

1-1-2015

A Recursive Service Learning Program: Empowering Students Of Color Traveling Within Community Borders

Cindy Lynn Mooty-Hoffmann
Wayne State University,

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/oa_dissertations

 Part of the [Education Commons](#), and the [Rhetoric Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mooty-Hoffmann, Cindy Lynn, "A Recursive Service Learning Program: Empowering Students Of Color Traveling Within Community Borders" (2015). *Wayne State University Dissertations*. 1404.
https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/oa_dissertations/1404

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@WayneState. It has been accepted for inclusion in Wayne State University Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@WayneState.

**A RECURSIVE SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAM:
EMPOWERING STUDENTS OF COLOR TRAVELING
WITHIN COMMUNITY BORDERS**

by

CINDY MOOTY-HOFFMANN

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2015

MAJOR: ENGLISH (Composition Studies)

Approved by:

Advisors

Date

DEDICATION

This project could not have been completed without the support of my family members and advisors. Therefore, I dedicate this project to my husband, Peter Hoffmann; my daughters Helen, Kathryn, and Elizabeth Hoffmann; my parents, Fred and Donna Mooty; and Advisors, Jeff Pruchnic and Gwen Gorzelsky. All have been instrumental in supporting me through this journey, and I cannot thank you enough!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ii
LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
CHAPTER 1: Students of Color in the service-learning Classroom	1
Critical Service Learning Instructional Approaches	3
Critiques of Critical Service Learning.....	12
Students of Color within Service learning Courses.....	23
Creation of a Recursive Service Learning Program	28
Project Design	32
Chapter Descriptions	41
CHAPTER 2: Trying to Identify the Recursive Learner	44
Who Decides “Normal” Behavior?	47
“What’s Wrong With Doing the Right Thing?”	50
They don’t belong: Identifying the Outsiders	56
They belong: Recursive Learners!	58
I’m Not Sure if They Belong.....	66
CHAPTER 3:Preparing the Recursive Learner	71
Background	72
The Recursive Learners’ Tool Box	74
Assignment Description	80
Essay analysis.....	82
Finding #1: Contrasting View of Environment – Normal?.....	91
Finding #2: More Positive View of Students and Teachers	95

Finding #3: Articulates activism	100
Finding #4: Recursive Learners Also Write Conversion Narratives.....	104
CHAPTER 4: Measuring Activist Intentions	109
Assessment Background:	111
Recursive Learners Tool Box.....	113
Tossing Our Pebbles.....	122
Assessment 1: Survey analysis.....	123
Social Values: Students have increased social responsibility.....	125
Increased efficacy	126
Civic attitudes	126
Measuring Individual Change	127
CHAPTER 5: Implications of Critical Service-Learning Classroom.....	137
Problematic Determinations	139
The Curriculum Works.....	141
The Curriculum Could be Better	143
How can we help student enter the community?.....	150
APPENDIX A: The Recursive Learners.....	152
APPENDIX B: Questionnaire.....	153
REFERENCES	154
ABSTRACT.....	160
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT.....	160

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Education Profile of Participating Students.....	69
Table 2: Total number of category claims	88
Table 3: The formula	90
Table 4: OAC VS Seaholm.....	120
Table 5: Unfair Racial Comparison	124

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Sample of Coding.....	84
Figure 2: Percentage of claims.....	88

CHAPTER 1: STUDENTS OF COLOR IN THE SERVICE-LEARNING CLASSROOM

Within the 2010 *Writing and Community Engagement* anthology authors Thomas Deans, Barbara Roswell, and Adrian J. Wurr provide a robust collection of 37 articles describing the diversity of research agendas and best teaching practices within the field of service-learning and community-writing courses. While they provide 30 years of cumulative research, they also highlight key research deficits within the field: “In all, we know a good deal about what exemplary community partnerships look like and how to theorize about them in sophisticated ways but relatively little about the effects of literacy collaborations on university students or community participants. Even less is known about the writing itself” (8). They ask us to “deepen and sharpen inquiry into the consequences of particular pedagogical and project choices” and to “adopt a more robust range of methods” (9).

Yet, the majority of the text, like most of our scholarship, describes community-writing courses where privileged, white students serve in communities different than their own. Focus on these students seems logical because they have historically represented the majority population within our classrooms and, more specifically, the target student demographic for service-learning courses. However, now that our campuses are becoming increasingly more diverse, our scholarship must follow suit; we need to examine a literacy collaboration for students of color. We need to understand how service-learning courses can benefit students from traditionally marginalized communities.

