

2002

## Writing Toward Democracy: Service-Learning and Composition

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WRITING TOWARD DEMOCRACY: SERVICE-LEARNING  
AND COMPOSITION

by

Glenn C. Hutchinson Jr.

A Dissertation Submitted to  
The Faculty of the Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy.

Greensboro  
2002

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HUTCHINSON JR., GLENN C. Ph.D. Writing toward Democracy: Service-Learning and Composition. (2002)  
Directed by Dr. Stephen Yarbrough, 144 pp.

This study will show how encouraging students to write toward democracy could help them to become better writers and citizens. Service-learning can help students learn to write through active inquiry, collaboration with different discourse communities, and consideration of their roles as citizens. However, service-learning must meet three challenges in order to be successful.

First, I will argue that freshman composition's subordinate status as a service course to the university can inhibit a pedagogy of service-learning. Even though service-learning may be a useful term to name this pedagogy, I propose that we find a different name in order to emphasize student writers as participants in democracy. We need to start thinking of our work in ways different from just "service." We need to encourage students to write toward democracy.

Next, service-learning and composition scholarship often emphasize a separation between academia and community, and this perception affects our discussion of discourse. We speak of "academic" discourse and "public"

discourse as if they were two different languages. I will argue that separating academia from community, and separating academic from public discourse, create unnecessary problems. Drawing upon the work of Dewey, Harris, and others, I call for a "discourse for democracy" in which students choose to write about and act upon problems that matter to them. These kinds of writing assignments will help students to become better writers and also might help them to become better citizens.

Finally, are we citizens of the world or citizens of countries or both? Responding to Martha Nussbaum's essay about cosmopolitanism and her belief that our focus as educators should be "world citizenship, rather than democratic or national citizenship" (11), I investigate possible definitions of citizenship. I will propose that our service-learning classes need to encourage students to write about their roles within a global community.

This study, then, proposes three changes in the use of service-learning with an examination of the scholarship and examples from my teaching.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following  
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June 28, 2002  
Date of Acceptance by Committee

June 28, 2002  
Date of Final Oral Examination

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

I'm a freshman, nervously awaiting the professor, sitting in silence with the rest of the class. The bell rings. No professor. We glance at one another and then stare at the wall and blackboard. We don't say much at all to one another, as most of us are probably wondering what is in store for us in Freshman English.

Then a bearded man enters, holding a diet Pepsi can in one hand and some books in the other. He walks around the long rectangular tables that form a box in the classroom and then takes a seat beside me. He smells of pipe tobacco. There is still silence in the room. After this dramatic entrance, he breathes a heavy sigh and asks us, "English 1101. What is English 1101? . . . Why are you here? . . . Why am I?" He then pauses. More silence. No response from the class.

I am surprised that an English professor would start a class with such questions. I think to myself: Why is he asking us? Isn't the purpose obvious? Let's find a course

catalog. Let's consult the graduation requirements. Why are we here? What a strange question!

As the semester progressed, I soon learned that these questions asked by my professor, Sam Watson, were more difficult and important than I realized. These were questions for me as a student to explore with my fellow classmates that semester, and these are questions that I'm still exploring now, years later as a rhetoric and composition teacher myself: What's the purpose of freshman composition? And how does its purpose help fulfill a university's purpose?

After teaching composition as a graduate teaching assistant, part-timer, and lecturer, I have been amazed at a paradox: how we have such high expectations for this freshman course, and at the same time, perceive the class as introductory and not that important. We both elevate and deflate the significance of freshman composition. One or two semesters are to teach students something very important--how to write at the college level--but these two semesters are remedial in teaching students what they did not learn in high school. It is a course that has helped develop an academic field with a wealth of scholarship over the past several decades; however, it is a class that is

rarely ever taught by senior scholars and faculty. It is the only course that nearly everyone takes in college, but is a course with both no content (there is no set curriculum or topic) and limitless content (students potentially could write about anything).

### **Question**

My central question for this study grows out of this paradox: Why should service-learning be used in freshman composition and how might we define service, community, and citizenship in ways to help our students to become better writers in a democracy?

This question stems from two beliefs: 1) Education, and specifically the teaching of writing, should help students to work towards becoming active, reflective citizens. 2) If students investigate problems that matter to them, then their writing will be more important to them and they will become better writers.

First, why should education help develop citizenship? Consider the mission statement of my university, which proclaims goals found in catalogs across the country:

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro is a student-centered university, linking the Piedmont Triad to the world through learning, discovery, and service . . .

Affirming the liberal arts as the foundation for lifelong learning, the University provides exemplary learning environments on campus and through distance education so that students can acquire knowledge, develop intellectual skills, and become more thoughtful and responsible members of a global society. Co-curricular and residential programs contribute to students' social, aesthetic, and ethical development.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro is a community in which people of any racial or ethnic identity, age, or background can achieve an informed appreciation of their own and different cultures. It is a community of actively engaged students, faculty, staff, and alumni founded on open dialogue, shared responsibility, and respect for the distinct contributions of each member. ("University of North Carolina - Greensboro Mission Statement")

I would like to believe that education can help us "become more thoughtful and responsible members of a global society," but when I share this mission statement with my students, most respond by saying, "That's a lot of words, but it doesn't mean much." And of course, why should they believe such a mission statement? We often think of education in terms of what kind of job and salary it will allow us to have.

In response to the ideals of such a mission statement, and with the belief that education should help us



participate in democracy, this study seeks to discover if the goals of citizenship can complement the goal of making students better writers. I will draw upon classical rhetoric, philosopher John Dewey, service-learning and composition scholars, and my own work as a teacher. I believe that freshman composition can be one part of an educational experience that asks students to recognize the importance of their own voices, reflect upon their place within community, and act--attempt to change what they want to change in the world. I want to ask my students to write toward democracy, to participate in the conversation of what it means to be a citizen. I maintain that if students see significance to their work, if they believe that their voices and actions can matter, then their writing will have an urgency and purpose that will aid in their development as writers. Therefore, the chapters that follow propose that writing toward democracy means investigating problems that matter to us as citizens, and through this process, we can become better writers.

### **Service-Learning: The Movement**

This study enters the conversation of a pedagogy called service-learning. Of course, the idea of learning

being a service to community is not a new concept; we learn in order to do something better, often for another. After the Land Grant Act of 1862, many colleges in the United States began with a specific duty of service to their state and country. Thus, from Isocrates in Ancient Greece to Dewey in America to today, people have written and talked about how education can help students recognize their roles and responsibilities within a community. The specific term "service-learning" began to be used only in the late 1960's, appearing in the work of Sigmon and William Ramsey at the Southern Regional Education Board in 1967 (Jacoby 12). In 1969, the Board published work linking community service to the classroom and used the term "service-learning" (Stanton, Giles, and Cruz 2). In the 1970's, a series of programs and organizations began, such as the National Center for Service-Learning, ACTION, and the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education (Jacoby 12). In 1985, Campus Compact started in forming a group of universities and their chancellors who have made service-learning a priority at their institutions. Also, another organization, Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL), started with a mission to help students volunteer and learn (Jacoby 12). And in the 1990's, service began to

help some young people pay for college. In 1993, under the Clinton administration and passed by a bi-partisan vote in Congress, AmeriCorps started sending over 40,000 young people annually into communities throughout our country, who are paid a minimum wage and receive an educational stipend at the end of their year of service (Hutchinson "Everyday Heroes"). Thus, since the 1960's, service-learning has been part of a growing movement that emphasizes community service among young people and students.

### **The Scholarship of Service-Learning and Composition**

In the field of composition, there is a growing amount of service-learning scholarship published in composition journals and discussed at conferences. Many scholars base their theories and practice on the educational philosophy of John Dewey, which emphasizes that learning is a process of doing, and the liberatory pedagogy of Paulo Freire, which emphasizes the power of education to address social problems. Although composition journals often have articles about service-learning, *Reflections on Community-Based Writing* is one journal launched in 2000 that focuses specifically on service-learning and composition.

In this scholarship of service-learning, one main work is the American Association For Higher Education's (AAHE) series on service-learning in different disciplines. The volume, *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning and Composition* (1997), contains a series of articles on the challenges and possibilities for using service-learning to teach writing. This anthology includes Bruce Herzberg's "Community Service and Critical Teaching," one of the most cited articles. Herzberg's essay is a reflection upon his students' work as literacy tutors in which he notes the problem of students not looking past their tutoring experience to examine larger social issues: "The goal of the course was not . . . to facilitate the tutoring experience but to investigate the social and cultural reasons for the existence of illiteracy . . . " (66).

Therefore, most service-learning theorists and practitioners emphasize that the goal of this pedagogy is not to have students write solely about their individual project experiences, but to use these experiences to think about larger social problems. Schutz and Gere point out the importance of students taking their personal experience as volunteers and connecting it with public issues.

Service-learning, then, wants to be more than just volunteer work, but an intellectual endeavour that could facilitate social change, or at least encourage students to ponder it. In discussing the public role of the intellectual and the writing teacher, Ellen Cushman sees the modern rhetoricians themselves as agents for social change.

In order to consider social change, service-learning raises the question of the balance between action and reflection. Commenting on the potential in Paulo Freire's liberatory pedagogy, Thomas Deans writes:

[G]enuine learning involves two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interconnection that if one is sacrificed, the other immediately suffers. The sacrifice of action leads to 'verbalism,' vacant words; the sacrifice of reflection leads to 'activism,' uncritical behavior. (Deans 124)

Service-learning classes, then, ask students to both do and think about what they are doing through the process of writing and reflection, developing the ability "[t]o see problems as systemic and to see things from multiple perspectives" (Deans 125).

Some universities have begun service-learning programs, some of which connect directly to composition.

Many universities now have volunteer coordinators or service-learning directors who provide professors with community contacts, helping them alter their courses to include a service-learning component. And specifically for the field of composition, there are examples such as Linda Flower's work at Carnegie Mellon, which includes a mentoring program with college students and teenagers in the inner-city of Pittsburgh (*Flower Problem-Solving Strategies*).

With the growth of such projects, another question for service-learning scholarship is evaluation: How do we know that service-learning helps students learn and write? Eyler and Giles' *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* addresses this issue with analysis of surveys, and scholars such as Adrian Wurr have compared students' writing in service-learning courses and non-service-learning courses. This work supports the claim that service-learning can aid in learning and writing.

### **Entering the Conversation**

For this study, I will focus on how encouraging students to write toward democracy can help them to become better writers and perhaps citizens. In order to accomplish this objective, it seems to me that the terms—

service, community, and citizenship—need to be clarified. What does it mean to "serve"? Does community include academia? Where does citizenship begin and end? After teaching service-learning for several years now and reading the scholarship, I would like to examine how we might define these terms and apply them. Similar to Herzberg, Schutz, and Gere's call for service-learning to help students examine larger social issue and engage in a conversation about public issues, I believe that writing courses need to help students participate in democracy. Recognizing their potential roles in democracy will assist students in becoming better writers. To accomplish this goal, we need to link our work in the community with our roles as writers and citizens.

This study begins with background and justification of service-learning for a writing course (Chapter 2). Students can learn to write through active inquiry, collaboration with different discourse communities, and consideration of their roles as citizens. The chapters that follow will address three challenges for service-learning and suggest how we might write toward democracy.

Chapter 3 considers how we define, think and do "service." What makes freshman composition different from

many other courses is its tradition of being a service course to the university. I will argue that this subordinate status can inhibit a pedagogy of service-learning. Even though service-learning may be the most useful term to name this pedagogy, I propose that we think of finding a different name in order to emphasize student writers as participants in democracy. We need to start thinking of our work in ways different from just "service."

Chapter 4 addresses two phantoms: the ivory tower and the public. Much service-learning and composition scholarship emphasizes a separation between academia and community, and this perception affects our discussion of discourse. We speak of "academic" discourse and "public" discourse as if they were two different languages. I will argue that separating academia from community, and separating academic from public discourse, create unnecessary problems. Drawing upon the work of Dewey, Harris, and others, I call for a "discourse for democracy" in which students choose to write about and act upon problems that matter to them. These kinds of writing assignments will help students to become better writers and also might help them to become better citizens.



Chapter 5 raises the question of citizenship in a global age: Are we citizens of the world or citizens of countries or both? Responding to Martha Nussbaum's essay about cosmopolitanism and her belief that our focus as educators should be "world citizenship, rather than democratic or national citizenship" (11), I investigate possible definitions of citizenship. I will propose that our service-learning classes need to encourage students to write about their roles within a global community.

### **Writing Toward Democracy**

Democracy asks a lot of its citizens: to voice our opinion on what matters to us. In other words, democracy gives us the chance to address problems that we want solved. However, often people are silent. They do not vote. They do not get involved. They do not try to contribute to their community. Of course, service-learning cannot solve this problem on its own, but the problem of being silent is one that makes its way into the writing classroom.

Sometimes students do not seem to have problems or questions that they want to investigate in their writing, so they feel compelled to write about the topics that seem

to be expected: essays on abortion, capital punishment, gun control, etc. No wonder one can find scores of essays on the internet ready to be downloaded on these topics, for they are the assignment canon of freshman composition. Although these issues are extremely important and demand our attention, I have found that often students do not feel they have a stake in these matters and they think that what they have to say really will not make much difference. I then ask, how often do we ask students what problems matter to them?

I would argue that throughout much of their educational experience many students have not been asked to ask questions. Service-learning is one way for them to start asking questions and writing about problems that matter to them and to those around them. This pedagogy certainly is not a complete solution. In fact, some students may be resistant to such projects at first and see little relevance to their own lives. I have found, however, that when students do see importance to their work, it energizes both them and their writing. When a student starts working with a 5<sup>th</sup> grader and helping him read, when a student starts a chapter of the NAACP on campus, when a student begins a campaign to address the

treatment of animals, when a student makes a connection with an international student through a conversations program, when a student works with children at a homeless shelter for the first time, I have found that my classroom becomes a place where we are investigating something tangible, something immediate, something that matters.

