a successful *service* event? Why or why not? What would have made it successful?
 - d. Note-to-self's
 - e. Anything that documents an **engagement with the event**.

Figure 2. Assignment Prompt for Service Logs

Research Description

To test the effectiveness of the model I have just laid out, as well as its potential areas for improvement, I completed a research study on two sections of my English 111: College Composition course during the fall semester of 2009. With IRB approval, I collected all student writings (turned into our Blackboard site⁴) from the course, along with interviews with students after the course ended⁵. The students were informed of the study and received consent forms, along with explanation, during the final week of the course. The consent forms were distributed and collected by my faculty advisor when I was not present. I only received the consent forms

⁴ This location was more private than social networking sites or alternatives, and is provided by the university.

⁵ The students had the option of choosing pseudonyms or their real names.

after final grades were submitted. The students had the choice of allow me to read their class writings and/or interview them.

Rather than sharing data on every student, I have chosen to focus on several focal students who gave me permission to interview them. I have selected these students because their experiences with service learning with their community organization were extensive and because their experiences point toward both benefits and drawbacks to service learning.⁶ The next two chapters focus entirely on these findings, along with my own experience teaching the model.

⁶ Some students in the course had less than successful service experiences not due to curriculum but due to the limited opportunities for service that their organizations facilitated during the semester. What I realize is that for the model I've developed to work, instructors will need to more thoroughly check out organizations and have robust back-up plans in case a student is in an organization that does not actually conduct that much service.

CHAPTER THREE

COMPLICATING SERVICE WITHOUT COMPLICATING PARTNERSHIPS

The model for service learning I propose problematizes the definitions and the institution of “service” in an effort to prepare students for what I hope to be future service learning endeavors. If my students choose to participate in service initiatives outside the classroom, particularly extracurricular student organizations, I hope that their experiences in the course will help in improving these organizations, and thus their community partnerships. Instead of reaching to the community to answer our service questions, I turned to the service tradition of campus organizations. Campus organizations emphasizing service is a location in which student voices are heard. Also, these locations of service are often ignored by service learning scholarship when actually they are perpetuating the concerns we have about community partnerships.

I have created an inquiry-based model in which students explore their everyday work with the community in campus organizations. How do these organizations define “service”? How do these organizations facilitate service? Are the organizations effective in their service efforts? Or simply, are the organizations effective as *organizations*? Students’ responses to this service-focused inquiry exhibited a rhetorical sophistication within their organizations (during and following the course), and a critique and analysis of different service organization models.

Returning to the course objectives and goals, I will analyze the effectiveness of the model using student writings and perspectives. I argue in this chapter that the model is particularly effective at reaching the following course objectives (from chapter two):

5. To reflect on the differences, similarities, and relationships between academic and public discourse
6. To examine how we adapt conventions of form, structure, voice, tone, diction and mediums to different audiences
7. To examine how organizations function (meetings, constitutions, objectives, etc.)
8. To articulate Miami’s various definitions and functions of service, and the tensions between these varieties

In service logs, class discussions, reflections, and assignments, students examined thoroughly their organizations’ weaknesses and strengths through a critical lenses provided by course

readings and discussions. The students collected detailed field notes on their experiences in organization meetings and activities and reported to the class their findings. Through these discussions students developed a nomenclature for discussing types of service organizations: the “buffet” model and the one-service/one-partnership model. Further, students’ movement between academic and public discourses led a growth in students’ communication as demonstrated in course writings and as successful service organization representatives. Overall, the classroom became a forum for students to share their service narratives in an effort to build a better relationship between Miami University and the town of Oxford.

Student Service Narratives

On the first day of class I assigned students a service narrative: a detailed personal history of each student's relationship with service. Students’ origins of service, as their narratives suggested, began in high school. Their narratives exhibited a strong relationship between service and education.

Many of the students served during high school for academic requirements or for a boost in their college application, since many university applications promote service as an admissions must. For example, Kate writes, “In high school [we] were told that service is good because it will perk up the applications that will get us into National Honors Society, colleges, etc. So being a ‘good’ student I joined four clubs, started volunteering at the hospital once a week, and coached a local swim team.” Another student, Molly writes, “Due to the fact I attended a very small, private, preparatory school; service was required.” Christian too, writes, “To be in good standing in the National Honors Society, it is a requirement to tutor young individuals, but even so, I found myself enjoying working with and being a role model for these kids.” I hoped my course would complicate the idea of service work as a key to professional mobility, especially since I see this view continued in university education.

The first assignment asked students to describe the outcomes of their earlier service experiences: What did it accomplish? Did it change you as a person? The student responses varied in the types of service, while their outcome descriptions remained essentially the same. In “Community Service and Critical Teaching,” Bruce Herzberg described that service learning courses fail in engaging students with the broader social issues that led to the need of service. Herzberg writes that

Students report that their fears and prejudices diminish or disappear, that they are moved by the experience of helping others, and that they feel a commitment to help more. This is a remarkable accomplishment, to be sure. But it is important to note that these responses tend, quite naturally, to be personal, to report perceptions and emotions. This is where my deepest questions about service learning lie. (308)

Below are a few student quotations from their first assignment, the service narratives. Naturally these quotes, as Herzberg warns, tended to be personal. While I have only collected a few responses to show this, the majority of the students described their service outcomes in terms of personal accomplishment. When secondary schooling associates service with academic achievement, it is not surprising that students would describe service outcomes as personal achievement. Further, my question—Did it change you as a person?—is also problematic. Looking back, the question itself is a cliché of personal achievement. Unknowingly I had pushed students towards the personal. The students' responses were only products of such problematic thinking.

I believe that service, although not always the most enjoyable thing to endure, is worth it in the end. Knowing that you benefited from the experience as an individual and were able to help others in the meantime is fulfilling and helps to remove the guilt we feel as the selfish human beings we tend to be. Therefore, I believe that my service, although miniscule compared to that of some, was beneficial to myself and my community, and I hope to continue to provide service whenever possible in years to come. (Shane)

I participated in service through these organizations for a couple of reasons. Foremost, I enjoyed these service opportunities and found them very fulfilling. Once I got past the work that it took I was able to meet and know people that I really enjoyed being around. In the case of Boy Scouts, I was involved primarily for the end goal of becoming an Eagle Scout. Much of the service I did was for the primary purpose of this goal. Regardless of the reasons I was involved, the service I participated in changed me for the better. I was able to hone my leadership skills in Boy Scouts when I served as a mentor for younger boys, and as I planned and carried out my own service project. Also through the service I learned how to be an all-around better person. I was sculpted into someone that could serve and help out all kinds of people. I feel like I am now a person that can

always be there for others and am good to be around. At Miami, I hope to be involved in service organizations that can fulfill me in the same way and fill this component of my life. (Joshua)

One most notable was also most recent. For SADD [Students Against Destructive Behavior] we put on a mock crash for Prom 2009 showing the consequences of drunk driving. The local firefighters, police officers and EMTs all participated. We staged a crash where a drunk driver collided with kids driving home from senior prom. One person died, one was life-lighted, one taken away in an ambulance and one arrested. The EMTs bloodied everyone up and the whole school watched as fellow students were pulled from destroyed cars. Then there was a mock trial and a mock funeral for the girl who was 'killed' (who just happened to be me). After it was all over many people said how good it was and how they're glad I'm not dead, but it never felt like an accomplishment until one day the club sponsor gave me a sealed envelope with my name on it. Inside was a letter from a boy who said the presentation changed his life. I was mildly shocked by the claim and read on. He said he drank and drove often but had never really thought of the consequences and that ("lame but true") because of that he never will again. I never found out who it was but I was touched by what he had written. I felt like the club had actually affected someone's life. Queue the "L" on the forehead. I guess I'm looking forward to getting involved with a group that has a positive effect on people. It puts a unique twist on a regular English class that we get to go out and do something then write about it. (Kate)

Considering the problematic structures the students were already working within, their service narratives were already contesting the institutions of service. All three quotes describe service, or specifically volunteerism, as a requirement and/or a burden. Although not an academic requirement, Joshua's service was part of system that awarded service with badges. Students only perpetuated a service ideal taught to them, but as these quotes show they began to push against this ideal. With that said, the students mostly likely told me what they thought I wanted to hear, what teachers/service leaders/admission essay requirements had wanted to hear. I believe the quotes represent a struggle to break free from the requirement to do service and the

expectation to “becoming a better person” because of service. The model’s intentions were to give students a voice within these pre-built structures based on service as personal achievement.