I am not the first to make such a claim. In a 2009 article published within *Reflections: Writing, Service learning, and Community Literacy*, Michigan State University’s Teresa Guinsatao Monberg disagrees with the common assumption that

students need to serve within a community of difference in order to trigger critical consciousness. She believes we can help students achieve this same affect if we create programs for students of color to serve within their own community of color. She argues that if we help students “see their community in new ways,” maybe they will encounter something different within themselves; she even theorizes they could develop into activists for their own communities. She writes, “Service learning’s predominant assumption that ‘change’ only happens when we move across borders precludes the possibility that change can happen by moving recursively over time within the same place or dwelling” (37). She then theorized how such a program, that she named Recursive Service Learning, could be implemented. I agree with Monberg and will discuss her theories in more detail later. For now, I want to briefly summarize those who have discussed marginalized students within their service learning courses.

Stephen Parks’s early work with Temple University is probably the closest to a Recursive Service Learning program that Monberg proposes. In his text *Gravyland*, Parks poignantly describes Advanced Composition students learning about the culturally-biased education they received – how the education system did not value or discuss their urban culture. Parks notes: “I wanted them to begin to recognize the role of language in creating a different set of values from the commodity-driven lifestyle being produced by mainstream culture” (3). His students then worked with local elementary school students to produce an on-line journal of culturally-based narratives, *Urban Rhythms*. However, since Parks’s scholarship emphasizes community-university partnership as its focus, he does not significantly address student learning or program design.

Other scholars have described students of color within their service learning courses; however, most operate within the border-crossing paradigm, or service learning is an “add-on” component – not fully embedded within course design, or their students are basic writers. I will discuss these programs a bit later; for now, I want to return to what Monberg suggests: the creation of a community writing course that desires to develop the consciousness of students of color when they serve within their own community of color. I also want to provide the research called for by Deans et. al: documenting student writing through “a more robust range of methods” (9). This dissertation presents a qualitative, ethnographic study describing three semesters of such a class: a literacy collaboration between a community college freshman composition course and a neighboring, at-risk high school. I examine this new border crossing, where students of color travel recursively within their own community, to consider the impact of such a course on student personal development and their writing.

However, before I discuss components of my program, I want to elaborate on the service learning scholarship that informed my pedagogy. As Deans, Roswell and Wurr urge, we need to be ever mindful of lessons we can learn from others (5). Therefore, allow me to briefly recount some strategies of success, and failure that influenced my course design.

Critical Service Learning Instructional Approaches¹

As many know, critical service learning programs are based on the liberatory model of education described by Paolo Freire in 1970s. In his text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire states the “banking model” of education wrongfully keeps citizens passive and unquestioning; instead, he argues education should develop *conscientization* – a critical

consciousness that allows individuals to intervene and challenge unjust social conditions.

Within the introduction to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Richard Shaull summarizes Freire goals as:

[E]very human being, no matter how ‘ignorant’ or submerged in the ‘culture of silence’ he or she may be, is capable of looking critically at the world in a dialogical encounter with others. Provided with the proper tools for such encounter, the individual can gradually perceive personal and social reality as well as the contradictions in it, become conscious of his or her own perception of that reality, and deal critically with it (32).

This “dialogical encounter with others” idea was viewed as an effective pedagogical strategy to help students engage in critical thinking about complex social issues. Freire argued students need to be taught to question how and what they learn, and how they live and interact in that world. Thus, he argues the: “fundamental goal of dialogical teaching is to create a process of learning and knowing that invariably involves theorizing about the experiences shared in the dialogue process” (17).

Freire’s theories have been adapted by many American educators, most notably by Ira Shor, Henry Giroux, and James Berlin. While critical pedagogy varies from one instructor to the next, they each believe in the power of education to create a more just, equitable world. Shor defines critical literacy as “habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meanings...to understand the deep meanings, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action” (129). He describes difficulty applying critical theory to American students because he believes they have been “habituated by passivity” through the banking system of education (139).

The goal of those teaching critical service learning courses is the same: they hope to prompt students’ critical consciousness and activist tendencies. However, many service learning advocates argue the connection to Freire is even stronger within their courses

compared to traditional classrooms because of the experiential learning provided when students collaborate with community members. Deans argues through critical service learning, students understand the social conditions surrounding the university “far more effectively” than traditional classrooms, textbooks, or experience alone (Deans, *Writing Across* 5). Most often the experiential learning components that students are asked to complete involves tutoring or mentoring and then writing *about* the community service or writing *with* community members. Course readings, writing, and dialogue help students understand the larger cultural, political, ideological, and/or institutional structures that shape identities within society. Mitchell’s 2008 work describes three elements within this pedagogy: specifically, it is an endeavor dedicated to “working to redistribute power amongst all participants in the service learning relationship, developing authentic relationships in the classroom and in the community, and working from a social change perspective” (50). The intent, again, is for students to learn how power is embedded within social structures and, hopefully, to become social change agents.