But it's not easy. Although the first thing to do is to get started and to try something, I think that I have assumed too much about what it means to serve, to be a part of a community, and to be a citizen. So, I hope this study will help me clarify how to think about these ideas and act upon them.

Also, I hope that the pages that follow will be one more step toward answering those puzzling questions, the ones that Sam, my freshman composition teacher, asked me that warm August day:

What is English 1101? Why are you here? Why am I?

## CHAPTER II

### SERVICE-LEARNING AND COMPOSITION:

#### INTERSECTIONS OF INQUIRY, COLLABORATION, AND CITIZENSHIP

An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory simply because it is only in experience that any theory has vital and verifiable significance.

- John Dewey  
*Democracy and Education*  
(148)

The epigraph points to the educational philosophy behind many service-learning endeavours: students' experience is what makes their learning meaningful and possible. But how does a service "experience" help students learn? This question is of great interest to many scholars, such as Eyler and Giles in *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* (1999), who justify, through quantitative and qualitative analysis of students' coursework, a pedagogy gaining popularity in a variety of disciplines from elementary school to college. For the purpose of this study, and in consideration of both service-learning and composition scholarship, why might a

writing teacher want to use service-learning in freshman composition at the university?

In this chapter, I will argue that students serving their communities can create three opportunities for learning in a composition course:

- 1) **Writing as Inquiry:** An act of inquiry encouraging action and reflection.
- 2) **Writing as Collaboration:** An opportunity for collaboration with different communities of discourse.
- 3) **Writing as Citizenship:** A method of learning about a writer's role and responsibility as a citizen and member of a community of discourse.

Service-learning, then, can be an effective way of teaching writing through these acts of inquiry, collaboration, and citizenship. In addition, this rationale for service-learning in a writing course leads to questions about the politics of composition as historically a "service" course to the university and now from the university to the community, a relationship that calls for examination of how we define "community" and "citizenship." After my justification for service-learning in composition, I will raise these questions about service, community, and citizenship, which I will explore in the chapters that follow.

### **Writing as Inquiry: Entering the Twilight Zone**

On the first day of the semester, I begin with a letter to my class and address it "Dear Writing Adventurers." They usually look at me a bit strangely, but I like to think of the classes that I teach as adventures, implying that we, both the class and the teacher, are to discover something new. As Dewey writes, "[t]he invasion of the unknown is of the nature of an adventure," and the place where learning takes place is in between knowledge and ignorance, what he calls "the twilight zone of inquiry, of thinking" (*Democracy and Education* 148). Yes, entering my writing class is like entering . . . the twilight zone.

I quote Dewey because service-learning's roots are in his educational philosophy and others like Paulo Freire's who contend that students should be active participants in a learning process based on inquiry. Instead of making students passive receptacles for knowledge so they can regurgitate a series of facts for an exam, service-learning, like Dewey's pragmatism and Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, encourages both action and reflection. But why are inquiry, action, and reflection important ingredients for learning, and more specifically, why might this be important for the writing classroom?

First of all, even with the wealth of scholarship about freshman composition and its importance, the writing classroom often is not a place (or not seen as a place) for critical inquiry, but a remedial course, a place to gain writing skills for future classes, which is a characteristic of Dewey's "traditional" classroom for primary and secondary students. This kind of "preparation" can be a "treacherous idea," according to Dewey, because it tries to compartmentalize knowledge:

One trouble is that the subject-matter in question was learned in isolation; it was put, as it were, in a water-tight compartment. When the question is asked, then, what has become of it, where has it gone to, the right answer is that it is still there in the special compartment in which it was originally stowed away. If exactly the same conditions recurred as those under which it was acquired, it would also recur and be available. But it was segregated when it was acquired and hence is so disconnected from the rest of experience that it is not available under the actual conditions of life. It is contrary to the laws of experience that learning of this kind, no matter how thoroughly engrained at the time, should give genuine preparation. (*Experience and Education* 48)

Dewey critiques, then, a teacher's tendency to train students how to do something in isolation and in preparation for future application, because they likely will recall this knowledge only in isolation, not connected

to anything else.<sup>1</sup> If we apply this idea to college composition, how can we expect a student to study writing in isolation--without writing about something, inquiring into something? In some ways, a writing course wrestles with a paradox: the course has both no content and limitless content. Most writing courses focus on a student's writing, not a specific content or discipline; however, unless all writing is personal, the student faces a tremendous amount of content to learn in order to write about a topic. Some scholars question whether we should even have a freshman writing course; as Stephen Yarbrough notes in *After Rhetoric*, "[t]eaching a 'composition' or 'how-to-write' course makes about as much sense as teaching a course on 'how to live'" (213).<sup>2</sup> The place of composition in the university is a problem that I will address later in this study, but regarding the isolated learning of writing, I believe that the question of purpose demands our attention: If students are not investigating real questions or problems, then how can they learn to write? Although there are other possible assignments for inquiry, service-learning is one option that can give students' writing a purpose and a chance for inquiry, because it places them in



rheterical situations that ask them to be active learners, not passive.

Active? Yes, service-learning can create a classroom of what Paulo Freire calls "co-investigators":

[T]he problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of his students. The students--no longer docile listeners--are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher.  
(*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 61-62)

A classroom of inquiry would resemble Freire's goal of students in dialogue with one another and their teacher. This kind of pedagogy contrasts with what Freire labels as the "banking concept of education," where passive students await the deposit of knowledge from their teacher. In a service-learning class, as students complete their projects--such as volunteering at a soup kitchen, tutoring at an elementary school, or working with agencies assisting immigrants--they not only help others, but through their observations and experiences, receive the chance to learn about a variety of issues that they can explore in their writing and share with their classmates.

Of course, service-learning certainly does not guarantee inquiry; in his often cited article, "Community

Service and Critical Teaching," Bruce Herzberg points out the challenges of service-learning and how students' work sometimes lacks much critical analysis, such as looking beyond the personal and at the societal factors creating the need for volunteerism. Other scholars, such as Schutz and Gere, have addressed this concern, and in Chapter 4, I will explore this problem too. However, service projects do demand active participation of a student/writer, especially if students have an opportunity to select a project that matches their interests or a problem that they see in their community. Also, students need the opportunity to reflect upon and report what they experience to their classmates.

The physical act of doing something outside the classroom, which becomes their research, creates a valuable opportunity for learning and for writing. Dewey stresses the "[i]mportance of the participation of the learner in the formation of the purposes which direct his activities in the learning process . . . " (*Experience and Education* 67). Like Freire's "co-investigators," Dewey calls for a "reciprocal give-and-take, the teacher taking but not being afraid also to give" (*Experience and Education* 72). The

teacher contributes his/her expertise, but so do the students.

A classroom of inquiry, then, contrasts with traditional notions of the teacher as the sole expert. In *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1987), Donald Shön describes a place where teachers become more like coaches and learning takes place through "[a] distinctive dialogue of student and coach in which description of practice is interwoven with performance" (20). Also, with an emphasis upon dialogue and performance, students' accumulation of knowledge is not the main goal, but the tool for inquiry:

Acquiring is always secondary, and instrumental to the act of inquiring. It is seeking, a quest, for something that is not at hand. We sometimes talk as if "original research" were a peculiar prerogative of scientists or at least of advanced students. But all thinking is research, and all research is native, original, with him who carries it on, even if everybody else in the world already is sure of what he is still looking for.

(Dewey *Democracy and Education* 148)

Dewey, Freire, and Shön believe in a classroom that asks students to do "original research," where students learn by doing, and if we apply this idea to the writing classroom, a service project can give a student writer such a chance.

In order for the act of inquiry to help students learn, reflection is needed, and service-learning stresses reflection by asking students to make connections between what they read/write in the classroom and what they do in the community. Without such reflection and connections, learning suffers; in describing the "traditional" classroom, Dewey says that many students see a "peculiar artificiality" to what they learn in school, that it is "unreal" (*Democracy and Education* 161). College writing courses risk a similar fate; students often view the class as a hurdle to jump and the essays that they write as having little to do with their own lives or the "real" world. In *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*, Paulo Freire emphasizes both a reading of the word (text) and reading of the world (student's experience/environment):

And the experience of comprehension will be all the deeper if we can bring together, rather than dichotomizing, the concepts emerging from the school experience and those resulting from the day-to-day world. (19)

To achieve this "deeper" understanding, students need to see a relevance to what they are learning and writing and

how it affects them and their neighbors. Dewey's advice on how to aid such learning and forge those connections between what we read/write and what we do is to begin with inquiry, to give students a problem to solve, which will require thinking, and "learning naturally results" (*Democracy and Education* 154). Problem-solving education leads to thinking that requires "[s]pecific connections between something which we do and the consequences which result, so that the two become continuous" (*Democracy and Education* 145). Also, as Ronald and Roskelly note, both Dewey's pragmatism and Freire's method stress these kind of connections, which strengthen learning as both students and teachers see something valuable to what they are doing, reflecting them toward "a sense of hopefulness" (614).

What makes service-learning different, then, from pure volunteerism is the reflection component, because service-learning courses ask students to reflect upon their service projects, often through writing, to try to understand why such service is needed, to think about how their actions affect others and how others affect them. Although service projects are not the only kind of assignments that call for students to be active learners, service requires both action and reflection, whether students write about their

experiences or write for a community agency. It gives their writing a purpose that otherwise might not seem apparent to students.

### **Writing as Collaboration: Exploring the Contact Zone**

We do not learn in isolation; we learn from others. Although many university writing classes use groupwork and peer editing, students' collaboration and understanding of different discourse communities are difficult goals to reach, and community service can be an effective tool for such collaboration and understanding.

Although written decades ago, Dewey's descriptions of the "traditional" classroom and its isolation still seem to ring true, even with some aspects of composition at the university. In *Experience and Education* (1938), for example, Dewey argues that traditional classrooms in primary and secondary schools rarely connect with the local community:

There was no demand that the teacher should become intimately acquainted with the conditions of the local community, physical, historical, economic, occupational, etc., in order to utilize them as educational resources. (40)

Do freshman writing classes typically "become intimately acquainted" with the communities in which they live?

Programs vary, and of course some writing projects such as Linda Flower's at Carnegie Mellon and the Stanford writing program serve as direct links to the local community, but what persists is a tendency to try to separate ourselves from others, which can impair learning.

From the "twilight zone" of inquiry, let us journey, then, to the "contact zone," Mary Louise Pratt's term for the place where different discourse communities overlap or collide in situations of power disparity. For example, in her work, Pratt discusses the contact zone in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Peru, the intersection and conflict found in that era's texts between Spanish colonizers and indigenous peoples (Pratt 33-40, Bizzell "'Contact Zone' and English Studies"). We need to study such discourse zones, so that we can try to understand the role of language in our lives. And contact zones still exist: racism, sexism, and poverty affect the way that people communicate and live. If we limit ourselves to a narrow definition of "academic discourse," then we may not be able to learn about these contact zones. Often in academia, the way people communicate can exclude

others, a point argued by Mike Rose in "The Language of Exclusion" and by other scholars such as Freire. Learning academic discourse turns into a hurdle to jump or game to play in order to remain part of or enter the elite class. The way we use discourse may not say anything about how intelligent we are; however, often in classrooms, if students do not write in academic discourse, then they receive the label "basic writers" and are not seen as being as intelligent as other students.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, service-learning gives us the chance to consider first-hand the different ways in which people express themselves and their perspectives on problems in their communities.

Why is collaboration so important in learning how to write? Most importantly, contact zones point to the significance of how community gives the writer a voice and a way of seeing. In *Invention as a Social Act*, Karen LeFevre stresses this importance of community to a writer and notes how in the past (and this view persists to some extent) writers often were seen as isolated geniuses: the writer in a dusty attic who shuts out the world and creates a masterpiece without the influence of anyone else. LeFevre explains why such a view of authorship and invention misleads us and how a community affects a writer



and her writing. A writer gains a voice and obtains ideas from other writers, from conversations with others, the influence of community.

In addition, knowledge and language are social. In *Mind and Society*, Vygotsky explains that we learn from others in what he calls the "zone of proximal development" (86). Students increase their knowledge ("level of potential development") through working with others (86). This social view of learning differs from Piaget and other theorists who believe that an individual's development happens before learning. Vygotsky points out that a child often is at one level when he/she can do work independently and at another level when he/she works with others. This "zone of proximal development" shows that what we can do independently is shaped and increased by what we can do with others. Through interacting with others, a child then learns when "[s]peech and practical activity converge" (24) and students internalize "external knowledge" (91).<sup>4</sup> As Bakhtin's "dialogic" view also indicates, our "inner speech" develops through our interactions with the world around us (Hutchinson "Service-Learning: Vygotsky, Dewey, and Teaching Writing").

These ideas about knowledge and language, the importance of community in shaping our knowledge and the ways in which we express ourselves, point to the significance of the rhetorical situation, as Ede and Lunsford indicate in their essay, "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked." Even though focusing too much on audience can inhibit the writing process in some instances--a writer may feel the need to "pander to the crowd" if he/she thinks too much about what others might think when beginning a piece of writing--other circumstances require considerable thought about audience and community. In a problem-solving situation, thinking about audience and community often is a necessity. In Ede and Lunsford's example, if a student writes about a neighborhood upset about placing a home for adults who are mentally-retarded in their backyard, the student will probably need to inquire about the views and opinions of the neighbors affected by this building and how to explain to them the importance of such a facility.

Ede and Lunsford's discussion of audience and community sheds light on the issue of collaboration for service-learning classes and the delightful complications that can result. At times, students' writing can be used

by a community agency for their newsletter or perhaps students can write memos, fliers, etc. However, like most rhetorical situations, writing for a community agency creates the challenge of writing for multiple audiences (teacher, community agency, community supervisor, the population that the agency serves, etc.). Nora Bacon suggests that such writing "[p]oints us toward a curriculum of textual studies based on inquiry into variation in discourse" ("Community Service Writing" 53). When students take future courses at the university in different disciplines, when students graduate and write in the workplace, when students want to participate as citizens and express their views to their political leaders, they will have to negotiate between different audiences and communities.