Critiquing “Service” In Organizations

As members of organizations, the students developed an understanding of how the systems of service organizations work. In order to critique this system, the students created a classification and language in order to discuss their experiences in classroom and within their class writings. The students and I noticed two interesting types of organizations: one we called the one-service/one-partnership model and one we called the “buffet” model. The one-service/one-partnership model is the most common and one we associated with most service organizations. They work closely with a community partner and/or work to solve one particular social issue. Organizations using the buffet model had many community partners and types of service, rather than one. Members came to meetings prepared to discuss service opportunities or outreach events happening at Miami University or the surrounding Oxford community. Many times, they devoted their time to service events held by other organizations. Our most straightforward example of the buffet model is Cords, which does not have any narrowed scope of service or partnership. The Optimist Club was the other organization the students placed under the buffet model. This organization had a focus on increasing optimism—but as such a goal suggests—this could manifest in a variety of service initiatives. The students became animated during debates over these differing models. I describe the scene below in my teacher’s log:

We have two organizations that do multiple services with various community organizations (and campus organizations); the students believed that this would inhibit the orgs from creating a lasting relationship like other organizations get when working with only one community partner. One student argued against this by saying that organizations like this helped students get a variety of service. (October 30, 2009)

On that very day, the students and I took to the dry-erase board to examine these models. To create an organized method of argumentation the students and I developed the following t-chart to outline the pros (+) and cons (-) of each model⁷ (see table 4).

⁷This t-chart has been altered for clarity.

Table 4. The “Buffet Model” vs. The One-Service/One-Partnership Model

The “Buffet” Model		The One-Service / One-Partnership Model	
-	More band-aids. Since you move from one group to the next, the organization only provides a short-term solution. Although this is an issue with most, if not all service efforts, the students found it even less effective in this model.	+	You “Dig Deeper” into the wider social issue. Many of these organizations are part of a national organization or well-educated in the issue, so with these organizations have an already established understanding of the issue.
+/-	Helps different people, but only a small amount. You make many connections with the community, but these connections may be short-lived.	+	Easier to see effects. Since these partnerships are longer, the organization and community partner can see change occur.
+	Appeals to more people. With a wider choice of outreach, it will appeal to more of the university.	+	Build a better idea of what the community partner wants. Since the organization works with one community partner, the organization devotes their entire effort to fulfilling their needs and getting a grasp on what the “need” actually is. Also, this relationship is often stronger.
+	Members have more choice and contribute to the decision process. The members have a choice of what type of service efforts they would like to be involved with. Members also have the power to give ideas on service projects they would like to get involved in.	+	Passion. Devoted to one cause. The students believed these members had a sincere devotion to their cause, since they chose it amongst others.
-	Limited Knowledge on Social Issues. Since you only work with the community partner for a short time, you have less of an opportunity to understand the issues they seek to address.	-	No Options. Since members had a commitment to one community partner or one social issue, they often have to volunteer for others on their own time.

Each model exhibited their strengths and drawbacks. The buffet model offered students choices and variety, while the other model offered more opportunities for sustainable community

partnerships. When discussing the models, students approached their critique from their own location in the university: as first-year students. The students find that the target audience for recruiting organization members was the incoming freshman class; they have a longer opportunity to contribute to the organization. Plus, upper-class students have most likely chosen their extra-curricular activities.

Thus, the students also considered the question: Is there a model that would appeal more to freshman students? Some members in the class thought that the buffet model is effective in teaching students the varieties of service in the community. The model is research for future service endeavors; they were able to participate in several types of service initiatives, each addressing a different societal concern, and use these experiences to choose a cause they are passionate about. Opponents of the model, several in a buffet organization, found the “variety” was just a directionless approach to service. I found that the proponents of the buffet model believed in the adage “helping only one person can make a difference.” The buffet model then measured success on how much service they did, while the other model reached for a distant goal of “fixing” a specific social issue. The one-partner/one-service model put more of an emphasis on education, since they work in addressing the social issue of one particular community partner. For example, Green Oxford sought to create a greener campus at Miami University. In order to make campus greener, the executive board spent time educating the members so that they in turn could educate the rest of campus. Big Brother/Big Sister-Butler County led workshops for new mentors to prepare members to work with local children from a variety of backgrounds. These systems of education were often entrenched within the organization, often to meet the objectives of the national organization. These ideas, as expressed by the students, never lead to a solid decision on what was a better model. Rather the creation and analysis of this taxonomy led to rich discussion in the classroom and a better understanding of how their organizations functioned. Further, the students saw choosing an organization as a process; not all organizations are the same and not all organizations facilitate service the same.

The class’s taxonomy of organizations was not the only way the class analyzed the effectiveness of the organizations. Throughout the semester in service logs, and in final interviews, students critiqued via reflection. The organizations exhibited reoccurring difficulties for the students: a lack of promotion and recruitment, little leadership or overwhelmed leadership, and/or broken service promises. I found the students that verbalized the most their

difficulties, did so because of their interest in the organization's greater goal. By the end of the semester, I had two students become vice presidents of their organizations, and one become president. In the following pages, I hope to explore how students critiqued and reflected on their organization membership. I look closely at three particular students that help in the improvement of the model, also. These three students were the most invested in the project, some of whom were the most verbal in class concerning the issues they had within their organizations or with the model.

Melissa

Throughout the semester, Melissa (an undeclared major) was one of the students most concerned about her grade. Because of some scheduling issues, it took longer than expected for her to be paired with her "Little" for Big Brother/Big Sisters, and she was concerned she would not reach the required hours for the service logs. While she waited, she attended meetings for the campus organization and also attended required training sessions to become a "Big." On October 26, 2010, Melissa wrote the following in her service log:

I learned a lot from the training session but I really would just like to start volunteering! It was helpful to find out where my application was in the process, to gauge how much longer it would be until I was matched. The training session helped to clear up questions I had about volunteering especially what to do if my "Little" isn't responsive or talkative. Also it was helpful to know that a teacher, social worker or parent recommended the child for the program because it's not always apparent why the child is in the program. Some kids don't have any friends and need to work on social skills while others are too talkative and don't do their schoolwork. Hopefully I can start volunteering before Thanksgiving break.

As fall break came and passed, Melissa was yet to be matched with a "Little." To fulfill the service log requirement, Melissa completed a number of tasks: did some research on successful mentoring, completed a rhetorical analysis on promotional materials (she was an advocate of increased promotion), interviewed other members, and devised plans for the campus organization's improvement. She was most concerned with the campus organization, a group of people that promoted Big Brothers/Big Sister of Butler County, but are not necessarily mentors for it. Their primary tasks were recruitment and planning social events. She explained that they

have three committees: fundraising, social chair (which was getting Bigs and Littles together), and one I can't remember. So I think that they were really trying to do too much at one time, and they weren't really being successful in any of the areas. But if they only focused on one area, if they only focused on fundraising or fundraising events they would probably be more successful. If somehow they could reach out to Miami University and get them involved in it. I mean, the organization is really small...no one knows about it. Like if you are a Big you may not even know about the student org.

(Personal Interview)

Even after her time working within the campus organization, waiting for to be placed in the community, Melissa decided to stay with the organization. After the course ended she received several calls from their organization and she is now a Big.

Shane

Of all the students, Shane came into the course most eager to participate in service organizations. Even after I warned him of the expensive membership dues, Shane joined Optimist Club because he was impressed with the work they did. During an interview after the class, Shane reflects on the most rewarding aspect of the course, "It made me want to look for other things to do on campus, which I probably would not have done otherwise. So overall it was a really good experience and I am very glad I was in a class that did service learning." Halfway through the semester, Shane became Vice President of Technology, and after the classes ended he was promoted to co-Vice President of Recruitment (the other co-Vice President of Recruitment was also a member of our course). Shane's group had an exceptional impact on the organization, and I received unsolicited e-mails from the Optimist Club's executive board praising their hard work.

As discussed in chapter two, the first project was an agency profile. I had not provided a multimodal/multimedia option, but when Shane asked if his group could create a scrapbook, I was thrilled. He explained that the components of the paper could easily be adapted to the genre of the scrapbook, and in turn, could be given to the organization as something they could use: a visual history and overview of the organization for prospective members. Further, he said that the organization had done so much for his group and he wanted to make something they could use. I can see how this model could be improved by Shane's lead. Throughout the course the students and I noticed how difficult it sometimes was to find solid information about the

organization. I think the agency profile could be successfully re-casted for their websites, promotional materials, or other organization materials. The students learn about the organization, and share their text with the organization.