Those teaching within this paradigm believe the most effective program involves students working with those of differing racial and economic backgrounds. Bickford and Reynolds describe the teaching philosophy as providing students with a “jolt” of the unfamiliar, along with a “set of tools” to learn how to analyze – and not simply record – this environment: “How students interpret this difference tells us a great deal about their understanding of the social-ideological workings of culture” (236). While most instructors have their students tutor or mentor with schoolchildren, they vary widely in the analytic “tool set” they provide to their students. Some want to prompt critical consciousness through analyzing power embedded within literacy education, while others do so through

analyzing structural ideologies formed around poverty or homelessness, and still others focus on race or class structures. Although their means and assumptions vary, the scholars believe the students' "experience, when accompanied by reflection, makes them better writers, better learners, or better citizens" (Bickford and Reynolds 236). Deans takes it a step further, arguing that advocates of this model believe the service learning experience will "parlay into critical consciousness and civic action later in life" (Deans, *Writing*, 109).

Many within our field know this goal of developing students' critical consciousness through service learning was first articulated in 1994 by Bruce Herzberg. In his seminal article, "Community Service and Critical Teaching," Herzberg described his goal as "not only of making individual students more successful, but also of making better citizens, citizens in the strongest sense of those who take responsibility for communal welfare" (317). However, Herzberg admits within the article that working towards such lofty goals takes time and work. Luckily, they had both available. He describes his affluent Bentley students entering the classroom carrying a profound belief in individualism and meritocracy; they believe that anyone who works hard enough can succeed – commonly espousing theories such as "if you strive for it, you can get it" (315). Therefore, they initially view illiteracy as being caused by someone not studying hard enough, or poverty as the result of a job loss. Herzberg argues the difficult – but necessary – role for instructors is to help students move beyond attributing attitudes, behaviors, and material conditions to the individual. If they fail to do so, he argues, they will not look beyond the person and begin to understand the forces producing and sustaining social issues such as poverty, illiteracy, discrimination, and injustice.

Within the community, Herzberg's students volunteer as adult literacy tutors at a Boston homeless shelter. In the classroom, they learn about the ideology of homelessness and illiteracy through analysis of multiple literacy texts including Mike Rose's *Lives on the Boundary*, Jonathon Kozol's *Savage Inequalities*, and several essays from *Perspectives on Literacy*. By the end of the year-long program, Herzberg states that many students slowly develop a social conscience which he describes as "a sense of the reality and immediacy of the problems of the poor and homeless along with a belief that people in a position to help out should do so" (308). Armed with this new sense of responsibility, Herzberg hopes his students are able to "not only to question and analyze the world, but also to imagine transforming it" (317).

While Herzberg was the first scholar to argue for compositionists to blend critical pedagogy and service learning programs in attempts to prompt the development of students' critical consciousness, over the years many additional instructors adopted similar year-long programs for their affluent, white students. It is not my intent to describe all variations; I just want to provide a quick glimpse of how the field modified his original critical literacy-based-tutoring model into prompting students to become social activists for change.

For example, in 1998 Schutz and Gere said their program, and those like Herzberg's, attempt "to enhance the more emancipatory and socially responsive aspects of tutoring" (143); and they agree with Herzberg that "service learning alone, without critical classroom component fails to enable students to become active participants within public realm" (131). However, Schutz and Gere believe Herzberg's students were not, as he said, "energized into social action" (131) because they analyzed the social constructs within

illiteracy and homelessness instead of the tutoring context. Therefore, they created such a program for their University of Michigan students. Unfortunately, they relate their outcomes were similar to Herzberg's; their students also had a difficult time moving beyond the individual, personal view to larger structural analysis. They theorize in order for students to see beyond the "liberal savior" model of providing "expert" knowledge to the tutees, they had to forge a strong relationship with the community; without this connection, students usually viewed the tutee's lack of ability as an individual deficiency and not part of the larger social problem (135). Their conclusion points to the need for further theorizing of student/community relationships – that service learning needs to focus on "not on 'helping' others but on joining them as relative equals in a common project of social change" (146).