In one of my freshman English courses at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, some students and I started a weekly writing class at a shelter for homeless families. After conversations with the staff, we planned for a regular writing group that would meet for the entire semester and collaborate on a collection of stories; however, after the project began, this goal had to be modified because of community needs. We learned that a

regular writing group was extremely difficult--people lived at the shelter for a temporary amount of time, from a few weeks to three months at the most as they sought their own residences. Another obstacle to those wanting to attend the writing group was the lack of child care; adults could not concentrate on their writing when they needed to watch their children, so we tried to provide child care.

This service project required my students and me to ask questions about writing and discourse communities:

- a) **Focus/purpose:** What is the purpose of our service work? My hope for the shelter writing class was to explore how writing can help different communities to communicate and learn from one another.
- b) **Audience:** In which communities are we communicating? What are their needs? The adult residents of the shelter, according to the staff, had an interest in a class. However, what kinds of writing activities would be beneficial?
- c) **Organization:** How can you make such a project work?
- d) **Rhetorical analysis:** How do we use language to communicate with other communities? At the beginning of the term, one activity included the analysis of a flier that I created for the course. I asked my freshman students for advice on rhetorical strategies as to how to make the flier persuasive: What should I put on this flier that I will post in the hallways of the shelter? What should I call the writing group?

After completing different activities such as résumé writing, personal essays, and trips to campus cultural events, we wrote a play that serves as a useful metaphor for our collaboration. Toward the end of the semester, a small group of shelter residents, the freshman volunteers, and I collaborated on writing scenes for an original drama. A setting was chosen, characters named, and then a tablet was passed around the group as each person wrote one line of dialogue. Thus, at the end of the activity, we created our own scenes (later read for the entire shelter at dinner time). No one person wrote the scene; individuals made contributions together. Through this project, we learned through writing with one another. We learned about issues of audience analysis when designing the flier, collaboration between a diverse group of people, and revision of both our writing and understanding of one another.

What we know and how we communicate what we know is tied to community, the world. A writer does not invent in a vacuum. Freshman composition and other writing courses need to give students an opportunity to explore and reflect upon different discourse communities, those contact zones. This opportunity will make them better writers by listening

and interacting with people who might have different perspectives than their own, to understand how they frame and discuss the problems they see in their communities.

### **Writing as Citizenship: The Democratic Zone**

From the zone of inquiry, through the contact zone, let us enter what I'll call the democratic zone, the third justification for service-learning in composition. One of the goals for a university education and for a writing class is for students to investigate their roles as citizens and members of a democracy, and service-learning can help reach that goal. Classical rhetoricians, such as Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian, emphasize that the study of rhetoric should make its students good citizens. In addition, service-learning practitioners, echoing themes again from Dewey and Freire, stress the importance of students reflecting upon their roles in a community and the possibility for social change.

Classical rhetoric focuses on public discourse and the rhetor's role within that discourse. Aristotle defines rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (24). In Ancient Greece, then, citizens enjoyed *isegoria* or "equality of public

speech" which, according to Herodotus, "[w]as that unique characteristic of democracy that allowed each citizen to express his equal membership of the community and in this way he achieved 'his very self' through and in community" (qtd. in Coleman 28). Thus, schools of rhetoric began to prepare citizens (defined only as elite males) to participate in such public conversations. In *Antidosis*, Isocrates compares his training of students' minds to a gymnastics class training their bodies, and through his instruction, students of rhetoric aspire to be better people and citizens. In Roman rhetoric, Cicero argues for a combination of the philosophical, sophistic, and technical traditions in the teaching of rhetoric in order to educate the rhetor for participation in community. In *On Oratory and Orators*, speaking through the character of Crassus in a discussion with other rhetors in the woods (resembling Plato's *Phaedrus*), Cicero stresses the ideal orator/rhetor as the leader and protector of a just and orderly society. Cicero does not think you should separate philosophy and rhetoric:

Hence arose that divorce, as it were, of the tongue from the heart, a division certainly absurd; useless, and reprehensible, that one class of persons should teach us to think, and other to speak, rightly . . . (209 Book 3, Chapter XVI).

Similar to Isocrates' view, Crassus explains how an orator should be a philosopher-statesman-orator. Also, greatly influenced by Cicero, and in his government position as Chair of Rhetoric in Rome, Quintilian equates a good orator with a good citizen or *vir bonus dicendi*, "the good man speaking well" (*Institutio Oratoria*, Book XII). He goes as far as to say that no one but a good man can be a finished orator.

Although some teachers (including myself) might be uncomfortable linking good rhetoric directly with good character and citizenship (a question to examine when I discuss different definitions of citizenship in Chapter 5), some scholars of composition, such as Halloran, call for a return to a "focus on public discourse" and citizenship from classical rhetoric (263). Of course, the students of Greek and Roman classical rhetoric were the elite and lived in a society where many, including women and slaves, did not enjoy the same rights; as Benjamin Barber comments, "In Athens, our first 'free society,' it was ironically a



system of slavery that permitted free Athenians to be full-time citizens" (*A Place for Us* 142). The students of rhetoric who participated in assemblies were able to do so because slaves did the rest of the work.

Today, even though democracy grants rights to all of its citizens, a crisis in public discourse and community exists in the United States. For example, Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* shows that there are a low number of people who vote or are engaged in civic issues. His data includes this interesting correlation: in 1993, the total number of American bowlers increased by 10%, while league bowling decreased by 40%. This statistic raises the question of whether people are becoming less and less inclined to participate in groups and think about community. In 1994, one third more people bowled than voted in the congressional elections (Putnam 70, Ervin). Of course, Putnam's study encompasses more than bowling, but the point is made: there is a decline in a sense of community and public discourse. And at the university, the same trend takes place and even more so. College students are becoming less and less interested in politics and public discourse: even though voting has decreased across the entire population, the decline is 50% more severe among

young people (18-24) than the rest of registered voters (Sax 6).<sup>5</sup> Of course, I do not intend to argue here that freshman composition can solve the problems of low voter turnout or national public discourse; however, if our system of education is based on democracy, and if one of our goals as writing teachers is for our students to feel empowered with skills of public discourse, then we need to experiment with new ways of getting them involved in civic issues and asking them to think critically about their roles as citizens.<sup>6</sup>

Citizenship issues are not new to the field of composition at the American university. Beginning with the first composition class at Harvard in 1874, freshman composition has endured a reputation of being a "remedial" course that teaches students only the fundamentals of writing, those survival skills for future courses and their specialized fields. However, composition does have a history of "activist rhetoric." In *Activist Rhetorics and American Higher Education 1885-1937*, Susan Kates describes three colleges' instruction of women, African Americans, and the working class, revealing that before Freire's critical pedagogy (the idea that education should work for

social change), these colleges practiced "activist education" (xi):

[A] rhetorical study that pursues the relationship between language and identity, makes civic issues a theme in the rhetoric classroom, and emphasizes the responsibility of community service as part of the writing and speaking curriculum. (xi)

Thus, a history does exist for the study of discourse that connects with issues of citizenship.

The university of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is also part of a slow, but significant trend as more scholars examine the boundaries and relationships between academia and community. In *Achieving Our Country*, Richard Rorty argues that academia has become too much a "spectator" of what is happening outside the campus and scholars need to implement theories that lead to real social change. And according to Di Leo and Moraru, posttheorists (referring to Jeffrey Williams' "posttheory" academics) are responding and becoming more concerned about how theory relates to practice, how the classroom connects with community, and how "[t]he public space becomes a focus of critical and political reading, which opens up possibilities for active intervention, boundary renegotiations, and effective change

(244). Thomas Bender believes that Dewey's ideas promise more possible bridges between academic and public life:

If there is a rhetoric to be developed that can be spoken to a diverse public, it will be first nourished, as John Dewey understood, in the face-to-face conversation of local areas. What the academic offers to his or her local culture is the intellectual power of theoretical abstraction that derives from an academic discipline. The locality, in return, offers to the academic the particularity, the concreteness, of lived experience in time and place. The language and thought of each, academic intellect and public life, would both be recognized and changed in a civic conversation. (Bender 145)

In the field of composition, teachers, such as O'Reiley in *The Peaceable Classroom*, believe that the discourse of freshman composition can work for social change. Indeed, Ellen Cushman sees the modern rhetorician as "an agent for social change" and argues for service-learning as a way to address the crisis in public discourse:

When public intellectuals not only reach outside the university, but actually *interact* with the public beyond its walls, they overcome the ivory tower isolation that marks so much current intellectual work. They create knowledge with those whom the knowledge serves.  
(Cushman "The Public Intellectual" 330)

Therefore, service-learning and composition is part of a growing movement to see how education can work for social change.

Of course, it may sound odd at first to think of freshman English as part of some grand endeavour to change the world, but sometimes it is a small, but significant step that can make quite a difference in someone's life and help that person realize his/her role as a citizen. In one of my classes, for example, a student with a visual impairment had the task of walking from an off-campus apartment to class every day and faced a stretch of uncompleted sidewalk that made the walk difficult for him and his seeing-eye dog and other students with disabilities. He chose one of his writing assignments for freshman English to be a letter to the Chancellor asking for a remedy to this situation, and after his phone calls and writing a draft of the letter, the sidewalk was fixed before the end of the semester. Although this assignment was a fairly easy one for him to complete and does not seem very complicated, this writing experience showed him and the rest of the class that words have the power to change, and evidence for that power is found in that new stretch of sidewalk.

### Questions to Consider

Service-learning--through these acts of inquiry, collaboration, and citizenship--can help students learn and write. Service-learning inspires learning, and it also inspires questions. To conclude, then, I would like to introduce three questions for the chapters that follow:

First, how does freshman composition's history as a "service" course to the university affect its implementation of service-learning? For example, most of its teachers are part of what Berlin calls the "faculty underclass," so how do they find the time and support to make service-learning part of their teaching?

Secondly, how do we define "community" in the way that we attempt to do community service? A great deal of service-learning scholarship discusses the separation from the campus and the community, arguing that service-learning is a way to escape the "ivory tower." But how do the intersections of commerce and academia, public and intellectual, complicate our definition of "community" and understanding of service-learning?

Finally, in a global age, how do we define "citizenship"? For example, Martha C. Nussbaum argues that our focus as educators should be "world citizenship, rather

than democratic or national citizenship" (11). How might the decline of the nation-state and the emphasis upon the global marketplace affect our practice of service-learning?

In the chapters that follow, these questions will navigate this study through these zones of twilight, contact, and democracy.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **DEFINING SUBORDINATES:**

#### **SERVICE BY ANY OTHER NAME?**

What's in a name? Would that which we call service by any other word smell as sweet?

What is service? It can be the "condition" or "action of serving a master," worshipping one's religion, "tending to the welfare or advantage of another," waiting tables, or beginning a game of tennis (OED). If you service something, you might be trying to fix it or work on its upkeep, like the service department at the car dealer.

With its inception and years before talk of service-learning, freshman composition gained the label of being a "service" course to the university, taught mainly by what Berlin calls the "faculty underclass" (part-timers, teaching assistants, and lecturers who serve an academic master or hierarchy), providing a remedial duty of trying to fix the problems of students' writing skills in preparation for their future coursework. Many see it as a subordinate course, and thus, something lesser.



Community service also places people in subordinate roles as they do something for another. Community service can have the connotation of someone doing something wrong and serving the community as a form of punishment. Also, service or charity can appear to be a band-aid that helps sustain a system of social hierarchy that subordinates others. In addition, service can place its practioners in roles that might make others feel subordinate to them: the university, the professor, the student entering a community as experts, not partners, and the recipients of their service feeling lesser or subordinate to them. Finally, the act of service itself is subordinate to much of the work done in academia, usually ranking below traditional research as Boyer notes in *Scholarship Reconsidered*.

As more compositionists explore the possibilities of service-learning, is "service" an adequate or desired name, then, for what they aim to do both in the classroom and outside it? What are the potential drawbacks of composition as service to the university and the community? In this chapter, I will suggest that service is indeed a problematic term and concept, but it is a necessary starting point; the difficulty with the term "service" points us toward the challenges of service-learning and

composition and how we must examine our definition and implementation of service. As freshman composition attempts to serve its students' needs, the university's needs, and communities' needs, we must address how these needs can conflict with one another and how to negotiate between them. Finally, even though I believe service to be a useful term that refers to much of what we do in composition, I think we should look for ways to redefine and perhaps rename what we do, helping students to write toward democracy.

#### **Freshman Composition: Why a Service Course?**

Freshman composition's history began in servitude with the creation of the course shortly after the birth of the English Department in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As William Riley Parker recounts, the English department itself is the offspring of two parents: oratory and philology (5), and Harvard did not have a professor of English until Francis Child in 1876 (Parker 11). This new department started as universities in the United States modeled themselves after German higher education and its emphasis upon specialized disciplines and research. President Charles Eliot of Harvard led the way when he

replaced what was a classical liberal arts curriculum (study of Greek, Latin, rhetoric, and philosophy) with a more discipline-based system. Also, universities responded to the economy, developing into places for corporations to conduct research to help their industries and where professors became more specialized; the liberal arts college shifted to the modern research university (Berlin *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* 18). During this movement in higher education, the study of rhetoric changed; once a part of a student's course of study each year, rhetoric dissolved into freshman composition (what could be called a remedial writing course) designed to help students develop adequate skills for college writing. Freshman English classes began to evolve at Harvard in the 1870's (Kitzhaber 33-34), and by 1897, the two semester course became the only required class for all students (Berlin 28). And over a century later in most universities, freshman composition continues to be the only course that nearly all freshmen take in college. Although some scholars, such as Sharon Crowley, propose abolishing this universal requirement because of the problems it causes (to be discussed later in this chapter), most college students' study of rhetoric

continues to be confined to this mandatory, introductory first-year experience.