Brittany

Brittany was a member (and subsequently the president) of Cords: an organization which fell under the buffet category, and which, until recently, was an entirely female organization. During her final reflection and interview, Brittany provided some interesting insight on her new roles as president and her experiences in the course. During her final reflection, Brittany reflected on the effectiveness of the buffet model, but also her concerns with the low membership. Interestingly, weeks after the course she used the buffet model debate to her advantage during a recruitment event.

Ashley: I remember in class there were issues with Cords mission being too broad. You seemed to be a proponent for you that, you thought it made sense.

Brittany: I think it does because... When I went to MEGA⁸ Fair people were like “Who is Cords? What is this?” “Well it is the best organization ever because it is an organization for *you*. We are here for *you*. We want to do what *you* want to do. If you tell me what you want to do I will make every effort to go out there and make people involved in that cause.” So I think having a variety of causes bring more diverse members, because you can attract so many more people. They can come to MEGA fair and say “I want to join an organization that does something bizarre.” And I’ll be like “Sure, we’ll do that, because we’ll do anything.” We do anything you want us to do.

Ashley: That is good rhetoric.

Brittany: That *is* good rhetoric.

This particular moment moved classroom discussion into practice. Brittany took classroom discussions and writings and transformed them into practices necessary for a successful campus organization. She

⁸ The MEGA fair is an event held each year in which organizations promote and recruit for their organization.

learned what makes an organization work from listening to other organizations. I would listen to them complain and moan about their organizations and what they didn't like. Then I would listen to everyone in my group and what they didn't like. Now, I can better run the organization. I know better how the communication should work, what we should do, how we get people to come and participate and stay strong with the organization. (Personal Interview)

While Brittany used her experiences and other student experiences to reformulate the organization of Cords, my other students shared their experiences to promote change in their own organizations. During the final weeks of school, I assigned the students' a reflection project. The students expressed their experience through three different genres to three different audiences: a business letter to the campus organization's leadership, an essay to the instructor, and an interactive Prezi presentation for the organization to use on their website for perspective members. I will dive into the reflections to me (the instructor) in the next chapter, but below I have shared portions of the students' letters to their campus organizations:

Also we have a new idea for a fundraiser for the month of January. While students are home for the holidays they could gather children's books at local thrift stores or in their homes. These books could then be brought back to school and donated to the children whom First Book serves. This could be a "Belated Christmas" fundraiser. Miami students will be in the spirit of giving and it will be easy to access the books.

We three think that First Book's mission is positive and rewarding for all who take part. We would like to continue working with First Book throughout our time at Miami. If not working with First Book we will definitely continue our service to the community. This semester of service to First Book has taught us how rewarding helping children can be. (First Book)

With many group members being directly involved with the organization and meeting with their "Littles," they have been able to see the positive impact the organization has on the children in the program. Ethan has seen drastic improvements in his Little, including grades, relationships with peers and teachers, and his relationship with his younger brother, who is also in the program. James, who is also paired with a "Little" at a

different school, has seen his impact on the organization at Van Buren Elementary, mainly because that particular site has recently lacked volunteers. Melissa, although waiting to be paired, has had a good experience as well. Although ready to be matched, it has taken an unexpectedly long amount of time for her to be matched with a “Little” at any of the sites in Butler County. With the semester drawing to a close, it seems that being matched now would be futile because of the Holiday break given by the University. While she understands that the matching process takes a long time, she is anxious to get started in the organization. (Big Brothers/Big Sisters)

I think the examples, considering the genre of the business letter, were rhetorically sophisticated. The students, although they had initial difficulty, explained sensitive subject matter—the weaknesses of their organizations—honestly and respectfully. I thought it was also an interesting strategy that the second group, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, employed when they individually explained their experience. This practice not only introduced students to business writing, but gave the organizations helpful information: what the students did in class, a reflection on their experience, and a thank-you. Also, the First Book group provided an idea for a fundraiser: a holiday book drive. When looking back to the students’ service narratives from the first day of class, these letters and other course writings show a confidence in talking about service. The students effectively explained not only the strengths but the weaknesses in the organization, and in a genre they were all unfamiliar with. The First Book group also gained confidence in their role as representatives of the university and utilized the letter as an opportunity to describe effective ways of collecting more books. The students successfully found a voice in writing, a voice in their university.

The course ended, and if anything, the organizations received opportunities for improvement and the students received the information necessary to manage student organizations. But did the students break down the roles of “server” and “served”? Did they avoid the too personal use of reflection that Herzberg warns us of? I explore these questions in chapter four.

CHAPTER FOUR
CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS:
USING STUDENT PERSPECTIVES TO IMPROVE SERVICE LEARNING

Having been a student of service learning, participated in service organizations in undergraduate schooling, and read a sufficient amount of scholarship on service learning, I designed my first-year writing course with a few assumptions on how service learning works and what type of service-learners my course would produce. The assumptions I developed from overly optimistic thinking and my belief that the universal goals of service learning could be translated into many, if not all, service learning courses and learning contexts. As my teaching and subsequent research has shown me, this is not always the case. My experiences teaching the course and students' reflections about their learning (both in interviews and in coursework) challenged these assumptions and provided points for improvement for the future implementation of the model I created. Some of the assumptions shaping my course design were:

Assumption 1: In effective service learning classes, students target a broader social issue and interrogate the “server”/”served” roles.

Assumption 2: One semester is sufficient time to get students thinking about broader social issues and interrogating server/served roles.

Assumption 3: The only sign of an effective service learning course is whether students have thought about broader social issues and interrogated the server/served roles.

When planning my class I, like most people, turned to Bruce Herzberg's influential piece “Critical Teaching and Community Service.” Herzberg's article challenges the unproductive use of reflections: “If our students regard social problems as chiefly or only personal, then they will not search beyond the person for a systemic explanation” (309). Herzberg notes that although “students report that their fears and prejudices diminish or disappear” (308), these responses tend to be personal and do not look toward possible solutions for the future. In the first assignment, to write their own service narratives, students expressed this personal perspective—that service was personally fulfilling and made them grateful for what they had: money, family, etc. With Herzberg in mind, I read these narratives and felt (initially) that students' responses were not enough: “Writing personal responses to community service experiences is an important part of processing the experience, but it is not sufficient to raise critical or cultural consciousness”(309).

Herzberg's solution is to challenge students to analyze and reflect on service through a critical thinking lens. By assigning students reading to accompany their service, they begin to challenge their initial perceptions of service. Herzberg's students served their community by tutoring adults. Instead of relying on the experience of tutoring alone, Herzberg complicated students' ideas on access to literacy by assigning Mike Rose's *Lives on the Boundary*. He argues that readings should work at complicating service by pushing students past the personal, emotional response to individual charitable efforts towards a critique of the societal structure which made the service necessary. Why do our students have access to literacy? Why do the adults they tutor not? Herzberg writes:

What the students' final papers show, then, is a sense of life as a communal project, an understanding of the way that social institutions affect our lives, and a sense that our responsibility for social justice includes but also carries beyond personal acts of charity. This is an understanding that has been very rare among Bentley students. Immersed in a culture of individualism, convinced of their merit in a meritocracy, students like those at Bentley need to see that there is a social basis for most of the conditions they take to be matters of individual choice or individual ability. (317)

It was my hope that I too would be able to develop a curriculum that would enable students to explore and critique the larger social institution, thus enabling students to complicate and diminish their roles of “server” and “served.” Several scholars worry service learning perpetuates the roles of server/served (e.g., Schutz; Gere). Several object to this “because they feel that it locates service-learning in a tradition of philanthropy in which ‘superior classes’ magnanimously render service to their ‘inferiors’” (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters 8) Because of the assumptions I held, I felt that the *only* measure of success would be if students saw service past self-fulfillment and “doing good” and toward working with the community. But, as I will show when examining student work and interview responses more closely below, there are myriad benefits and successes to service learning, even when all goals and hopes are not met.

By utilizing a service-space students are familiar with—campus organizations—I believed students could reach the goals outlined in assumption 1, because service was less time consuming and allotted more time for discussion. When first reading the students' final reflections, their comments on service were definitely complex, but often framed from the personal—just as Herzberg had warned in his article. I felt I had failed as an instructor because

the students had not succeeded at developing critical perspectives on broader social issues, but after a second reading, I realized my perspective was clouded by my initial assumptions and my student's work had actually taken their learning in unexpected and positive directions. As the students' writings in this chapter show, there are numerous ways to interrogate self and service learning and that the success of a service learning model should not, I argue, be judged solely on one criterion.