Like Schutz and Gere, Nancy Welch believes that students need to forge connections with community members. Within her 2002 article, "And Now that I Know Them: Composing Mutuality in a Service Learning Course," she theorizes Herzberg did not want his students to discuss the tutoring within their research papers because they might resort to the "ever-present" problem of composing in service learning courses: writing classic subject/object binaries that forestall social change. She writes: "Latent in Herzberg's conclusion is a fear that if students wrote of their tutoring experiences, they would collapse all difference and thus assert, 'And so the people at Pine Street are just like me,' implying, 'And they can get ahead just like me' " (246). She describes how her writing pedagogy moves students beyond this single-lens analysis to helps students construct complex narratives "in which all participants, including the children and teens at the center, are understood and composed as active, as knowing, and as exceeding any one construction of

who we all are” (247). She uses the bulk of the article to describe how she helps the students construct these narratives: through writing with those at the community site and about “the overlaps and tensions among their own literacy practices and assumptions, the practices and assumptions they observe and participate in at the center, and our class readings and discussions” (246). Therefore, through critical examination of their assumptions connecting to past practices, the service site, and/or course readings, she writes the students become more socially responsible.

Ellen Cushman and Ann Green argue for yet a different approach; instead of having students tutor or mentor community residents and write about issues connected to that service, their students become more socially responsible when they enter as ethnographers. They believe having students write observations and fieldnotes more effectively leads to reciprocal relationships thus avoiding the classic binaries that Helzberg; Schutz and Gere; and Welch describe happens when students are placed in a position to tutor community members. In her article, “The Public Intellectual,” Cushman suggests that when activist methods are employed and students enter the community “in a sincere effort to both engage in and observe language use that helps address the topics that are important to community members... knowledge-making [occurs] *with* the individuals served” (330, 331). Within a separate article she described a 1998 collaboration between the local YMCA and her U.C. Berkley students, who were studying to become teachers. The students wrote fieldnotes and connected their observations to “an important issue, problem, and/or idea from their readings” (“Sustainable” 56). Later, these notes were connected to additional readings and converted into case studies. For example, she relates how her student Delta initially believed a young YMCA student, Adrienne, had a learning disability because she was

writing so slowly; however, Cushman helped Delta realize Adrienne was just taking her time writing so neatly because she “wanted a star” from her teacher (54). Delta was then able to connect the incident to course readings that examines the relation between emphasizing “the product of a child’s emergent literacy as opposed to the process” (54). Delta then wrote a final research paper analyzing issues related to labeling children and tracking children. Cushman argues by complicating student understanding of literacy theory and pedagogy and working with the community members in a reciprocal and dialogical relationship, students are able to acquire such important new knowledge about important social issues.

Green also has students write about their service using ethnographic methods; however, students’ later reflection pieces focus on critical race theories. Like Schutz and Gere, she encourages her St. Joseph University students to talk to the learners while tutoring at the site. She believes that hearing their stories will more effectively help her affluent white students unlearn racism: “[I]t is important for Service learning students to recognize that race does matter, and to think about the ways that race facilitates and limits the work that can be accomplished at the Service learning site” (“But” 25). She helps students understand these issues through writing answers to questions such as: “How does race affect your tutoring? Are there particular uses of language you attribute to our race?” (“But” 21). Green discusses her anti-racist critical service learning program within three different articles, including one that problematizes how students of color were impacted by the pedagogy.

The final variation I wish to discuss is the Carnegie Mellon partnership with The Community Literacy Center (CLC) in Pittsburgh. While most students learn of social

justice issues abstractly through texts, Carnegie students learn through dialoguing with community members. This strategy, which the CLC calls an *intercultural* collaboration, helps both students and community members learn how to negotiate and use difference to solve problems. CLC Director Linda Flower says it takes this collaboration with the community to help her students understand the story behind issues such as police harassment, discrimination, or teen pregnancies. This dialogue “lets ‘other’ people speak back to our interpretations for themselves. Such dialogue can lead not only to reflection but to reflective social exchange” (“Partners” 107). In addition to the collaborative problem solving, students produce many different types of writing products including activist research, literacy work, and proposal writing. In his book, *Writing Partnerships*, Deans describes their program as a “comprehensive social change effort with rhetoric at its center” (112). They hope that “both the CLC teens and college student mentors will use writing to produce texts that do not simply critique or express, but also problem-solve, instigate social action and intervene in the world” (Deans 120).

The scholars named above are only a few of the many service learning advocates who teach modifications of Herzberg’s initial program. They believe that the combination of critical pedagogy and writing *about* tutoring service will prompt traditional white students into becoming aware of social problems and, hopefully, into becoming social activists in the future.