Throughout this history, freshman composition has become a course that serves the university and the English department, which creates hurdles for service-learning. One main consequence of this "service ethic" is its "low status," as Crowley notes (252), and Grego and Thompson add that "[c]ompositionists become 'housewives' to other academics who are positioned as our 'corporate husbands'" (67). Freshman composition does not receive equal treatment, then, and becomes subordinate to the "serious" academic work of its husbands. And although its huge number of sections wields power, it is a domesticated, subservient power through its service identity, because of its remedial reputation and mission of "fixing" students' writing problems before they enter higher-level courses. The labor to provide this service is cheap because the faculty underclass staffs freshman composition; it is rarely ever taught by tenured faculty (who usually teach upper level classes without the heavy paper load of student writings from freshman composition). And because the labor costs are so low (the faculty underclass get paid a fraction of what regular faculty receive) and the demand

for it is so high (it is a requirement), the introductory course is a "cash cow" for English departments and the university (Graham, Birmingham, and Zachry 692).

In his provocative article, "Return to Service," James Sledd criticizes the field of composition and compares it to a plantation, where the directors of writing programs become "boss compositionists" and the people who teach the course subsist like field hands or slaves:

They now are boss compositionists, overseers (obishas) on Pomocompo, the plantation of postmodern composition. Under their administration, exploited field hands (TAs, part-timers, and untenurables) still teach the vast majority of the thousands of sections of the freshman course in writing. (12)

And in this exploitive system, one could argue that freshman composition helps make English departments possible in its present hierarchy. Freshman English permits the graduate faculty to teach their seminars, because their students serve as TA's. If the graduate students and part-timers did not teach freshman composition, then there would be empty classrooms for those upper level seminars, and those graduate faculty might have to teach the introductory course that they most likely dread. Sledd proposes that we restructure freshman

composition and even suggests we end tenure and create an egalitarian system:

In the democratic university of my imagining, the whole faculty would walk out and close the place down if the football coach got a million a year while TAs survived on a pittance and librarians qualified for food stamps. (28)

Issues of tenure and the established hierarchy of the university surpass the scope of this study; however, an important question lingers for compositionists contemplating service-learning in this kind of university environment: Is service the right name for what we do?

Some say yes. Some scholars laud the service ethic and connect it to the hopes for service-learning:

Once a term of denigration, indicating the low level, foundational nature of required work, service is making a comeback as a term that garners support for socially responsible action connecting the university with its larger environment. (Roemer, Schultz, and Durst 387)

Roemer, Schultz, and Durst say we should embrace the term "service" and that if we do not, we succumb to the elitist tendencies of academics who view introductory work as remedial and less worthy. Also, they point out the

possibilities for service in composition: because the course has no specific content, they praise the ability of freshman composition to make connections between different disciplines and encourage "border crossings" between different communities (391). They acknowledge the problems with the system; they compare the situation of the faculty underclass in composition to the "[m]assive problem of global labor reorganization affecting all university employment policies . . . " (390). Composition, then, is part of a movement in higher education: more than half of all faculty appointments are now non-tenure track; part-time teachers make up 38%, non-tenure full-time teachers 20% ("Part-Time and Non-Tenure-Track Faculty"). Roemer, Schultz, and Durst believe that this predicament can improve with more tenure-track jobs in composition and better pay for part-timers.

This call for incremental change sounds reasonable, but I find this discussion troubling. It seems, then, that I am completing this dissertation on service-learning and composition in order to rise out of the faculty underclass and live better in plantation "Pomocompo," as Sledd puts it. However, words like "exploitation" and "faculty underclass" do not seem to describe working conditions at a

university. Think of people who dedicate their lives to "service"-- underpaid teachers in our public schools, social workers, and counselors. Compare the life of a lecturer at an American university to people making minimum wage in our country, or factory workers in developing countries making even less. Of course, the faculty underclass have educational credentials that in most other professions would promise a much higher salary. Thus, implicit in this discussion about service is the belief that education (as seen in acquiring degrees) should somehow separate you from low-paying subordinate work, which often is dubbed "service," for service often names those kind of jobs that college promises us that we can avoid with a degree: working fast food, retail, etc. For the purpose of this study, what most concerns me is how freshman composition's identity as a service course might affect its use of service-learning, for serving others and being subordinate often is interpreted as something not important, controlled by others, remedial, in preparation for something better, and exploitive.



### **Subordinate Roles & Needs**

So how might this service identity within the university or, as Joseph Harris puts it, these "routine and invidious divisions of labor" ("Meet the New Boss" 65) in English departments affect service-learning? The faculty, students, university, and community often have needs or expectations for freshman composition that can impede or challenge the use of service-learning.

First, consider the faculty. Think of the challenges a graduate student or adjunct trying service-learning in freshman English might encounter: the extra work involved in setting up contacts with community agencies and restructuring the curriculum to include a service-learning component. Although more campuses have created positions of a service-learning coordinator (whose goal is to be the liaison between the university and community agencies), implementing service-learning in a freshman English class likely requires either a motivated member of the faculty underclass to start something in his/her sections or a framework set up by a senior faculty member or director of the writing program. In the first scenario, the adjunct teacher often works at a university semester by semester with no lasting ties to the college. Starting a service-

learning initiative may seem like too much work or, if something does start, the initiative may wither when the adjunct moves on to another university or finds a tenure track job somewhere (where he/she may someday soon escape teaching freshman English). The second scenario, where a senior faculty member organizes a service-learning project for freshman composition, seems more desirable because it can reap the benefits of continuity from semester to semester, establishing ties with the community and learning from successes and failures. But again, it is likely that the duty of service is given to those lesser in rank, another responsibility for an already difficult job.

What about the students? How easy and desirable is it for freshmen to complete service projects? Many freshmen are asked to complete service projects in high school or have been told to do so for their college applications and may resent such a project, especially if their experience in the past was not perceived as a valuable learning experience--often "service" is viewed as a punishment, like when a judge punishes mischievous teenagers with a certain number of hours picking up trash. Also, freshmen, trying to get acclimated to the university, may have difficulty finding transportation to and from the campus. In

addition, many freshmen, like many other university students, equate college with career preparation and see no relevance to service work. Many college students' schedules are also occupied with jobs to pay rising tuition costs. Therefore, is it too much to ask for students to improve their writing skills and enter a new discourse community, complete service hours, and reflect upon it?

And then the university's needs and desires continue the complications. Although service-learning could very well be used by upper level English literature classes within the English department, service-learning more often than not finds its home within its writing/composition courses. Of course, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, the study of rhetoric often asks its students to think of their roles within a community and strive for good citizenship, but it again asks a great deal from the course: to be a service course to the university, by trying to "fix" students' academic writing, and also a course that connects students to the community outside the campus and write in different discourse communities. In a way, freshman composition might seem like a dumping ground for things that are not being accomplished in other courses at the university, as Kerri Morris notes:

Like staff at the local diner, however, we serve our customer/students a casserole of expectations from the masters we also serve--our own departments, myriad other departments on campus, curricular goals, and the communities in which these students will eventually work. (115)

And with all these different service demands from different "masters," some argue that the service of freshman composition is not to engage students with different communities but to separate them:

The required first-year course still serves American universities as a border checkpoint, the institutional site wherein students either provide proper identification or retreat to wherever they came from. (Crowley 231)

In other words, some might see the purpose of freshman English as helping students learn the dominant discourse and separate themselves from discourses of marginalized communities. Therefore, the goals of service-learning may conflict with the goals of freshman composition.

Finally, what about the community? Some might see service or charity work as a band-aid to larger social issues that confines people to subordinate positions. The history of service in America supports this argument. Small, private charitable organizations have existed since

the seventeenth century, such as the Scots Charitable Society in Boston, which started in 1657 raising money to help the less fortunate by holding lectures and meetings, as well as other early benevolent groups: St. Andrew's Society of New York (1756), the Philadelphia Society for alleviating the miseries of public prisoners (1787), and the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children (1798) (Watson 172). One reason that these kinds of charities began, argues Charles S. Griffin and other scholars of nineteenth century philanthropy, was for their religious leaders to use benevolent institutions as a means for social control and to gain political power in society (Griffin xi). In *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*, David Rotham believes that the prison system, the insane asylum, and the almshouse represented a desire for control and order in a chaotic and changing country. The "deviant" and the "dependent" were a threat to the social and political order, so institutions such as the almshouse, orphan asylum, insane asylum, and the prison system were "[a]n effort to insure the cohesion of the community . . ." (xviii).

Service work in the twenty-first century faces a similar question about its effect. In *Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in a Cynical Time*, Paul Loeb stresses how volunteering is an important first step toward community involvement, but it is only a first step. "To rely on volunteer efforts is to duck the basic issue of common responsibility, and to ignore the fact that individual crises are often the result of collective forces," writes Loeb (206-07) or as Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Philanthropy is commendable, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstances of economic injustice which make philanthropy necessary" ("On Being a Good Neighbor" 19). Real social change (assuming that this goal is desired) can only happen through community involvement that goes beyond traditional notions of philanthropy and volunteerism. Loeb gives the example of a well-meaning student who has enjoyed his service experience at a homeless shelter so much that he tells everyone in his class that he would like for his grandchildren to have the same experience at this same shelter someday. Some classmates pointed out to him that they wanted to work toward a day when such shelters would not be needed (*Soul of a Citizen* 203-04). Bruce Herzberg,

Schutz, Gere, and other service-learning/composition scholars also have examined such problems with volunteering, such as one-on-one tutoring, and how students may learn a lot about the person with whom they tutor but not much about the larger social issues and questions. In other words, students might not look past their individual projects to the larger public concerns.

#### **Redefining/Renaming Service**

Would service by any other name smell the same? As argued in this chapter, the term "service" is problematic in a number of ways for composition, community work, and the union of service-learning and composition. Of course, merely renaming service in our scholarship and course catalogs will not remedy everything either unless we examine how we serve. Therefore, for composition, I propose that service activities need to help us write toward *democracy*: giving students opportunities to investigate, write about, and address problems that matter to them and their communities. Students should select or start their own projects, and these activities can include volunteering in a soup kitchen, tutoring in the schools, working to change a policy or procedure on campus, starting a new project to respond to a community need, etc. As the

teacher, I provide a list of suggested projects, but the choice is up to them. The project must give them both the chance to contribute to community and to write about the experience. Whatever the endeavour, students need to have the opportunity to respond to and write about the needs of their communities. Thus, I suggest that the ultimate goal reaches beyond the name service, toward students becoming civic-minded, active, reflective citizens ready to participate in the discourse of democracy. This definition requires changes:

- **Faculty:** Teaching a service course should not mean being underpaid, undervalued, and overworked; instead, writing faculty need better support to implement "service-learning programs."
- **Students:** Students' service-learning should adapt to their interests and needs, aiming for more than service, for them to become civic-minded, active, reflective citizens.
- **University:** Service needs to be something central to the writing program and the institution, not something separate and subordinate.
- **Community:** Service means working with, not a doing to.

The remainder of this chapter will be an explanation of the above definition.

First, as many have argued, one needed solution for the "service ethic" of composition would be for



universities and English departments to treat its writing faculty as they do other faculty, pay them a comparable salary and give them a comparable teaching load. The Pomocompo plantation model (Sledd's term) creates a service course to the university, which inhibits the kind of service-learning course that many scholars advocate. This solution of salary and work-load equity seems difficult to reach, however, as Crowley describes with the 1987 Wyoming Resolution, an attempt to criticize and put pressure on institutions who pay their composition teachers such low salaries (236-40). Such resolutions, articles, and books written about the subject do not seem to make much dramatic change.

A more possible first step would be for English departments and writing programs to emphasize a goal found in many mission statements in university catalogs: help students to become active, reflective citizens. As mentioned earlier, the writing program director should help design and set up courses that allow students to connect with community through service and collaborative writing projects. It is difficult for part-time teachers and TA's to organize projects from scratch. A useful example is Linda Flower's work at Carnegie Mellon, a mentoring program

that encourages collaboration between college students and at-risk teenagers. Such projects make freshman English more than a remedial, fix-it course, because students collaborate and potentially publish their work through this public writing. As John McKnight asks, "Are professors servants who depend upon deficiency and control rather than competence and community?" (177-78). Freshman composition, then, can become more than a service course of "deficiency and control" by stressing the strengths of students and community.

And for students, the course must respond to their needs and concerns, and the service projects should be planned accordingly. Many students work or may need to work out transportation arrangements, and the instructor needs to make many service options available for students to participate in the community and encourage them to find or start their own projects if possible. Also, as a scheduling matter, the teacher may need to meet with the class twice a week and devote the third meeting time to serve as their practicum time, to volunteer in the community. And since students, and especially freshmen, focus on their majors or deciding upon one, service projects can connect with their future career interests.

For example, students contemplating a career in medicine could work at a hospital; education majors could tutor in the school system; computer majors could design and write web materials for a non-profit. Most of all, the service projects should not be a repeat of the kind of forced "volunteering" that they may have experienced in the past, which lacks any reflective component encouraging them to think and to learn about what they are doing. On the first day, course syllabi should stress that this work is their own inquiry or change projects; perhaps students want to change something on their own campus or their own community. Composition faculty should encourage such individual initiative.

Next, service needs to be more of a focus for the university; otherwise, its subordinate status will continue to be an obstacle. Like freshman composition, service-learning often indicates a course subordinate to others with a mission to accomplish goals that the rest of the curriculum is not. By making it separate, we marginalize it. Could we imagine all courses as service-learning courses? Should not most of what we do at the university be "service" in some way? In the definition that I am using, service includes activities (both inside and outside

the classroom) to improve the communities in which we live and also to encourage people to think about their roles as citizens. Obviously, volunteering with an organization is not the only way to do this.

Thomas H. Huxley commented, "The great end of life is not knowledge but action" (422). We need to think of ourselves as public intellectuals who want to better the human condition with the knowledge we pursue; as Ellen Cushman writes:

The kind of public intellectuals I have in mind combine their research, teaching, and service efforts in order to address social issues important to community members in under-served neighborhoods. ("The Public Intellectual" 329).