What I realize is that my assumptions when I planned and taught the course distracted me from other service issues and other opportunities to challenge the roles between "server" and "served." The students' experiences revealed to me interesting perspectives on service, perspectives that point to interesting ways in which to revise the curriculum, revisions which I describe in more detail in chapter five.

Shane: Opening Dialogue to Weaken the Roles of "Server" and "Served"

Shane, an education major, participated in the Optimist Club. A buffet organization⁹, Optimist Club's goal was to "encourage people to adopt Optimism as a philosophy of life through service to others" ("Optimist Club"). I worried that the organization's objective fell into the cliché: participating in service for some sort of personal achievement and satisfaction. Particularly in this case, service was used as a vehicle to promote and to gain optimism by the "server." The organization focused their attention on the children of the community by reading books and throwing holiday parties. Due to the type of organization Optimist Club was and rereading Shane's course writings, I initially feared that he failed to target a broader social issue.

Brainstorming topics for the social issue paper was a challenge for students working in the buffet model, since there was a no particular issue the organization was addressing. Inspired by his volunteer work reading to children of the community and the fact that he was an Early Childhood Education major, Shane researched how children responded to books with imaginative plots. When he first approached me with the topic, my initial thought was (1) I failed at choosing organizations that fit my service learning model and (2) the topic did not fulfill the requirements of the social issue paper. Initially, I had hoped for students to pinpoint why their service efforts were necessary and explore alternative approaches for future improvement in the

⁹As described in Chapter 3, "buffet" is the term my students and I came up with to describe organizations that have no single partnership or addressed social issue, but serve the community at large with a variety of service projects.

community, instead of one-time, short-lived service efforts. I feared Shane would not get out of the course what I had planned. I feared his paper would simply delineate facts, rather than working towards change.

In all my course projects, I assign students reflective writer's memos in which they explored their writing process and growth as a writer. For this particular course, I also asked students to reflect on their project's relationship with the organizations in these memos. In his memo, Shane explained the evolution of his topic for his social issue paper:

I absolutely love kids, and being that I have Christmas already on my mind, I decided that I wanted to do something dealing with Santa Clause (sic). Rather than taking the easy route and arguing that children cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality, I decided to take the more difficult route and search for information to argue the opposite. I've always felt that kids were underestimated in their abilities, and research actually showed that I'm not alone in this theory.

In the last chapter I described Shane's initiative to transform the agency profile into a scrapbook the organization could use. Shane had anticipated opportunities to direct course assignments back to the organization in ways I had not thought of as an instructor. When brainstorming topics for his Social Issue paper, Shane thought about specific service events he thought were particularly effective, and thought about new ways to approach his interaction with the children. He thought about how the children responded to the world around them and more specifically, how they interacted with the stories he read to them. Instead of assuming what abilities children possessed, Shane searched for answers. While Shane provides the scientific evidence and other forms of substantial support, I found the closing of his paper most inspiring:

Research has shown that while a child's mind is a curious one, it is an always-growing one as well. Children are eager for knowledge, and as adults we are attempting to spare them the pain and stress that reality can sometimes cause. While this is by no means a bad idea, it is thus unfair to accuse them of lacking the ability to make distinctions that we simply don't ask them to make. Children have the ability to live the carefree lifestyle that we as adults often miss, but in allowing them to have this lifestyle we must recognize that we are encouraging the things that we later criticize in today's children. I am not by any means arguing that children's minds are as developed as ours or their lives as circumstantially prepared for the reality that is outside the walls of the homes we shelter

them with. I am arguing, rather, that they are capable of making the distinctions that distinguish real from make-believe, and when given the chance have proven this to be true. Children are much wiser than we give them credit for, and we would be naïve to assume that they are completely oblivious to the world that surrounds them.

Essentially, I think these two excerpts (the first from his writer's memo, the second from the conclusion of his paper) are doing two things: (1) exploring whether reading to children is an effective service activity and (2) targeting possible communication gaps between him and the children to whom he reads. While there is no particular problem the organization is addressing, it is necessary to address what the service is actually doing, and to assess if it is effective in executing some sort of solution. Although Shane does not explicitly state in his paper or accompanying writer's memo that he sought to analyze the effectiveness of his service, I do believe he indirectly complicates his interaction with the children which I believe will bring new light to his service. I also see Shane targeting and challenging a possible communication gap which occurs between child and adult, a gap which places children in an inferior role. Shane's conclusion revealed children's abilities adults fail to notice when saying, "Children are much wiser than we give them credit for, and we would be naïve to assume that they are completely oblivious to the world that surrounds them." Shane's paper began as a search to prove that children can distinguish fantasy from reality and concluded with a call to listen to children. I see Shane here breaking down the wall between server (Shane/adult) and served (children) by conversationally giving power back to the child. Shane's final reflective essay discusses these roles further:

If asked to create an accurate definition for effective service, I would define it as the incorporation of service into one's own life through the thorough understanding of the issue being addressed and the dedicated attempt to improve it. The best way to serve is to eliminate the role of "server" and "the one being served" and actively place yourself within the group of which you are working to help. We're all individuals, and once we realize that the only differences between our neighbors and ourselves come from circumstantial happenings and the results of decisions made, we will then be able to effectively help these people.

Shane's definition of service is thoughtful and intelligent, quoting from class readings or handouts, and he has certainly made strides toward considering broader social issues. But I think

he may not have developed as fully in this area as possible, in part because of my curriculum (which did not do enough to foster study of broader social issues) and in part because of the type of organization he participated in. This is evident when he does not elaborate or explain the vague “circumstantial happenings and results of decisions made.” Describing in further detail what these circumstances are would get Shane closer to the source of the problem. In addition, his use of “these” to describe the people with whom he worked in the organization, still carries with it connotations of server and served. Yet, although I think Shane was unable to target and find alternative approaches to a broader social issue, I do believe he was successful in complicating the relationship between university and community. Shane argues that the best way to eliminate “server” and “served” roles is to immerse oneself into this unfamiliar population. I believe Shane’s social issue paper works towards understanding his community audience (children), since he is working towards understanding children’s perspectives and ways of thinking. While Shane receives a feel-good, optimistic feeling after working with children, Shane complicates his organization agenda by exploring how children minds’ work, which I believe will lead to some fruitful work with children in his future.

Brittany: Too Many Challenges at Once

Like Shane, Brittany was an Early Childhood Education major. Brittany joined the organization Cords, which seeks to give back to the community and create an atmosphere for friendships to develop. Cords, a buffet organization, served the community wherever service was needed. Service events included painting the community arts center, picking up trash with Green Oxford, and serving and cleaning at a senior center luncheon.

Brittany’s final reflection presents a conflict between the buffet model’s idea of one-time, charitable acts and addressing a broader social issue. In a reading response to Bickford and Reynolds’ “Activism and Service-learning” (an article that explores students devotion to service but aversion to activism), Brittany appreciates their argument and activism’s work, but holds on to the ideal that “simple service”—charitable efforts by individuals—is still effective and worthwhile. After all, this is the type of service Cords promotes.

Reframing volunteerism as Acts of Dissent, the author [Bickford and Reynolds] makes the point that people should focus more on activism rather than (sic) on community service. While the author makes the point that activism is more “effective” to the

community, I believe that simple service can be just as helpful. I feel that over time community service similar to what CORDS¹⁰ does make a difference in individual lives rather than (sic) in a whole group of people's lives. Which is more "effective" to our humanity knowing we changed a life or knowing we changed a demographic? I guess it is up to the individual to determine which is most effective.

But then later, in the same reflection, Brittany also begins to envision a different future for Cords,—one in which Cords choose one service effort.

In future (sic) hopefully CORDS can get more in-depth with our service and make lengthy commitments to helping our community rather than (sic) occasional one-day service events. I would like to see us do more activities like tutoring local children, making more improvements on the Community Art Center, and going to the local animal shelter. With these events CORDS can explore some of the local social issues at hand and maybe pick one to focus the group around.