Service-learning, like all of what we do at the university, should encourage us to consider how our courses and research help improve the communities in which we live.

The politics of service in the community also require that we examine how we serve: it needs to be a working with not a doing to. One danger, then, for service work is that scholars and students enter communities as experts and do not collaborate with the "recipients" of their service. If service-learning is to be a "learning" process, then

university volunteers need to listen and learn from the people with whom they are working. Cushman believes service-learning courses should use "activist research methodologies":

Activist research combines postmodern ethnographic techniques with notions of reciprocity and dialogue to insure reciprocal and mutually beneficial relations among scholars and those with whom the knowledge is made. (332)

In other words, when completing this kind of research, scholars and students need to work "with individuals" rather than acting like they give their knowledge without receiving anything back (332). This kind of relationship connects with Freire's dialogic approach to education in which teacher and student, and in this case, volunteer and community member, are co-investigators, working together. However, Ball and Goodburn point out that much activist/service-learning research lacks this approach: "The absence of their voices and perspectives from the dialogue reveals the challenges of ever addressing reciprocity fully in any service learning environment" (90). Thus, the articles and books that we write, the projects that we plan, and the assignments we give students

should encourage an inclusion of diverse voices, striving for what Linda Flower calls "intercultural inquiry":

Can we use our community experience and writing to engage in inquiry--to cross cultural boundaries in a mutual inquiry with people to discover how they are reading the world? Is it possible to then look beyond the stereotypes that surround marginalized people, especially people who are poor, poorly educated, in trouble, or in real need? Can we see the agency in others, seeing them as people with goals, intentions, values, plans for their lives (that may be quite different from ours)? Can we look deeply enough into other people (especially those labeled disadvantaged or underprepared) to see the abilities, capacities, and powers in them that command our respect and demand our understanding?

*(Problem-Solving Strategies 325-26).*

The above goals are important to consider in an examination of how we serve others. Perhaps what we are asking of our students is more than service; it is collaborative inquiry, civic-minded learning, public writing, and concerned writing.

### **Conclusion**

The title of this chapter, "Defining Subordinates," refers to composition's identity as a service course, its effect on service-learning, and how these definitions point to a subordinate status. At the same time, however, we

must not let defining our subordinate status and the problems of service paralyze us from action. I will not soon forget a professor's comment to me when I was an undergraduate and had started a food recycling program at my campus in which student volunteers transported leftovers from the campus cafeterias to a local soup kitchen. One of my professors warned me, "Glenn, you know, that this project is good in its intention, but it doesn't solve the problem of hunger. It's a band-aid to a larger social issue." I appreciated his point that I needed to look beyond my immediate work to examine larger social issues and the system, and yes, this project of giving food to those who are hungry did not solve the root problem. However, it seems to me that this kind of skepticism, although healthy and important, can lead us to question any work to the point that we do nothing. Did or do I know the solution to the world hunger problem? Did my professor? He did not inform me what the solution is.

In addition, we, as educators, need to reflect upon our own notions of service. We need to be wary of the assumptions we have about what ideologies most need critiquing. Much service-learning scholarship seems to assume that students need to look past their one-on-one

volunteering and become advocates for more sweeping social change. Take for instance, President Bush's recent call for volunteerism, recasting his father's thousand points of light. One response might be that this is a tactic to excuse cutting domestic programs to help the poor. The assumption in this critique, however, is one based on an ideology of how government should function, and what should be the responsibilities for our government and what should be the responsibilities for individual volunteers. We need to raise these issues in our classrooms, ask questions of our students, but not force them to adopt what we might think the answers are.

Finally, defining service reveals a tension between reflection and action. We reflect and discover the problems with our actions, so much so, we could decide to do nothing. And the other extreme is to act and not ever consider the consequences of our actions. In this chapter, I have tried to point out the problems with service and some of the obstacles that prevent us from perhaps changing what we really want to change. At the same time, if we do not do anything, if we do not start somewhere, then our destination is nowhere. One step is better than no step. If we cannot overcome the "plight" of working in an English



department, then how can we ever consider addressing issues of hunger, poverty, and illiteracy that affect so many citizens? As John Lachs writes, "The mindless indifference of what we sometimes call the 'system' is in reality our indifference" (269).

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **A DISCOURSE FOR DEMOCRACY:**

#### **ESCAPING THE PHANTOMS OF THE IVORY TOWER AND COMMUNITY**

On the university campus, the ivory tower is nowhere to be found; instead, one often discovers corporate logos, research for big business, and a curriculum that focuses on careers. Bill Readings adds, "[t]he University is not just like a corporation; it is a corporation," as seen with the popular corporate language of "excellence" (22). However, service-learning scholarship often stresses the importance of escaping an "ivory tower," the safety of isolation on the college campus, and entering the "community." But why does this myth persist in our discourse about service-learning? And how does our definition of community relate to the ways in which we teach writing, complete service projects, and think about discourse? Is the university within community or beside it? Is academic discourse within public discourse or separate from it?

In this chapter, I will argue that freshman composition needs to help students develop a discourse for democracy through inquiry into problems that matter to

them, which requires a pedagogy blending academic and public discourse and acknowledging the overlapping boundaries of the university and community. Thus, service-learning in freshman English needs to escape the phantom definitions of the ivory tower, community, and public that haunt much of our discourse. This chapter will examine what these phantoms are, why they are misleading, and their effect on our sense of community, public discourse, and implementation of service-learning.

### **The Ivory Tower: Longing to return or leave?**

Before its use in service-learning scholarship, the phrase "ivory tower" has had a history of referring to both the beauty and foolishness of purity and isolation. In the Bible, the expression "ivory tower" expresses great beauty as when King Solomon describes his beloved: "Thy neck is a tower of ivory . . . " (Song of Solomon 7.4). Solomon decorated his throne with great amounts of expensive ivory, and later, King Ahab built an "ivory house" of a palace; ivory, then, can be a symbol of indulgence and debauchery (Wilson and Ayerst 20-21).<sup>7</sup> In the nineteenth century, French critic and poet Charles-Augustin Saint-Beauve used the term in a poem called "Penses d'Aout" ("Thoughts of

August" 1837) that compares two poets, Victor Hugo and Alfred de Vigny; Vigny, unlike Hugo who does battle, retreats from society "As if in his ivory tower, retired before noon." The title of Henry James' uncompleted novel *Ivory Tower* (1916) is an allusion to this poem, and in the decades that followed, more writers began using the term (H. G. Wells, Hart Crane, Aldous Huxley, and Ezra Pound), continuing to point to something wonderfully and absurdly secluded from society (OED).

The perception lingers of the university once being (or currently trying to be) an ivory tower, a beautiful place safely isolated from the vulgarities and demands of society, a place for contemplation and scholarly research and learning for learning's sake. Some scholars lament the loss of an ivory tower and believe that higher education has abandoned serious scholarship, as Allan Bloom writes in his best-selling critique of academia, *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987):

No longer is there a hope that there are great wise men in other places and times who can reveal the truth about life. . . . Gone is the real historical sense of a Machiavelli who wrested a few hours from each busy day in which "to don regal and courtly garments, enter the courts of the ancients and speak with them."  
(34-35)

Bloom argues we no longer escape into the wisdom of such classics, and there is something lost: a serious scholarly something that has been sacrificed by the opening of the university and curriculum to voices different from the traditional canon, thereby destroying the intellectual power of the ivory tower. In the controversy surrounding Cornel West and President Lawrence H. Summers of Harvard, one issue is whether Dr. West's popular writings and his recent hip-hop CD about civil rights detract from the institution's tradition of academic discourse. Those who romanticize the ivory tower may have an image of the past like Provost Ivar from Jane Smiley's *Moo*, who reflects about college life in 1950's U.S.A. and paints the picture of the campus as a safe, elite academic utopia of learned white men: "It was 1953, and angular men in glasses, crewcuts, and bow ties were everywhere, a benign army of uncles, who liked to point things out with the stems of their pipes . . . " (384-85). And since things have changed so much from this ivory tower past, according to this perspective, the university lacks something, as seen in Saul Bellow's *Ravelstein* and its title character (who resembles Bloom) stating that "[n]o real education was possible in American universities except for aeronautical

engineers, computerists, and the like" (47). These examples from Bloom, Bellow, and Smiley express the longing for a university that has been lost to technology, the market, and the multi-cultural demands of society, and some nostalgically look back to (or construct) a marvelous time in which the university was an ivory tower of important, isolated contemplation.

Ironically, service learning scholarship often stresses the importance of leaving the ivory tower. Consider this passage from David H. Lempert's *Escape from the Ivory Tower*:

The top universities continue to take the best young minds out of their home communities and bind them to others like themselves, disconnected in their ivory towers from both their home communities and the communities in which they are educated. Were this to change and the top universities were to encourage students to empathize with those whom they will manage, to view the less gifted and the less fortunate with tolerance, and to test the views of elites against the social reality, they would be less likely to enforce policies that deny the liberty and opportunity of those groups. (19)

This passage, then, implies that students live in a bubble while in college, and that service-learning could break that bubble so that when they become the future business leaders in America, they will have more compassion for the

poor. This excerpt raises some questions about the politics of service as discussed in Chapter 3, as college graduates will "manage" the "less gifted," but also Lempert's point connects with the notion that the university is separated from community. Of course, if students do not see the connections between what they study in the classroom and what they experience outside it, then a separation may seem evident. In "Service-Learning: Bridging the Gap Between the Real World and the Composition Classroom," Wade and Susan Fox Dorman discuss this idea of how students feel separate from their education and point to the problem of teachers often using a "[p]edagogy that divorces the classroom from the real world . . . " (120). Ellen Cushman writes also of the need of professors to "[o]vercome the ivory tower isolation that marks so much current intellectual work" ("The Public Intellectual" 330). Richard Rorty maintains that academics have become less involved in political issues over the past century and have reduced themselves to "spectators" rather than agents for social change (9).<sup>8</sup> Thus, many in the service-learning movement believe that their pedagogy can solve this problem.

## **The Ivory Phantom**

What complicates this discussion about the ivory tower and service-learning even more is that there does not seem to be a time when higher education was purely an isolated ivory tower. Throughout the institution's history, the needs of society have shaped college and defined the boundaries of academic freedom and its discourse.

In the earliest days of the United States, college was not seen as a necessary requirement for a learned person. Even as late as 1865, universities did not play a huge part of "American intellectual life" (Brereton 7). Colleges, such as Harvard beginning in 1636, were traditionally places to school ministers and inculcate morals among the few who attended (Boyer 3). In fact, many writers, thinkers, and leaders (Whitman, Twain, Howells, Stowe, and even the great orator Abraham Lincoln for example) did not attend college. To a great extent, the intellectual climate of the "colonial college" was defined by theology, a place "to educate and morally uplift" according to Biblical scripture (Boyer 4).

The university of the twenty-first century is largely a product of the late 1800's, a time of great transformation for higher education. After the passage of



the Morrill Act of 1862 (the Land Grant College Act) that gave states federal land to establish state universities, the number of students soon escalated. Also, another key action by the government in shaping the university came with the Hatch Act of 1887, which gave federal money to start agricultural research projects to benefit the farmer (Boyer 5). With this help from the government, the number of students between 1890 and 1910 doubled, and by 1920 nearly doubled again (Brereton 7). The state university, then, was created with social missions (such as research to help the agricultural industry). However, both state and private colleges modeled themselves after the German research university. Specifically, American universities adopted the German emphasis upon specialized disciplines and research. As mentioned in Chapter 3, President Charles Eliot of Harvard helped lead the way when he replaced a classical liberal arts curriculum with a more discipline-based system that responded to the American economy. Universities became a place for corporate America to conduct research to help their industries (Berlin 18). Professors became more specialized; thus, there was a shift from the liberal arts college to the modern research

university. And during this change, a new academic department emerged: the English department.

In this modern research university, some argue that a balance between the needs of society and the ivory tower can be found in the use of academic discourse. Immanuel Kant argues such academic freedom is needed for the German university in *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798) and explains what kind of relationship should exist between society and academia. Kant argues that the higher faculties (what he calls disciplines such as law, theology, and medicine) are directly responsive to and dependent upon the state. However, philosophy, part of the lower faculties or liberal arts, is the independent means for rational inquiry to pursue truth (an ivory tower of sorts). The university, then, depends upon the state for its funding and mission, but Kant believes that philosophy will escape such dependency by using rational inquiry to search for truth. And to pursue truth, Kant asserts that the difference between academic and public discourse makes the freedom of the philosopher possible. In other words, what the social critic/philosopher writes will not be understood by the general public. For example, King Frederick William II disliked Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Mere*

*Reason.* Kant writes a defense in his preface to *Conflict of the Faculties* about the uproar by explaining that most people would not be able to understand his writing:

This is already clear from the fact that the book in question is not at all suitable for the public: to them it is an unintelligible, closed book, only a debate among scholars of the faculty, of which the people take no notice. (15)

Therefore, because most people will not read it, then the King need not worry about the work being blasphemous; it is a harmless debate among scholars.

However, academic discourse cannot be separate from community. Kant bases his argument for the independent scholar on the assumption that language can be "theoretical" or "purely constative" (Derrida "Mochlos" 19-20). But as Derrida notes, when we write and express ourselves, we engage in a political process based on "[a]n interpretative community gathered around the text, and indeed of a global society, a civil society with or without a state, a veritable regime enabling the inscription of that community" (21). Thus, when we write, the institution gives us the "structure of our interpretation" (22).

Derrida, then, points out the paradox of Kant's argument for the independent scholar:

It is a paradox of this university topology that the faculty bearing within itself the theoretical concept of the totality of university space should be assigned to a particular residence, and should be subject, within the same space, to the political authority of other faculties and the government they represent.  
(26)

Even though Kant argues that public discourse is separate from academic discourse, the independent scholar (philosopher) of the lower faculties is under the authority of the state. And even if the philosopher rebels against the state, that criticism is both fueled and constrained by the state/society.

In addition, the language of the academy is often used as a way to exclude others. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Mike Rose discusses this idea in "The Language of Exclusion" and other writers (including Paulo Freire) show how language can be used to maintain the status quo. In other words, learning academic discourse becomes a hurdle to jump or game to play in order to remain part of the elite class. If certain students do not write in the same way as academic professionals, then they are labeled "basic

writers." Mina Shaughnessy's "Diving In" essay parodies this exclusion and shows how a teacher may develop the belief that certain students are "un-teachable" because they do not speak or communicate in the same manner that people do in the academy. Thus, the teacher may "guard the tower" by flunking the students.

The ivory tower and Kant's notions of academic freedom affect the teaching of writing. For example, David Bartholomae observes that a student has to "invent the university" when writing, which requires "[learning] to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community" (511). And freshman writing courses continue to be based on this idea of a "peculiar" knowledge and way of communicating. Although different rhetorical situations, such as writing at the university, require different conventions that students should learn, what is the "peculiar" knowledge that we are pursuing? If we believe that we can isolate ourselves from community, we may communicate in ways that do not seem relevant to real issues, as Dewey notes:

But a belief in intellectual freedom where it does not exist contributes only to complacency in virtual enslavement, to sloppiness, superficiality and recourse to sensations as a substitute for ideas: marked traits of our present estate with respect to social knowledge. . . [T]hinking deprived of its normal course takes refuge in academic specialism, comparable in its way to what is called scholasticism. (Dewey *The Public and its Problems* 168)

Thus, these "insulated branches of learning" (171), these disciplines in which we practice our academic freedom, often create a discourse that "[i]s not conceived in terms of its bearing upon human life" (172). So perhaps escaping the ivory tower really means recognizing that there is not one; as Roemer, Schultz, and Durst note, service-learning is an attempt to "[break] down the perceived isolationism and insularity of universities" (387). And for the purpose of this study, I want my students to engage in a discourse that helps us to become better writers as we write toward democracy.

### **The Phantom Public**

However, if academic discourse separates us from community, then how do we define "community"? Where is it? We often use the term "community" in a very general way, saying we aim to do service to it, implying, it seems, that we are separate from it and need to escape academia and

venture out into the community and enter the public sphere. In *The Phantom Public Sphere*, Walter Lippmann argues that the public sphere is a construction and that being an informed, active citizen is an unattainable ideal:

I hold that this public is a mere phantom. It is an abstraction. The public in respect to an agricultural tariff may include the very railroad men who were on strike. The public is not, as I see it, a fixed body of individuals. It is merely those persons who are interested in an affair and can affect it only by supporting or opposing the actors. (Lippmann 67)

The public and our idea of "community" is a fiction, according to this argument, and if a student does not feel like she has a vested interest in a public issue, how can she enter the public sphere and community? Lippmann portrays the average citizen in passive terms, which we might apply also to the composition student:

The private citizen today has come to feel rather like a deaf spectator in the back row, who ought to keep his mind on the mystery off there, but cannot quite manage to keep awake. He knows he is somehow affected by what is going on. Rules and regulation continually, taxes annually and wars occasionally remind him that he is being swept along by great drifts of circumstance. (3)

In other words, the average individual "does not know how to direct public affairs . . . does not know what is happening, why it is happening, what ought to happen" (29). Thus, for Lippmann, the public is a phantom, and democracy asks its citizens to do something impossible: become knowledgeable about a myriad of complicated public issues and vote on them. And because of the impossibility of being a good citizen and the lack of a real public sphere, Lippmann adds that we are deluding ourselves if we believe that we can teach citizenship:

If the schools attempt to teach children how to solve the problems of the day, they are bound always to be in arrears. The most they can conceivably attempt is the teaching of a pattern of thought and feeling which will enable the citizen to approach a new problem in some useful fashion. But that pattern cannot be invented by the pedagogue. It is the political theorist's business to trace out that pattern. In that task he must not assume that the mass has political genius, but that men, even if they had genius, would give only a little time and attention to public affairs. (17)

Lippmann's argument seems especially relevant for service-learning and composition, because, as mentioned in Chapter 3, more students are volunteering in the community but fewer students are interested in politics and voting. Although service-learning cannot be expected to solve the



problems of low voter turnout, it should encourage students to engage in inquiry with the goal of being civic-minded, active, reflective citizens ready to participate in the discourse of democracy.

In responding to many of the issues raised by Lippmann's *Phantom Public*, Dewey asserts that we need to work on better ways to communicate and also recognize community: "Unless local communal life can be restored, the public cannot adequately resolve its most urgent problem: to find and identify itself" (*The Public and its Problems* 216). Therefore, perhaps we should think of ourselves not as entering community, but recognize that we are already in it: "How well do we understand, I wonder, our next door neighbors? It has also been said that if a man love not his fellow man whom he has seen, he cannot love the God whom he has not seen" (Dewey 213). Service-learning scholarship has also called for this realization. In their introduction to the AAHE's *Writing the Community*, Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Ann Waters comment: "The most immediate effect of service-learning is to rearticulate the college or university as part of rather than opposed to the local community" (4). And if we recognize that we are part of community, then we should

avoid a rigid separation between academic and public discourse in our classrooms.

The question remains: How can academic discourse be a way to connect with others--a means to bring people together? I think the first step is to avoid seeing "academic discourse" as something completely alien and separate from other discourses. Even if different communities and disciplines use different terms, the goal is to communicate. Should not the goal of academic discourse be to communicate something within community? How else could it? In *The Public and its Problems*, Dewey calls for an "[i]mprovement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion. That is the problem of the public" (208).

#### **Phantom Discourses: Academic vs. Public**

The problem of defining "community" makes "public discourse" difficult to locate; therefore, we need to recognize the importance of blending academic and public discourse. Our writing must connect with our experience within community, "[t]o translate knowledge of the subject-matter of physical conditions into terms which are generally understood . . . " (Dewey *The Public and its*

*Problems* 172-73). However, we often think about writing that is about community rather than in community, operating under the assumption that academic knowledge is best when "[i]t is uncontaminated by contact with use and service," but knowledge is not knowledge unless it is known (Dewey 175-76). Democracy requires its citizens to engage in "social inquiry," which requires "the art of full and moving communication" (184).

When we recognize that we cannot separate academia and the community, then we will overcome a fiction in our discourse, as Joseph Harris writes:

The choice is one between opposing fictions. The "languages" that our students bring to us cannot but have been shaped, at least in part, by their experiences in school, and thus must, in some ways, already be "academic." Similarly, our teaching will and should always be affected by a host of beliefs and values that we hold regardless of our roles as academics. (*A Teaching Subject* 105)

There are not, Harris asserts, "[t]wo coherent and competing discourses but many overlapping and conflicting ones. Our students are no more wholly 'outside' the discourse of the university than we are wholly 'within' it. We are all at once both insiders and outsiders" (105).

Harris believes that we "[i]dealize the workings of 'academic discourse' by taking the kinds of rarefied talk and writing that go on at conferences and in journals as the norm . . . " (106-07). Harris wants to get past the term "community," for he believes it has the connotation of agreement and consensus that may inhibit learning and dialogue with different opinions. Harris uses the term "public" and asserts that the classroom is a public space with "[t]alk that takes place *across* borders and constituencies" (109). This view of language compares with Bakhtin's dialogism, the "[c]onstant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others" (426). In other words, a discourse does not exist in a static form; context shapes meaning. Therefore, the way we communicate (the language or discourse we speak) changes based on the rhetorical situation.

Specifically, for service-learning, Herzberg points out the importance of "[a]nalyzing the gap between academic investigation, on the one hand, and public discourse and public policy, on the other" ("Service Learning and Public Discourse" 395). Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Waters propose such a re-thinking of discourse:

But more than a traditional rhetoric is needed if we are to avoid seeing experience as simply an effect of rhetorical action. Instead, we need something like a "rhetoric of practice" that understands the effects of practice to be reciprocal with those of verbal rhetoric. A part of such double rhetoric would need to be a consideration of politics and ideology that goes beyond the entrenched championing of seemingly rigidly opposed positions such as "community" and "academy." Actions in the community or the academy are never independent of context. (11)

In this context, we need what Peck, Flower, and Higgins call a "community literacy" that is "intercultural and multi-vocal" (587). In other words, we should encourage our students' writings to include different perspectives and voices that represent the overlapping boundaries of communities. Nora Bacon notes:

It is not enough to tell students that writing varies with its audience and purpose: If students are to develop a real (not merely abstract) understanding of rhetorical principles, they need to write in more than one setting, for more than one audience and more than one purpose. We need to be resourceful in creating pedagogies--WAC programs, service-learning courses, internships--that give students an opportunity to experience rhetorical variation first-hand. ("Building a Swan's Nest" 606).

Service-learning, then, can be one pedagogical tool to accomplish this goal of blending academic and public discourse.

My writing classroom attempts to make possible for students, as Bacon puts it, "[b]oth opportunities to write outside the classroom, to experience socialization into multiple discourse communities, and opportunities to critically reflect upon their experiences as rhetors" (Bacon 607). In my second semester composition course, one student has combined his project of working with Amerasians from the Philippines and his academic writing. My student's project attempts to connect the children in the Philippines with their American fathers who were U.S. servicemen, so they can gain proof needed in applying for citizenship. Through use of the internet, e-mails, and letters, my student helps Amerasians gain citizenship in the U.S. In addition, for my class, he wrote a proposal and has been accepted to present at an academic conference on issues of Filipino-Americans. His goal is to find ways to change a law that excludes offspring from the Philippines from having the same rights to apply for citizenship as residents of other Asian countries have. His project represents to me a good example of the blending of academic and public discourse. He is writing "public discourse" with his letters and e-mails to interested parties and also to politicians, and he also is writing

"academic discourse" for his presentation at this conference. However, these two different writings, although different in format and some stylistic issues, overlap in their content, focus, and research; thus, they blend discourses and create what I would call, a discourse for democracy, a way of communicating for both the student, scholar, and citizen.

#### **Discourse for Democracy: Characteristics and Possibilities**

Therefore, I propose that a discourse for democracy can be defined by the kinds of problems the writing attempts to solve: problems that do not already have solutions, such as the problem concerning Amerasians that my student is addressing. Of course, why would one write about problems that already have solutions? Writing assignments often ask students to do that very thing: to *re-search* something that has already been found. Although such assignments might be a useful academic exercise, searching for something already found is not always good preparation for searching for something not found. If students are *re-searching* something, then they are likely trying to answer a question given to them, a question that is not their own. And if students form their own questions

to explore in their writing, they sometimes become discouraged when they do not find books, articles, etc. in the library that exactly match their topics. "There's nothing in the library that is on my topic," they tell me. Of course, my job is to help them recognize the difficult task of making meaning out of texts, to think of such "research" as a never-ending treasure hunt that begins with one text, leads to another, and on and on. In *Reading as Rhetorical Invention*, Doug Brent points out that students need to recognize reading and research as a "[a] process of evaluating the meanings that one has evoked, not according to intrinsic merit as isolated entities . . . " (72). However, the difficulty remains: how to make our research, our reading, and our writing a form of inquiry to evaluate competing ideas and our beliefs.

Service-learning is not the only way to develop a discourse for democracy. Students can form important questions on their own and use traditional means of research to try and answer them. However, articulating such questions is often a big challenge for students. As mentioned earlier, most students have not been asked to ask questions. I argue that one effective means of getting students to ask questions is service-learning. As students



engage in different projects that respond to needs in their communities, they begin to ask questions about the problems that they see first-hand around them. And these are problems that may not have neat, tidy answers in introductory paragraphs that can be proven in a four to five page essay. These are problems that are messy and difficult. And in this messiness, a discourse for democracy attempts to address problems that matter, consider different perspectives in solving these problems, encourage individual reflection and scholarship, emphasize submission/publication to specific audiences, and explore the relationship between the individual and community.

To encourage students to investigate such problems, here are the questions that guide my classroom and its goal of writing toward democracy:

**Writing:** What is an argument? How and why should we write arguments and in what contexts will we be expected to do so? What questions and issues interest us and invite inquiry?

**Community:** In what communities of discourse do we write and how do they affect the way we write? How do we communicate and collaborate with communities different from our own? What can we learn from different discourse communities? What are the needs of our community?

**Citizenship:** How do we define the citizen? What role should citizenship play in our lives as writers,

students, and people? How does the global marketplace affect our definitions of citizenship?

*Service:* What can we learn about ourselves as writers through service to others? And how might service help us answer these questions and ask others in our writing?

As students complete their community projects, they often address vital problems in their writing. One student writes political leaders to change a law about immigration. Another student writes legislators about human rights. Another student writes the Chancellor to fix the sidewalk, so those with visual impairments can safely travel to class. And other students might not submit their work but also engage in inquiry: How does one be an effective mentor to children? When do children first recognize race? How can two people from different cultures form a friendship? Although this kind of inquiry demands consideration of multiple perspectives and often lacks clear-cut answers, students are writing about issues that matter to them and that may have consequences to them as members of a democracy. A discourse for democracy, then, does not segregate academic from public discourse. The questions listed above require students to use their experiences from

their community projects, interview people from their projects, and also utilize texts from library research.

It seems as if when we talk of academic discourse we refer to a peculiar inquiry, a writing process isolated in some ivory tower. However, as I argued above, discourses overlap; community shapes us as writers. The rhetorical situation in which the rhetor finds him/herself needs to supply the problem. And the more important the problems, the more difficult the answers.

### Conclusion

Returning to an ivory tower is impossible because we were never there. How can we escape from something that does not exist? However, what's most important is our belief in them and the reasons we believe in them. As Derek Bok, former President of Harvard writes, the problem is not that universities are ivory towers:

[I]t is no accident that universities have failed to address the issues of poverty and competitiveness more effectively, for universities are captive to the very social values and priorities that caused these problems in the first place. (42)

Of course, it is impossible to generalize all universities and rhetoric programs in the States, from the private

campuses of the Ivy League to the branch campuses of the State colleges, but we often link education and discourse to issues of power and social status.