Brittany plans to utilize the model's wide exploration of service in order to narrow down their scope to one cause. It seems here that Brittany believes short-lived service commitments with a variety of community partners is good for now, but hopes to create sustainable relationships with one community partner in the future. Although Brittany's service view falls under what Herzberg would call "personal acts of charity," Brittany's future plans work towards targeting one particular social issue and creating sustainable relationships. Brittany wrote this reflection while still serving in the organization, but by the end of the semester, she was elected president of Cords. As a newly elected leader she may actually have the opportunity to enact this vision. But change is difficult, and I can see why Brittany is hesitant to restructure the entire organization of Cords. In her new position as president she has faced more complications than we had both expected, as expressed in our post-interview.

Ashley: How is your presidency going? Is there anything you are particularly proud of? What were your goals going into it?

Brittany: Particularly proud about? It is still really early. I have had a lot of fun experiences with people already. I had to make my own mailbox because CORDS didn't

¹⁰ The organization uses "Cords" and "CORDS." "CORDS" used to be an acronym, but over time the meaning behind the letters was lost.

have a mailbox in the mailroom. I'm trying to get back our office space because people think we don't exist. Our executive board wants to get CORDS really big and we want to get a lot of people to know about it. [. . .] It is kind of hard to organize things with people because they won't email you back and that's kind of frustrating. I'm the kind of person that likes email and not calling people. So I guess I'll start calling people, which makes me really sad. We are trying to get more guys and it is really, really hard. Our last meeting we had three people show up, so hopefully next meeting we'll have more people show up, since we did MEGA fair. That was great. I guess it is kind of different being in charge now. I can't believe I am president. I mean, I'm in charge of all you people. You have to listen to me? It is kind of weird, because everyone is older than I am and I am president of them. I like it. I think it is going to be a good experience. Hopefully I do more with it now that I am president. I can plan some things.

Brittany faced problems that neither I nor she expected: gaining a voice within her organization and gaining a voice for her organization. Due to the organization's structure, Brittany needed to increase numbers through promotional materials and events. Further, she needed to find events. On top of this, Brittany had to reclaim her office space and prove herself as a freshman president. Many of these tasks involve writing and rhetoric: creating promotional materials, convincing students to join, writing emails to the community, and filling out piles of paperwork. Though, many of the things she learned and brought to the course cannot be translated to her work in the organization until she builds one. Although Brittany achieved a lot, the limited amount of time could not fully prepare her for the challenges to come. When considering the assumptions I had for the course, Brittany did not have the chance to target a broader issue, because her organizations did not have one. Nor does Brittany show much movement toward interrogating server/served relations: she's too busy running her organization. But what I realize is that this does not mean that service learning was unsuccessful. There are certainly more criteria by which to judge the success of service learning and clearly Brittany has learned a lot. She is now an active member in a campus organization, one that partners with many community organizations. She is learning leadership skills, and she has begun to think of ways of building actual community partnerships. As I discuss in more detail in chapter five, one element I wish I had included in the curriculum was more organizational and administrative analysis—having students map their organization's structure and administration in their first weeks of being

involved in the organization. In order to become effective activists, it can be helpful to know how systems work.

Kate: Seeking to Create Equal Ground between “Server” and “Served”

An undecided major with a business interest, Kate chose to work with Big Brothers/Big Sisters-Butler County (BBBS) as a mentor for a little girl. Kate had the most direct contact and extended contact with community members, so, with the lens of my initial assumptions in mind, I had hoped she would be a student who would most interrogate “server”/”served.” This was not the case—not because of any lack of critical reflection and consideration on Kate’s part, but because I realize that the curriculum I developed and the model for service learning I developed did not do enough to help students consider and complicate the binary.

Kate was paired with her Little in November, towards the end of our fall semester and our course. I was eager to interview Kate to see how her relationship with her Little was enhanced by our service learning coursework. Meeting only a few months after the course ended, I was surprised to see how much Kate knew about her community partner.

She tells me that all the time, which is funny. She likes to remind me...and I’m not that old! I’m only 19, I’m not old. [My Little], personally, has a very hard life. Her parents—she just talks and talks and talks. Her parents split up, I’m not sure if they were even married, very, very young. She hasn’t seen her mom for about a year. She lives with her dad and four siblings, none of which are sibling-siblings, they are either half-brother or half-sisters. One is 30 and has a kid, so she is an aunt. I met her dad before, a very, very nice man, and he obviously letting her get involved in these things, and he has good hopes for her.

Kate had already gained the trust of her Little; her Little shared details on her family and home environment. Further, she had even conversed with her Little’s father. Surely, this was a one of the strongest relationships between a student and community member I had seen in the course. But, as she continued to discuss the relationship, I feared this relationship was structured around the “server”/”served” binary.

It just really makes me appreciate my family and, not so much money security, but that I have all these opportunities to go to college and travel and do all these different things. I hope that girl can go to college, but you never know. It makes me appreciate that I have

two sisters, two sisters that are younger. And, she has no family. It makes me appreciate, and not going off money, she wears the same outfit every day. Or at least every day that I see her. It makes me glad that I have the opportunity and the money to go out and buy clothes

Essentially, Kate consistently returns to the personal when describing the relationship with her Little. She appreciates the family and financial stability in her own life, but only in opposition to its lack in her Little's life. Also, Kate says her Little sister has "no family." While the family situation of her Little is certainly complicated, earlier mention of her family does not illustrate a lack of family but rather an extended family, one unfamiliar in Kate's experience. That Kate was still positioning her Little's experience in terms of her own experience seem problematic to me, exhibiting binary thinking. Kate does, however, seek to create equality between her Little and her in other ways. First, Kate says, "not so much money security, but that I have all these opportunities to go to college and travel and do all these different things." While money is the means by which we receive education and travel, I believe Kate makes this move to establish a common ground between her Little and her; with money aside they can establish equality. I also believe Kate sees money as a difference, but does not interrogate this far enough to reach an effective analysis of the social institutions which divided them. In "Service Learning, Multiculturalism, and the Pedagogies of Difference," Gregory Jay would most likely label Kate's thinking as part of the "common ground moment" (264). Jay writes that students

often fall into the trap of banal cultural liberalism with phrases such as "We're all human, we're all just the same, different cultures are not as different as everyone wants to make them." Unfortunately, this well-meaning attitude usually entails ignoring the specific differences that make up a culture's history, values, beliefs, and practices and that we insultingly negate in insisting on Universalist perspective (264).

Moving past this stage takes time, and our course was only a semester. This common ground moment is not an end but a "developmental stage" (264). Jay writes that instructors should "avoid the temptation to criticize our students for naïveté" and "channel powerful positive emotions this realization brings with it to help students reflect on and analyze the *differences* they are also experiencing" (264). I believe Kate is making strides towards developing a critical consciousness, but can only continue to move in that direction if instructors push it past the common ground moment. Kate's dedication to the organization leaves time to do this, but with

our course over, I fear she may not have the forum to explore this. When I revise my service learning curriculum in the future, I will aim to layer in more opportunities for explicit critical reflection and analysis.

Despite some of the ways in which Kate's service learning did not meet the assumptions I had, she still is learning a great deal. In addition, her dedication to her service has introduced me a different type of sustainability on a smaller scale.

I most definitely see myself participating in service again, especially in BBBS. BBBS does ask for a year commitment from their student. However, I intend to stay involved for as long as I can. [My Little] asked me if I was going to stay for more than a year because none of her Bigs have ever stayed for more than a year and she thought because she is going to the middle school next year I would stay at Marshall. I told her I can't make any promises but I would try and follow her to the Middle School next year, needless to say she was thrilled.

Although the model could not promise a sustainable relationship with the community, Kate's choice to be a mentor created a sustainable relationship beyond the course. While my model does not risk increasing the gap between university and community, it cannot help in strengthening students' understanding of the social alone. While Kate continues mentoring her Little, I fear that she will not have the opportunity to continue her thoughtful reflection about difference. While my curricular model was effective in laying the ground work for critical inquiry, my experiences suggest that successful service learning models in first-year composition are dependent on a larger service learning initiative within the university and an ongoing dialogue between instructors across the disciplines.

Utilizing Student Voices

With students' perspectives and experiences in mind, in the next chapter I look toward possible improvements and revisions to my service learning model, especially ways to provide more time for analyzing the organization (especially seemingly mundane but important administrative and bureaucratic workings), to foster more critical inquiry, and to create more space for students to explore and articulate their perspectives.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARDS MORE EFFECTIVE SERVICE LEARNING INITIATIVES

As a teacher-researcher, I developed and implemented the curricular model with the idea of eventually sharing my findings and experience to improve service learning today. More personally, I wanted to improve upon my own teaching by looking to the students for feedback throughout the course. In this chapter I explore where my experiences have brought me and what lessons I take with me into future service endeavors in composition.