Richard Rorty believes, "All universities worthy of the name have always been centers of social protest" (82). Although I do not think of my freshman composition room as the center of protest, I do think of it in these terms of Dewey's:

We lie, as Emerson said, in the lap of an immense intelligence. But that intelligence is dormant and its communications are broken, inarticulate and faint until it possesses the local community as its medium. (Dewey *The Public and its Problems* 219).

How else can we develop a discourse for democracy?

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CITIZENSHIP: THINK GLOBAL, WRITE LOCAL**

In Charlotte, North Carolina, I was teaching a full load of first semester freshman composition. We had recently completed a service project at an adult day care facility located near the campus. We had been discussing our roles and responsibilities as students, writers, and citizens.

My classes met on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, so that Wednesday, September 12, 2001, was the first day that I saw them after the 11<sup>th</sup>. And of course, what happened in my classroom that day took place in many classrooms across the country--students expressing their fears and their anger in response to the day before.

Many of the discussions were helpful and thoughtful as students wrote and talked about the tragedy. However, I also heard something else from some students: a hatred toward people who believed in a different religion or came from a different place. Referring to Muslims and Arabs, one student said, "We should kill them all" and many of his

classmates agreed. And when hearing this anger, another student, a Muslim from an Arab country, started to cry.

This situation leads me to the basic question of this chapter: In a global age, how do we define "citizenship"? During this crisis in the States, patriotism has surged, so what are we to make of the argument made by Martha C. Nussbaum, who believes that our focus as educators should be "world citizenship, rather than democratic or national citizenship" (11)? Also, how might the global marketplace affect our practice of service-learning in composition? In this chapter, I will consider some different approaches to defining citizenship, the effects of globalization on that definition, and how this topic might affect the way we teach writing in a service-learning course. The main point that I hope to make is that defining citizenship is an important, complicated task for a service-learning composition class, because how we define ourselves as citizens influences the way we think and write about the world; the assignments, writing tasks, and community projects that we encourage our students to do should help them recognize this complexity. In addition, I hope that this discussion of citizenship will shed some light on my classroom scenario on September 12<sup>th</sup> and what has followed.

## **The Good Citizen**

Beginning with classical rhetoric, the definition of the good citizen often stresses an individual's responsibility and role within the local community and nation-state. In Ancient Greece, the constitutional reforms of Ephialtes (462/1 BC) made Greece a fuller democracy; however, citizenship was only granted to the elite of Greek society, excluding women and slaves. In this limited democracy, citizenship depended largely upon *isegoria* or "equality of public speech" among this elite (Coleman 28). Being able to speak and communicate in local government and assemblies was a necessity for citizenship. And although there were the "quiet Athenians," who probably did not speak because they lacked the training and skill,<sup>9</sup> the Sophists made money by helping citizens develop their rhetorical prowess (28-29).

One of the most successful Sophist instructors, Isocrates (436 to 338 B. C. E.), stressed that rhetors must connect with their home community in order to be successful. At his school of rhetoric in Chios beginning in 393-92 B. C. E., Isocrates taught many students who became important figures in Greek society, such as Timotheus (son of the Greek General Conon) and Androtion

the historian (Usher 5-7). What distinguishes his *paideia* from his contemporary Plato was Isocrates' focus on rhetoric connecting with politics and community.<sup>10</sup>

"Antidosis," an essay Isocrates wrote at the age of 82 when he defended himself in a lawsuit, explains his method of teaching rhetoric.<sup>11</sup> His speech is more than a legal defense, but an argument framed as if the lawsuit intended to be an attack upon his teaching, like Socrates' trial. Isocrates uses his rhetorical situation to defend his own school of rhetoric. He explains that he trains students' minds like a gymnastic teacher trains their bodies: "[B]oth the teachers of the gymnastic and the teachers of discourse are able to advance their pupils to a point where they are better men and where they are stronger in their thinking or in the use of their bodies" (226). Isocrates tries to help his pupils become better men through rhetoric: "[T]he power to speak well and think right will reward the man who approaches the art of discourse with love of wisdom and love of honour" (231). Thinking "well" and speaking "right" leads to action; the conclusion to "Antidosis" summarizes his pedagogy:



[T]he man who wishes to persuade people will not be negligent as to the matter of character; no, on the contrary, he will apply himself above all to establish a most honourable name among his fellow-citizens; for who does not know what words carry greater conviction when spoken by men of good repute than when spoken by men who live under a cloud, and that the argument which is made by a man's life is of more weight than that which is furnished by words? Therefore, the stronger a man's desire to persuade his hearers, the more zealously will he strive to be honourable and to have the esteem of his fellow-citizens. (231)

Thus, the ethos of the rhetor is vitally important, according to Isocrates, because one's standing in community affects one's ability to persuade.

Kathleen E. Welch observes that Isocrates' pedagogy influences "[C]icero's ideal orator (*vir bonus* or the good person) and later Quintilian's ideal orator (*vir bonus dicendi peritus*, or the good person speaking well)" (123). For example, the Roman rhetorician Quintilian (40? A. C. E. - 96? A. C. E.), like Isocrates, believes that the orator should be a *vir bonus* or good man:

I do not merely assert that the ideal orator should be a good man, but I affirm that no man can be an orator unless he is a good man. (Book XII, i, 3)

In other words, an orator should be a good person and can only be a good orator if he is a good man (Brinton 168).

Of course, settling on an exact definition of a good citizen or person raises all sorts of difficult questions, but one particular issue is that of nationalism and citizenship. Werner Jaeger points out that Isocrates' teaching philosophy "[u]ses his faith that the interests of Greece are the highest moral law, to justify all his work as an educator . . . " (136). Finley also critiques Isocrates and his "[s]purious, restrictive canons of eternal greatness and eternal truth . . . " (213-14). In other words, Isocrates' paideia may pursue a dangerous "truth," one that overvalues one's own community, as some of Isocrates' writings support Greek imperialism. The "good citizen" could serve the interests of the community/state--interests that may include dominance over other peoples.

### **The Cosmopolitan Citizen**

Taking a different approach to this question of citizenship, Martha C. Nussbaum believes that for the twenty-first century students need a "cosmopolitan education" (6) in "[t]he very old ideal of the

cosmopolitan, the person whose allegiance is to the worldwide community of human beings" (4). She refers to Diogenes the Cynic's proclamation that he is a "citizen of the world" (6). The Stoics discussed *kosmou politês* or world citizen, which recognizes that each person is part of two communities--"the local community of our birth, and the community of human argument and aspiration . . . " (7). Nussbaum notes that Americans are "[a]ppallingly ignorant of most of the rest of the world" (11), and our educational system needs to respond:

Most important, should they be taught they are, above all, citizens of the United States, or should they instead be taught they are, above all, citizens of a world of human beings, and that, while they happen to be situated in the United States, they have to share this world with the citizens of other countries? (6)

For service-learning and writing classrooms that ask students to think of their roles within communities of discourse, Nussbaum's argument raises the question of the global--how much does the global affect our identities and work as writers?

One reply to this question is that the local and national overshadows the global. Benjamin R. Barber argues

against Nussbaum and points to the "thinness of cosmopolitanism" (33) and asserts, "Our attachments start parochially and only then grow outward. To bypass them in favor of an immediate cosmopolitanism is to risk ending up nowhere--feeling at home neither at home nor in the world" (34). He emphasizes how we identify ourselves as African Americans, Asian Americans, etc. in order "[t]o acquire the dignity of natural citizens they must first take pride in their local communities" (34). In a similar approach, Rorty asks us to follow Whitman and Dewey in creating a "civic religion" in which America works toward a more just nation (15).<sup>12</sup> In addition, Judith Butler says that it is difficult to have a conversation about global citizenship, because people are so different; we would have to depend upon "established conventions of universality" (45-46). Thus, many definitions of citizenship continue to favor the local.

However, it does not seem to be an either/or proposition. Even though we cannot ignore the local community, we work and write--not as isolated citizens of towns, cities, states, or countries--but as members of an interconnected world. William M. Plater notes that universities are prime examples of this reality:

The college or university--because of its knowledge base, its commitment to understanding diverse cultures, and its experience with international scholars, both students and faculty--has the opportunity and responsibility to become engaged as a world citizen. Using the rapidly expanding capacities of digital communication, there is no reason not to share curricula, faculty, students, information, interests, assessment, and even values across political and geographic boundaries. To be a citizen of Indianapolis or Seattle or Miami without also being involved with citizens of Islamabad, Santiago, or Moscow may be increasingly problematic. (150)

And being a citizen on a university campus often means being a citizen with students from around the world. The scenario described at the beginning of this chapter shows one way the global affects the local. The tragedy of September 11<sup>th</sup> resulted in a backlash against people who were Muslim or Arab. And what disturbed me as a teacher was how tempting it was for us to ignore the effect of these events on our students and ourselves. If one of the goals for a university is good citizenship, and if service-learning is supposed to help students think about their places within a community as students, writers, and citizens, then we need to structure our classes to think about our roles within the international community. A service-learning class can address this issue of citizenship by encouraging students to interact with

students from other countries and write about global issues.

### **Service-Learning: The Global as Local**

After September 11<sup>th</sup>, I found it difficult knowing how to respond to the hatred I heard from my students. I had to manage the conversation in the classroom and emphasize the importance of respecting one another and our differences. I planned our next writing assignment to respond to this situation: ethnographies about communities different from our own. Some students chose to visit a place of worship to understand a faith different from their own, travel to a soup kitchen and write about their experience there, or journey downtown to observe our banking community. The goal of these assignments was for students to think about how they treat the other and what role stereotypes play in their thinking and writing. I also invited guest speakers from the Muslim Student Association to come and converse with my classes about their religion and perspective, to help some students realize that many citizens of the United States are Muslim and/or Arab and it is illogical to view all of them as

terrorists. And as a teacher, I participated in some of their events for Islamic Awareness Week that November.

Racism and xenophobia swept across the campus, which affected many international students who were threatened and harassed by other students. This situation was unacceptable for the writing classroom and the university, which must stress tolerance and an openness to different perspectives. I wrote letters to the Chancellor and Provost, raised questions at faculty meetings and workshops about the matter, e-mailed my department with information about beatings of Arab students at nearby universities, and tried to encourage our campus event planning board to respond to the hatred. The well-organized group of Muslim students conducted activities, like "Islamic Jeopardy," that educated students about their religion.

Although a service-learning composition course cannot be expected to make everyone tolerant of diversity, it can encourage students to consider different perspectives in their writing about the world. My student, who was Muslim and Arab and had heard the hatred from others in class, wrote her next essay about the treatment she received on campus because of her ethnic and religious identity. She wrote the essay but decided to remove all specific

reference to herself or specific country of origin. At her request, we photocopied her essay and dispersed it for the class to read and respond. She wanted her fellow classmates to understand her perspective, so she sat silently as the class session became a writing workshop in which students responded to the essay and made suggestions to the "unknown" writer. This writing activity allowed students to consider how people were being harassed because of their identity, and it also allowed this one student to consider American students' perspectives, to hear their fear and anxiety over recent events.

Service projects can connect, then, to this kind of dialogue, such as a conversations program between international and American students, which involves students meeting on a regular basis to talk and learn about each other's culture and perspectives. Such a service-learning project can lead to writing assignments in which the student can connect both what she learns through conversation with her partner as well as research about her partner's country. This kind of service may seem quite different from volunteering at a soup kitchen or tutoring in the schools; however, it is a project that serves in



many ways. Students learn about different cultures and perhaps can help one another adjust to campus life.

### **Writing Global**

What my classroom experience that semester taught me was how the global affects the local. We did not have to leave the "ivory tower" of the university to confront real, important problems that service-learning could address. Also, this experience encouraged me to think about the ways in which my campus is affected globally and the significance of this global relationship for the writing classroom.

Besides recognizing the different nationalities represented on our campuses, service-learning and freshman composition needs to acknowledge how the global economy has helped to make universities more like corporations with its values and language--the business-like emphasis upon "excellence" and "mission statements." Bill Readings points out how this language shows the corporate mindset at the university and how these terms can be problematic. For example, one issue that service-learning can address is how campuses in developed nations attempt to save money in this global economy and also make money by use of certain brands

from multi-national corporations. Institutions--such as Carnegie Mellon, the University of Michigan, and the University of Virginia--have cut costs by using companies in Barbados, India, Mexico, and other countries to scan articles and proofread e-texts for their libraries (Farrell and Olsen). Such business practices save university libraries a good deal of money, for the minimum wage in India is typically \$30 per month (Farrell and Olsen). Schools also make money by signing exclusive brand contracts or making deals with multi-national corporations, such as giving a soft-drink manufacturer exclusive rights to sell its product to students. Such practices raise questions about fair wages and the business practices of these companies, as seen with the \$2.5 billion per year market of selling clothing and other products with university names and logos (Greenhouse). Such deals with corporations can be problematic for writing and academic freedom: for instance, Reebok's 1996 deal with the University of Wisconsin at Madison included a provision that forbade faculty and staff from saying anything negative about the corporation of Reebok and its products (Klein 96).<sup>13</sup> Although members of the campus community protested and the provision was dropped, the corporate

influence on higher education raises concern. Under pressure from faculty and students, some schools have been forced to change their dealings with corporations.<sup>14</sup>

The status of the corporate/global university is significant when we think about writing. Like a company's mission statement or its "quality control," universities are striving for "excellence," training workers (or what Robert Reich calls "symbolic analysts") for the global economy: students who are to be problem solvers for future employers. The best university education helps students with "judgment and interpretation" for their careers in such a marketplace, says Reich (230-31). However, in this kind of marketplace, exploitation shapes us as citizens; Benjamin Barber comments on this situation in Ancient Greece:

In Athens, our first 'free society,' it was ironically a system of slavery that permitted free Athenians to be full-time citizens. They were free to debate the peace and fight the wars because slaves did the work and produced the goods. (A Place for Us 142)

In some ways, the inequality of wealth in the twenty-first-century world resembles Athenian society, whose elite were able to engage in a study of rhetoric and public discourse

because the majority of the population lacked the same rights and opportunities. College is still an elite endeavour: only a small percentage of the world engages in higher education. Statistics from a study commissioned by the World Bank acknowledges that more people are attending college in developing countries, but the enrollment rate in the developed countries is nearly five to six times higher (World Bank 27). Eighty percent of the world's people live in developing countries, but only make up fifty percent of higher education and far fewer have access to "high-quality education" (91). The two billion people that reside in the lower-income nations have one sixteenth of the "purchasing power" that the one billion people who live in the developed world have (World Bank 97). The poorest billion and the most wealthy billion citizens of the world have an income ratio of 1 to 80 (a conservative estimate, according to the World Bank) (97).<sup>15</sup> And even though developing countries devote a large percentage of their government's budget for education (often a greater percentage than developed countries), fewer people are attending college when compared with the developed world. Of course, the disparity of wealth can explain this difference. In 1995, the GDP per capita in the USA was \$18,980; in Sub-Saharan

Africa, \$2,208 (131). The World Bank argues that more emphasis needs to be placed on tertiary (post-secondary) education in the developing world, but their statistics show that the inequality in wealth makes higher education an expensive product to create.

### **Conclusion**

The classroom scenario from the beginning of this chapter made me much more aware of the significance of global events on the writing classroom. First of all, as mentioned in Chapter 4, service-learning scholarship often emphasizes the necessity of leaving the classroom, the "ivory tower," in order to serve and learn; however, leaving the campus is not always necessary. Even though many of my students choose to complete projects off campus, I also believe in the possibility of service on the campus as seen with the international conversations program. We can encourage students to address problems and needs that they see in their immediate surroundings--local problems that often connect with global issues. Secondly, if one of the goals for service-learning is for students to think about their membership within different communities, to write about questions and problems whose causes and

consequences do not end at our nation's borders, then we need to structure assignments and projects that ask difficult questions about the nature of citizenship in a global age. The research that we do in the library, what we drink in the campus cafeteria, and the clothes we buy at the bookstore often is dependent upon a global economy. The goal in raising these issues is not to tell students what to think or write, for there are multiple sides to consider; instead, service-learning must ask a difficult question: Where does community begin and end for the "good citizen"? At the edge of campus, the state line, the oceans, or somewhere further?

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

I still have questions. In the year 2002, in a country and world so rich, we still have people who are hungry and have no place to live. We still have children in need, not just for food, but for the support and chance for an education. We continue to hear about the problems of pollution. We still have war. And then I remember what Rabbi Hillel said, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, then when?" (qtd. in Loeb 349). And what do these concerns have to do with writing and a composition course? Everything, I say.

Of course, the primary impetus for Freshman English is to improve students' writing and not to solve the problems of the world; however, there is a link, I think. Freshman composition has become a service course to the university, a class to diagnose and cure the problems in students' writing. But how do students become better writers? The quality of students' writing can improve if they are

investigating problems that matter to them and to their community. Like Dewey, Freire, and many others have argued, the best kind of learning is when students are active learners, asking their own questions and making their own meaning. Service-learning can lead to inquiry and collaboration to help students become more active, reflective citizens and writers.

However, even though service-learning creates great possibilities for composition, there still are questions and challenges. As the previous chapters explain, I have discovered that I had assumed too much about service, community, and citizenship. I had not realized the problems of naming and thinking about what we do as "service." I had not realized how connected the university already is with community and that we needlessly segregate academic and public discourse. Finally, I had not realized how difficult it is to define citizenship, especially with the boom of globalism.

For this study, I hope that my investigation into the complicated definitions of service, community, and citizenship has raised new questions and possible answers. My main goal for this study of service-learning and composition is to emphasize how we must try to write



towards democracy and try to solve problems in our lives as citizens.

Freshman composition is one small piece of the puzzle. To address the problems of voter apathy and global issues, a first-year writing course can only do so much. Although it is the only course that nearly everyone takes in college, freshman composition is just one or two classes in a student's education. And even though the number of people attending college is increasing, it is also important to note how few people on this planet engage in higher education.

That sense of perspective reminds me of another idea that Sam, my freshman composition teacher, later taught me as a graduate student: all knowledge is personal, as philosopher/scientist Michael Polanyi argues in his works, *Meaning and Personal Knowledge*. In his critique of Laplace's theory of universal knowledge, Polanyi challenges an epistemology based on the "objectivity" of science and instead points out how all disciplines/observers have their own lenses and subjectivity. Consider a room in which a boy appears taller than a man. Such a sight would puzzle us, because we most likely would assume that the boy and man are in a "normal room" with a level floor, based on our

tacit knowledge, our assumptions about the world. But if the room is not level, the boy could appear taller than the man. Thus, what we know and how we say it is directly part of the world in which we live, and we are likely to view the way we communicate as the "normal" way.

One valuable thing that service-learning can do that many other pedagogies might have difficulty accomplishing is getting students to learn first-hand about perspectives and ways of seeing that challenge their tacit knowledge. It is so tempting to think that everyone lives in the same "normal room" that we do; however, the world proves otherwise. As I have argued in this study, students are rarely encouraged to ask questions, and it sometimes is difficult for them to choose a problem that they want to address in their writing. When students actively try to do something or change something, they become more invested in the process. They suddenly discover or remember problems that they might not have otherwise. Service-learning, then, can be a fountain for invention.

I return to Sam's question: What is freshman composition? Why are you here? Why am I? I think one reason might be found in the projects that my students have completed this semester:

volunteering with seniors, helping build houses with Habitat for Humanity, coaching soccer and other sports and mentoring children, connecting with International students on campus, writing articles for the campus paper and linking students with cultural activities in the city, teaching Japanese and Korean to children, recycling, delivering leftover food from the campus cafeterias to the soup kitchen, writing Congress to help change the law about Amerasians, writing leaders around the world to help stop abuse of elephants, starting a cheerleading class with at-risk teenagers, taking care of animals at the Humane Society, and beginning an art therapy class at a battered women's shelter.

(English 1102, Spring 2002, UNC Charlotte)

Why are we here? I keep learning different answers to that question as my students and I recognize community and write toward democracy.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In *On the Study Methods of Our Time*, Giambattista Vico comments on the problem of compartmentalizing knowledge:

Students' education is so warped and perverted as a consequence, that, although they may become extremely learned in some respects, their culture on the whole (and the whole is really the flower of wisdom) is incoherent. (77)

<sup>2</sup> Using the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, Donald Davidson, and Michael Meyer, Yarbrough's book focuses on the study of discourse:

Discourse studies proposes to regard language not as a medium of representation but as fundamentally a questioning process, a continual inquiry into the problems and intentions of driving the discourse of others, a convergence with others upon the common causes of our concerns by means of responses to their discourse that anticipate their further response. (211)

<sup>3</sup> For example, in Lunsford's "Cognitive Development and the Basic Writer," she gives suggestions on how to increase

basic writers' abstract thinking abilities. Mina Shaughnessy's "Diving In" essay parodies this exclusion and shows the way writing teachers do or can respond to students who do not know this "language" and are labeled "basic writers." There are four stages to the writing teacher's response, according to Shaughnessy. The first is "GUARDING THE TOWER." Often a teacher will develop the belief that certain students are "un-teachable" because they do not speak or communicate in the same manner that people do in the academy. Thus, the teacher will "guard the tower" by flunking the students. The next phase is "CONVERTING THE NATIVES." The writing teacher believes that the students may be teachable, so he/she tries to convert them to this new manner of speaking all at once--marking up their papers and telling them to speak the proper academic talk. When the teacher fails to achieve these goals quickly, then the teacher becomes frustrated and commences stage 3: "SOUNDING THE DEPTHS." The writing teacher starts to wonder how to structure a class that will respond to student needs and respect their voice and identity as writers. The final stage, "DIVING IN," requires the teacher to dive in and experiment with

different pedagogies--recognizing both the students' present abilities and their capacity to learn.

<sup>4</sup> Vygotsky's ideas connect with Dewey's educational philosophy too on this point; Dewey writes in "My Pedagogic Creed":

For instance, through the response which is made to the child's instinctive babblings, the child comes to know what those babblings mean; they are transformed into articulate language and thus the child is introduced into the consolidated wealth of ideas which are now summed up in language. (229)

<sup>5</sup> One troubling statistic from Sax's study is the trend that even though more college students are volunteering and completing community service, they are becoming less and less interested in politics and public discourse: just 32.4% of young people (ages 18-24) voted in the last election, a significant decline when compared with 50.9% voting in 1964 (Sax 6). Thus, this study raises questions about the way service is used in higher education, which I will explore in Chapter 5's discussion of citizenship.

<sup>6</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, most university mission statements usually stress that education should help prepare students to be citizens, participatory members of a democracy:

Graduates . . . should be self-motivated individuals who are able to form, articulate and act upon reasoned decisions in their personal, civic, and professional lives. (University of North Carolina - Charlotte Catalog Mission Statement).

<sup>7</sup> Also, ivory can name something that is perhaps foolish:

Those that come through the gate of ivory are fatuous, but those from the gate of horn mean something to those that see them. (*The Odyssey*)

Woe to those who lie upon beds of ivory,  
And stretch themselves upon their couches . . .  
Who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp. . .  
Who drink wine in bowls,  
And anoint themselves with the finest oils,  
But are not grieved over the ruins of Joseph.  
(8<sup>th</sup> Century prophet, Amos, qtd. in Wilson and Ayerst 21).

<sup>8</sup> Richard Rorty argues that academics used to be more active in politics and community:

The difference between early twentieth-century leftist intellectuals and the majority of their contemporary counterparts is the difference between agents and spectators. In the early decades of this century, when an intellectual stepped back from his or her country's history and looked at it through skeptical eyes, the chances were that he or she was about to propose a new political initiative. (9)

<sup>9</sup> For more background on this topic, see L.B. Carter, *The Quiet Athenian* Oxford, 1986.

<sup>10</sup> In *To Nicocles*, Isocrates gives advice to the King, one of his former students, and stresses the importance of helping leaders to become good citizens: "[f]or those who educate private citizens assist them alone, but if one can turn those who rule over the masses towards virtue, he may benefit both classes . . . " (124-25).

<sup>11</sup> Antidosis referred to the exchange of property in Attic law; for in Athens, the richest of the rich would pay higher taxes for the maintenance of the war fleet. If one of the taxed elite believed he could name a wealthier citizen, then he could challenge that citizen to swap estates with him as a test to see who really was the wealthiest and who should pay more taxes. In other words, because of Isocrates' success as a teacher (making money from his school of rhetoric), a citizen challenged him in a court of law to pay more taxes (Jaeger 132).

<sup>12</sup> In *Achieving our Country*, Richard Rorty discusses the problem of the academic as spectator rather than an active citizen. Discussing American leftist thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Rorty distinguishes between intellectuals who



watch and critique society from the ivory tower (the spectators) and those who offer ideas for change and act upon those ideas (the agents). He traces the history of the leftist movement in America; he calls the "reformist Left" all those who worked between 1900-1964 to work for social justice--everything from worker's rights to civil rights. The "New Left" started to emerge as a result of the Vietnam War; these are the disillusioned people "[w]ho decided, around 1964, that it was no longer possible to work for social justice within the system" (43). Since the 1960's, there is also a cultural Left in academia that stresses issues of difference and otherness (76-77). This cultural Left has little in common with the political activism of the reformist Left from the first half of the century (80). Rorty believes that education, and the university as a center of "social protest" (82), should try to address some of the real problems facing the United States: "It means deriving our moral identity, at least in part, from our citizenship in a democratic nation-state . . . " (97). In his essay, "Sad Stories in the International Public Sphere: Richard Rorty on Culture and Human Rights," Bruce Robbins critiques Rorty's call for patriotism in America. (127-29)

<sup>13</sup> Here is the clause from the contract that was later rejected at the University of Wisconsin at Madison:

"During and for a reasonable time after the term, the University will not issue any official statement that disparages Reebok. Additionally, the University will promptly take all reasonable steps necessary to address any remark by any University employee, agent or representative, including a Coach, that disparages Reebok, Reebok's products or the advertising agency or others connected with Reebok." (qtd. in Klein 96-97)

<sup>14</sup> Duke University, for example, instituted a requirement that all vendors of clothing using the "Duke" logo had to pass certain standards: minimum wage, a safe workplace, the ability to have unions, and the use of "independent monitors" who inspect their factories (Klein 408). At Kent State University and other campuses, students protested Coca-Cola's doing business with the military regime of Nigeria (Klein 404). Other students protested Pepsi's dealings in Burma (Klein 403-04). These actions follow the work of student protestors in the 1980's who forced many American universities to divest their holdings in companies that did business with apartheid South Africa. Therefore, as members of the university

community we are also members of the global community--our institutions are intimately connected with the economics of multi-national corporations.

<sup>15</sup> In response to such inequality, the World Bank's report concludes:

Higher education raises wages and productivity, which makes both individuals and countries richer. It allows people to enjoy an enhanced "life of the mind," offering wider society both cultural and political benefits. And it can encourage independence and initiative, both valuable commodities in the knowledge society (37).

The task force, then, argues that higher education will help the developing world, but to pay for it, "[t]he majority of additional resources will necessarily have to come from within developing countries" (95). However, based on the information gathered on 178 countries, the developing countries already spend a large percentage of their GDP on education. As stated previously, more people in the developed world engage in formal higher education: in 1995, 49% of people over age 25 in the United States had enrolled in some sort of post-secondary education; in Latin America, only 11%, and in Sub-Saharan Africa, only 6% (World Bank 115). The percentage of government money

spent, though, shows an interesting difference: in the past decade, the U.S.A. has devoted 12.3% of the government budget on education, but Latin America and the Caribbean have spent 18.1%, and Sub-Saharan Africa 13.2% (119).

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