The Low-Risk Benefits of Campus Partnership Model for Service Learning

The curricular model I propose could be especially effective in first-year composition courses. Although, as chapter four suggests, practicing this model in a first semester course may only get to what Jay calls the “common ground moment.” Composition courses can only reach so many writing and service goals. This model leaves room for the academic goals that instructors are expected to reach without compromising the community and service learning components. Thus I believe that my curricular model is especially effective in reaching four goals unique to other service learning initiatives.

1. The model has the potential to be especially effective for graduate students hoping to enter into service learning pedagogy.

I created and implemented this model in the fall semester of my second and last year in the master’s program at Miami University. I had felt well-read and well-experienced as a student invested in service learning pedagogy, but wanted to use a model that was not too labor intensive (thus compromising my own academic goals); one that would be flexible enough to meet service learning goals *and* program goals (thus not compromising student learning); and one that would be sustainable across instructors and semesters (thus not compromising community-university relations). This model, built as it is on campus organizations, is especially useful for graduate students, or even first-time service instructors, in that it (1) is a simpler model to implement and plan, (2) introduces instructors to their campus’s service initiatives, and (3) does not risk an unsustainable relationship with the community.

The model was easy to adapt to the curriculum laid out by the Miami University English Department, but I believe the curricular model is flexible enough to be adapted to a variety of first-year composition curricula. Since I did not want to risk building community relationships I could not sustain, I did not have to plan long-term goals and activities for future classes. The only issue I faced when planning the course was the monetary dues new members were required to pay in order to participate in the organizations. While I was unable to get financial support from the university for this obstacle, I did receive permission to state possible dues requirements on my syllabus as the equivalent of a text book. The students received information on the cost of each organization early in the course, but, perhaps not surprisingly for the demographic of students on Miami's main campus, a few students noted the cost, but most were not concerned about the fees. I recorded a particular moment in my teacher's log, in which two students discussed the membership dues: "While walking out of class one day a student was talking to another student about this particular organization. She said, '...but it is so expensive,' and he replied along the line of '...but I'm really excited about the work they are doing'." This may suggest that reasonable organization dues can promote a sense of investment from students into their organizations. Whether or not this is the case, the students were informed of potential fees on the first day of class, and could choose to switch composition sections. I understand the membership dues will be an issue for students and instructors at other institutions. In such cases, I believe the students can work with student organization as observers, not as members.

Another benefit of the model for graduate students, first time service learning instructors, and new instructors to the university was the valuable exploration of the university and its service resources. My work as a teacher-researcher in service learning began dialogues with other instructors not only in the English Department, but also in many additional disciplines. Whether through conversations or conference presentations, I received knowledgeable advice and support from colleagues. Further, I received valuable feedback from the Office of Community Engagement and Service in the planning of the course. Overall, their feedback helped adapt my model to my particular university.

As I mentioned in chapter one, Ellen Cushman's ideal teacher-researcher in service learning seeks long-lasting, sustainable relationships with the community so that they "have the reliable presence of a university representative in whom they can potentially place their trust and with whom they can genuinely collaborate" (58). As a second-year graduate student, I was

limited in my ability to serve as a representative of the university to the community. Even if I were to pass the partnership on to another graduate student when I left the university, I believe the partnership would still be my responsibility, and I do not have the resources or time to implement and watch the model in action for the indefinite future. This brings me to the next low-risk benefit of the new curricular service learning model, where I particularly look at how the community benefits.

2. The community is not affected negatively by the class.

The course introduced students and myself to service learning, but also avoided using a community partner as a “guinea pig.” As a first time instructor to service learning, I understood that I would make mistakes. The curricula model building on campus organizations was one where students and I were safe to make mistakes and adapt without making a community partner adapt to us. We had the experience of the organizations and their ongoing relations with the community to help guide us. Further, I did not risk increasing the gap between the university and community with a “wham and bam” or “hit it and quit it” partnership (Cushman 40). I *do* believe community partnerships can be done right with partnerships that gain strength over time, in which all stakeholders benefit. I could not promise such a relationship and I did not, at the time, have a larger service learning initiative in the university to work within or to commit to. Also, I could not promise the community any final product from students, since we had a number of academic goals to meet. Instead, the course sought to improve campus organizations in the hope that the community would benefit in the long-run.

3. The campus organizations receive participation and feedback from students.

The organizations benefited from our service learning course in a variety of ways. First, the organizations received not only increased membership, but members required to be there and actively participate. Since the students were able to choose their organizations, the organizations received members who had interest in their work. For many organizations, the increased membership was crucial. For example, Cords was a smaller organization and if it were not for Brittany (see chapter three), their organization might actually be without a president: Brittany volunteered to lead the organization when no one else would. Another organization, Big Brothers/ Big Sisters, trained and accepted two new mentors. Based on an e-mail praising

students from the course, the Optimist Club benefited from my student's eagerness: two of the students are now co-Vice Presidents of Recruitment. Along with willing participants, the organizations received helpful feedback from the students in the form of an end of the semester reflective business letter. Discussed in chapter three, students shared their experiences within the organizations, discussed how their experiences served as content for the course, and delineated in detail the weaknesses and strengths of the organization.

4. The students are introduced to their university and service learning, while also receiving composition instruction.

All students were in their first year and new to the university. This curricular model was effective in introducing the students not only to crucial aspects of composition necessary for success within the academy—such as skills in rhetorical analysis, public discourse, and argument—but also to their university. Many students expressed that the course introduced them to service organizations they would not have heard of otherwise. During an interview, Shane explained that he “didn’t even know about Optimist before the class.” Another student, Maresa, explained to me that she joined another organization she heard about in class: “Yeah, I learned about Adopt a School from someone else in the class just after we’d go around and just reflect on what the clubs were doing.” Through class discussion and informal organization updates in class, the students learned not only of their experiences but those of their classmates. Many students who ended the course unsatisfied with their service experiences, decided to join other organizations, organizations introduced to them in class by their peers.

Since the organization utilized campus organizations rather than direct partnerships with the community, the course had the flexibility and time to reach academic goals. Since campus organizations run on an academic schedule and work around student schedules, the time did not risk conflicting with the schedule of the community. Further, since we did not have a community partner that expected a final project, we had the luxury of putting purely service work aside for academic goals. I had mentioned before in chapter two that the course had to combine the last two projects: a move that could not have been done if the community was expecting some type of deliverable at the end of the semester.

While I believe the students could have benefited more from direct contact with the community, considering the time allotted and academic goals for the course I could not have

promised the community the effort and partnership they deserved. While this course is an introduction to college writing, I assert that it is also an introduction to service. This class alone cannot reach the goals crucial to service—developing a social and cultural consciousness. Service learning efforts will be most effective if viewed as a college-long process of many, rather than the semester-long work of a few.

Recommendations for Improvement and Revision

Looking through teaching logs, student interviews, and student reflections, I have compiled recommendations for improving the model specifically and service learning in general. Many of these recommendations developed from recurring issues I had when teaching the course. Essentially all of these recommendations involve asking for more help and taking advantage of the resources already there.

1. Facilitate an open forum among students and help them continue their work with service.

The communication amongst the students led to some fruitful discussions about their service, but I believe these moments could have been more often and more insightful. Several of the students, low on service log hours, asked if they could interview other university students about their service experiences. The students interviewed friends, other members of their organization, and members of the class. The students began to gather perspectives of those outside of class, creating a larger collage of service narratives on campus. Further, the students could have benefited from an online space where they could promote service events hosted by their organizations. Some organizations hosted crossover events with other organizations, in which my class could see first-hand the work their peers were doing. I think instructors could help in creating more of these opportunities. Lastly and most importantly, I recommend instructors compile and distribute a list to students of other service initiatives and service learning courses in the university. Although I cover this in more detail later, I believe the goals of reflection and action will be fulfilled through college-long efforts. Even if there is a structure like that in place, instructors can do the research and share the information for interested students.

2. *Improve the class through constant gathering of student perspectives.*

As a graduate instructor I found myself struggling to fulfill all the goals I had set for my service learning course. I was in the first semester of my second-year, and along with teaching two sections of the course, I was applying to doctorate programs and finishing my Master's coursework. I believe the stresses and workload that came with being a graduate student caused my teaching to often remain in my own head. Perhaps my teaching tasks were marked off within the context of a larger and more personal academic to-do list. I think some of the class planning workload could have been lessened, but most importantly my own teaching could have been improved, if I would have looked towards the students for "service" expertise.

Through student interviews *after* the course, I found that many of my students had ideas for improving the course that I could have utilized *during* the course. For example, I described in chapter three how Shane transformed his agency profile into a scrapbook to be utilized by the organization. Also, Brittany introduced me to the complications in student organizations beyond the service component: the administrative duties. Student insights inspired each of the recommendations I outline in this section, but I search for ways to extract such ideas from students during the course. Many of these insights only became evident when I asked the students how I could improve the course in interviews following the course. I should have been asking such questions throughout the course. I now look to teaching scholarship to improve upon my approach to this service learning curricula.

Essentially, I over-planned to save time and to avoid uncertainty. In an effort to keep things "running along," I passed by opportunities to create an environment that fosters students' creativity, and thus enhanced critical thinking. I believe this could be avoided through a constant gathering of student perspectives when developing projects and in an effort to adapt the curriculum to their needs. To start, I could have better integrated a sequence project suggested by the English Department: Designing Your Own Project. As explained in our Teacher's Guide, in this sequence, "Students learn how to approach open-ended assignments and how to frame and deliver their own critical questions [...]" (Updike 124). In prior classes I had merged this project with one other (the Public Discourse project), but I see the value in giving students more agency in project development.

If I were to create the project guidelines with students and leaving project requirements flexible, my students could have more power over their service experience. Each student had a

different experience within their organization and from other members of the class, thus their approach in creating a text will vary. For example, allowing an open-ended project description for the agency profile could have led to some fruitful work for the organizations. Cords used to be an acronym, but the letters' meaning disappeared from the organization's written history. The students participating in Cords could have possibly used the agency profile as both an opportunity to introduce themselves to the organization and search for the lost pieces of Cords's history. The students of other groups found that the websites of the organizations lacked pertinent information; an opportunity to create content for the organization.

Critical teaching scholars transgress the boundaries between teacher and student by making student co-collaborators in course design and evaluation. I realized I should have included students in project planning and in choosing assigned readings. Ira Shor's work specifically has provided two ideas in implementing this recommendation. In *Empowering Education*, Ira Shor delineates a Freire-inspired teaching in which students "experience lively participation, mutual authority, and meaningful work" (21). In his chapter "Democratic Authority," Shor promotes shared decision making through the use of the "after-class group," "which meets with me after each class to evaluate and plan the ongoing course." The group provides their thoughts and feedback on the day's class. The students were offered class points for their participation, but he soon found other students joining out of curiosity. As he warns, my sections would have issues doing this after each class since it was an evening class. Nevertheless, I think even a few planned throughout the course could be beneficial. Further, for this particular service learning curricular model, I think after-class (or planned another time) groups could lead to rich service logs. Students might answer inquiry-based prompts developed in group sessions, such as "How is this course revealing, enlightening, restricting your research on service?" or even more practical questions, "How can classroom discussion be improved?"

While the class could have included students more in the project planning, the students should also have a say in the assigned readings for the course. Throughout the course I promoted the idea of community engagement, but I failed to establish equalized participation in another important community—the community of writers in our own classroom. The course readings were chosen entirely by me. Instead, the students and I could have created a collection of texts, "a course reader," that was representative of our exclusive classroom community and service experience. The students each brought with them a unique personal service narrative, and by

having each student (or in groups) choose readings we can have a better understanding of how their ideas of service were shaped. This could be a continuous effort; students can suggest readings throughout the entire course in an effort to include peers in their journey through “service.”

3. Create a more inquiry-based service log/reflection.

The service logs were effective as field notes, providing the instructor and students with meeting descriptions and reflective responses. Again, the most interesting service logs were those that developed when students were not reaching their required service hours. I provided students opportunities to return to readings, answer “service”-related questions, and explore interesting service moments. I found that these logs provided fresh perspectives on and continued the conversation with previous readings. Expanding on the last point, I think the students could have benefited from peer response to their service logs.

Deans promotes a dialogic journal between instructor and student; I argue that fellow students should also be involved in such dialogues. The students provided some interesting feedback during class discussions and in service log interviews, and I think much could be accomplished through peer dialogic journals. In “An Analysis of Peer Group Dialogue Journals for Classroom Use,” Dale Lumley shared a journal exercise in which high school students shared and responded to reading responses of their peers. Students wrote journal entries about the assigned readings and then “each student has one or two journal partners for the length of the journal exchange” (169). The high school students began to not only respond, but ask questions of their readers. From the discussions amongst group members and during in-class discussions, I believe students could have benefited from a practice such as this. Whether in an online space or simply handing over a hardcopy, I could expand the discussion between students and instructors in service logs to other members of the class. An interesting prompt would be to ask students to share thick descriptions of what happens at their organizations’ meetings, and then have other students respond. The students in my course found that meetings were at times unproductive and wasteful of their time. Other organizations, such as Green Oxford, prepared educational presentations on their social issue and engaged their members in inquiry. By exchanging,

responding, and giving advice to these meeting narratives, the organizations could benefit from the multiple perspectives the students gathered in class in an effort to run better meetings¹¹.

4. Plan more time for instructor and students to choose and learn more about the student organizations.

The climate and culture of organizations change constantly, year to year: leadership is replaced, member recruitment and retention vary, and community partners may come and go. It is difficult to predict the climate of the organization during first-semester courses especially, since elections for most organizations occur at the beginning of the academic year. I recommend choosing organizations that (a) have a solid leadership established (b) have a present academic advisor, (c) a well-planned schedule for the year, and/or (d) have a record of consistent service over a few years. Having started my own student organization, I understand the amount of time and people necessary to create a prolific organization. Thus, you may have several conversations with newer organizations prior to the course. I would not remove newer organizations from the list; I think observing the efforts of an organization in establishing a service identity on campus could be beneficial.

In chapter two I touched on the issue of students losing interest in their student organizations over time. This disinterest was often prompted by frustrations with how the student organizations went about planning meetings, service events, or even their goals for the year. I suggest spending a sufficient amount of time introducing students to their choices in student organizations in order to reduce the possibility of later apathy in their service work. In my course the students had only a week to make their decision, and next introduced themselves to their new choices via the Agency Profile. A possible suggestion to avoid choice-regret would be to have students choose organizations after the Agency Profile and presentation of the profile to the class. Students could be split into groups and paired with organizations based on initial interest for the Agency Profile project, and then after the project be allowed to make their final decisions. Further, I recommend having students rank and explain their choices, so that you (the instructor) can equally distribute students to each organization fairly.

¹¹When doing this type of reflection it is best to let the organizations and students know that their work is public.

5. Work with the organizations to align course objectives with organizations' schedules and goals.

One particular challenge in our course was the service logs. Since all campus organizations differ in how often they meet and for how long, I assigned a universal number of hours logged for every two weeks. Thus, the students were expected to spend the same amount of time out of class participating in their organizations. After reducing the hours and assigning inquiry-based service logs to make up for leftover hours, I still had difficulty making sure the amount of time was equal among all groups. Prior to the course I met with several organizations and inquired about their schedules, which were later changed to adapt to their own members' schedules. Also, many organizations did not keep attendance, so I had to find my own means of making sure students were not lying about service events. Although I found that class groups held all their members accountable and spoke up when someone was not doing their part, I often felt powerless when trying to determine participation grades in relation to service organizations. I believe this problem can be avoided with increased communication with the organization. Applicable to all service learning partnerships, I think we should look to the community partner for help assessing our students' work. Our partners, whether the community members or campus organizations, have the experience and expertise to determine if our students work is appropriate in *their* location. I may have the abilities to teach academic writing and simulate public discourse, but only the community knows what is working and what is not. In my case, the organization partners could work with me to make sure that students were actively participating within their organizations and if there were tools I may have missed when equipping my students to do this work.

6. Promote understanding of organizations through institutional mapping.

In the last chapter, Brittany's experience illustrated the administrative complications that arise when running a student service organization, an issue I left out in course planning. Brittany faced the challenge of reclaiming Cords's history, establishing lasting community partnerships, and recruiting and retaining members. Essentially, the course fell short in including organizational literacy. In her chapter of *Successful Service-Learning Programs*, Amy Driscoll explains that organizational literacy "means understanding what is going on, recognizing who's who, and knowing how to get things done" (151). Although the class is not meant to teach

students to run an organization, it is meant to prepare students to write while at college (and beyond). In the case of running a student organization, there is a lot of writing associated with obtaining organizational literacy as a leader in the university: constitutions, e-mails, proposals, promotional materials, websites, business letters, mission statements, and goals. Further, while navigating through these administrative tasks, students may develop an idea of the diverse roles of service in the organizations, from national headquarters to individual members.

In an effort to steer through the complicated structure of service organizations, I suggest the use of institutional mapping. By drawing out the components—and the connections between them—of service organizations, and within its larger context of the university, students can begin to see how power is distributed, what avenues one must travel down to get things done, and the various uses and definitions of service. This would be a successful addition to the agency profile, since mapping the organizations would provide a different way of students getting to know their organizations. By understanding how organizations function, students may better maneuver the organizations and find alternative avenues for critical thinking during the remainder of the course.

7. Be aware of possible, unwarranted dichotomies created through language

Service learning seeks to create partnerships between community and university, but I found that I often held the two apart when describing the types of assignments I wanted the students to complete. The assignments fell into what I believed to be two distinct categories—academic writing and public writing—each referring to their target audiences. This dichotomy was further entrenched by my constant concern to reach academic goals. Unfortunately, I feared the service component would take priority over the composition goals of the department and university, both of which I placed under the broader category of academic writing. Also, I wondered how service learning in a composition course could help students with writing within in their own majors. Essentially, I worried that I might produce efficient public writers at the expense of their academic writing.

When reading through student work after the course, I found that my division between academic and public hindered me from realizing the effects service has on academic writing. Many of my students chose organizations that were in some way linked to their major. For example, both Shane and Brittany majored in education, and both chose to participate in

organizations involving children. In this sense, the service component created an atmosphere of interdisciplinarity, making their major-related work more meaningful. Further, service used in such a way extends the students' understanding of research outside of the academy. In conclusion, "public writing" can redefine perceptions of academic writing, rather than conflicting with them.

8. Create service learning teaching communities.

Although I did not have the university's support, there are other ways to seek support in the university: other instructors. When implementing a service learning course for the first time, I found that I had no other instructors that really understood the problems I was facing. Thus, I think working with other instructors assigned to other sections of the course will create a community in which ideas can be exchanged and where issues can be voiced. With other instructor perspectives on using this particular curricular model, I could find solutions during the course rather than only after. I now look towards possibilities for future collaboration among instructors in an effort to improve my model and to inspire the creation of other models.

The written experiences with the curricular model will provide opportunities for discussion and collaboration with future instructors of the model. Although I soon leave the university where this service study happened, I will share this work in an effort to start communication at Miami University and future universities about service learning. I plan to have this thesis readily available to instructors at Miami University, along with an open invitation to contact me. I want my pedagogy and scholarship to be a start of an ongoing conversation. Even after I have graduated, I want my work to continue to work towards meaningful change.

Building Foundations: First-Year Composition and Service Learning

In "Learning at the Edges: Challenges to the Sustainability of Service Learning Education," Charles Underwood et al. argue that service learning at most universities "remains an activity that is largely peripheral to the dominant concerns of the institution" (7). Their call for recognition stems from the work of John Dewey. They write, "Dewey believed that it was the responsibility of the school to provide opportunities that would enable students both to apply their learning experiences to the world around them and to apply their experiences with the world to the learning process" (9). Paula Mathieu, on the other hand, argues that the university

should not be the one initially making these partnerships. Mathieu argues “These projects should develop and grow from the bottom up, not the top down, not mandate service of students, consider the community as a source of expertise, and acknowledge and seek to work rhetorically within the specificity and limitations of space and time” (106). She also revises Tom Deans models to include *writing by the community*, “which includes projects that assist in community publishing and history publishing” (110). These types of relationships involve an exchange of ideas between community and university, rather than trying to solve their problems.

While both make logical arguments, I argue that instructors should *at least* create communities in which their service initiatives are carried on by themselves or other instructors in higher-level English courses. While I am not arguing for a top-down model, I am arguing for an increased responsibility on the instructor’s part to make sure these initiatives carry on with our students. It saddens me that the progress of my course could be the end of the service learning road for many of the students. The students could have benefited from further service inquiry and the perspectives of additional instructors. Ideally, this work would function as a writing-across-the-curriculum model since service work is already being done across the span of the university. Unfortunately, establishing service learning communities involves commitment and time. Still, service learning courses and opportunities are out there; I worry the communication between such courses are not. Whether top-down or bottom-up models are best, we should still let our students know of available opportunities for service work. However these foundations are to be built, it is necessary that the building occur. These foundations are only made stronger when we instructors share our own stories about service learning, and our stories will only become more fruitful when we include the voices of our students, campus organizations, and community partners.

APPENDIX A

Project 1: Agency Profile

Purpose: We can't work well with an organization until we get to know that organization. The purpose of the Agency Profile is to help you better understand the student organization with which you will work; it also will give you experience in collaborative writing and field research.

The report should be a concise description and analysis of your organization. There are multiple parts of this document, so I recommend splitting up the workload among members of the group. Also, since there are multiple parts, you may use headings and subheadings. I highly recommend this. Please provide the following information.

Introduction

- **A brief description of your organization** to provide a reader (me) with a general idea of what the organization does before loading the reader (me, again) with details.
- **The organization's cause.** Why they exist. Just an intro of more to come...
- **Objectives** (this may be in a bullet format (if you get this from documentation created by the organization, such as the website, make sure to cite!).
- **A brief history.** Is it part of a national organization? When was it founded at Miami? Any important milestones?

How the organization functions

- What is their service? What does it look like? How often does it happen?
- When do they meet? What do they usually do at meetings? What are the rules?
- How is the leadership set up? What does the executive board look like?
- How is the organization funded?
- How large is the organization?
- What places on campus are associated with the organization?
- Consider, but you don't need to explicitly state this in a separate section... What are artifacts or symbols associated with the organization?
- What are some of the biggest accomplishments associated with the organization?
- What is the organization's presence on campus? How do they promote their organization? Website, flyers? Mega fair? Etc. What is their presence in the community? Or distant partner? (organizations working for Africa)
- How is their communication with the community? Is there a strong relationship? Do they just do service or is there a mutual "friendship" or relationship outside service?
- Is there a higher power they have to communicate with? Such as the national organization? Do they have an academic advisor? Are there university rules they have to follow?

Social Context (you may have to do some library research for this section)

- What needs is the organization responding to? Who defines those needs and how should they be met? What are the root social forces of the problems that the organization addresses? Are there alternative ways of addressing those problems?

Future

- *What are the organizations goals for the following year?*
- *The following 10 years?*

Reflection

- *What are your overall questions about the organization?*
- *What were some problems you ran into during your research?*
- *What is your initial impression of the organization?*
- *What is missing from your research? Gaps in their information? (i.e. questions the history still leaves)*

Of course, your profile is not limited to what is suggested above. Feel free to expand or add to it. Along with the project, you will be required to turn in a 1-page writer's memo about your experience in the project, what you contributed, and your experience in the group. The format of such a memo will be discussed in a later class.

Length: 4-5 pages double-spaced; 12-pt; 1 inch margins; Times New Roman (or Garamond)
Headings/subheadings when appropriate

Deliverables:

In one document...

- Rough drafts
- Final draft
- Works Cited Page
- 2 Interview transcripts (questions and answers; just print off emails if it was an email correspondence)

In separate document...

- Writer's Memo (from each member of the group)

Group Conference with Teacher: ---

Workshop: ---

Due Date: ---

On the day it is due, I would like just a very brief and informal (you don't need to prepare) "presentation" to the class about your organization and the research you did. I just want the class to hear about everyone else's experience!

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. What was your community service experience prior to the course?
2. How would you define a successful student service organization?
3. What organization did you participate in? Please describe your experience as a member of your organization.
4. What were the benefits and drawbacks of participating in a student service organization for you as a person and as a student?
5. How did the service logs benefit or hinder your service experience? What suggestions do you have to improve reflection?
6. How could the course better integrate the service work with academic projects, in-class activities, and assigned readings?
7. What suggestions do you have for improving this course? For instructors teaching this course in the future? And for future students enrolled in this course?
8. Overall, what did you learn in this course and is there anything you wished you had learned?
9. Do you plan to continue your participation in the organization? Why or why not? If not, would you like to join other service organizations or community service efforts in the future?
10. Any further comments to make on the course or about service learning?

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