However, in reviewing this scholarship, one has to be aware of a glaring limitation to where each program was incorporated: all are at elite or private institutions (indeed, Welch even describes her University of Vermont as the “U.S.’s most expensive public university” [261]). An additional issue is courses described by Herzberg, Schutz and Gere,

and Green are part of a year-long sequence. I mention these limitations because while the field emphasizes our courses should prompt student's critical consciousness, duplicating these programs at smaller institutions or with different student populations seems daunting. Many of those who create one-semester programs avoid the Critical service learning programs and usually adopt the writing *for* the community model that I will discuss in the next section.

Critiques of Critical Service Learning

Those teaching the service learning version that Deans calls writing *for* the community model believe student citizens “should be actively involved in improving their communities” (Deans, *Writing*, 78) and argue for this paradigm because it initiates students into the type of writing they might do after graduation. Their goal is for students to learn how to write for social change while generating needed real world documents for a local social agency (e.g. brochures, flyers, newsletters, or websites). Deans describes three elements of this program: students learn nonacademic writing, compose needed documents for a community agency, and reflect on community needs (75).

One early adopter who has students write *for* the community is Paul Heilker. He argues for using this version because the critical service learning program “on the left” is too political and results in “oppositional behavior” from his students (75, 76). Within his 1997 article, “Rhetoric Made Real: Civic Discourse and Writing Beyond the Curriculum,” Heilker describes his desire to use the writing *for* the community model because it is more modest and therefore more attainable than those that argue for cultural transformation. He states: “I choose to focus my limited energies on moving students to take what some might call baby steps, but which I consider to be essential and very difficult (if not radical) first

steps out of stasis and apathy and into active citizenship and social responsibility” (75). Through producing essential writing documents for non-profit agencies, Heilker believes his students learn “how rhetoric is social action, how writing is life” (76).

While Heilker’s decision *not* to teach critical service learning course seems to address Herzberg’s concern that I noted earlier – teaching for critical consciousness takes time and effort – several scholars discussed Heilker’s motivation as it relates to our field. The most notable discussion comes from the editors of *Writing Community*, where Heilker’s article was published. They write:

[Heilker suggests] pressing ideological analysis on students may be counterproductive as well as dubious from an ethical standpoint. But this position elides another question in its different stand against teaching a particular mode of ideological analysis: Are we as instructors not engaging in service learning both because we want to change the community in specific ways and because we find it an effective “content” through which to teach students skills associated with academic writing? Is it enough to get students engaged and involved without promoting specific attitudes, interpretations, and outcomes – whether those are related to the community, the academy, or both? (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Waters 7).

I quote this passage at length because it harkens back to the argument about appropriate, effective course content for composition courses. Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Waters seem to be saying that as composition instructors incorporating service learning pedagogy, shouldn’t we want to spark change within the community and within our students’ interpersonal development? This is one of the key arguments that Composition instructors have used to argue for service learning courses within our discipline. Many say we should use our expertise in rhetorical theory and practice to help students move beyond writing personal narratives about the social conditions to more in-depth pieces analyzing the social, political, and/or ideological conditions causing inequities. As such, we help “prepare students in new ways to carry on responsible, effective, socially aware

communication in a variety of workplaces and communities, as well as in school” (Long 3).

Another effective model is illustrated by Thomas Deans. Within his *Writing Partnership* text, he describes how he blends both academic and community discourses within a one-semester course. Students begin writing a research essay on a social concern and then remediate this critique for a different audience. While students are working on these projects, Deans contacts local agencies to determine worthy projects trying to match community writing needs with current students’ interests. Students select from this list and work in groups to create the needed documents. The students’ final essay is reflection about their experience both as writers moving between discourses and as agents acting in the community. Similar to Herzberg, he hopes students can use writing to imagine a better world and bring it into being.

I would like to discuss one final type of program – the early work done by David Cooper and Laura Julier within the MSU Service Learning Writing Project (that now falls under the umbrella of civic engagement). They claim critical service learning courses spend too much time “training or nurturing students’ intellectual, cognitive, and moral talents” (92). Instead, they argue students would be better served if more time is spent teaching them how to critique current solutions to existing social problems. They argue creating “effective citizenship demands the ‘immanent critique’ of *solutions* to social problems in addition to the empathic immersion of students into those problems” (92). Students within their American Studies and Composition course read and reflect about democratic principles and values of American civic traditions before they began writing for their community organization. Selections from Thomas Jefferson, Martin Luther King, Jr., and

John Dewey help them analyze questions such as: “What does it mean to be a citizen in a democracy? How well do traditions of American citizenship serve the complex demands and increased diversity of public life in America? What is the relationship between civil rights and civic responsibilities? What does ‘service’ mean and what does it have to do with democratic citizenship?” (80). Cooper and Julier then provide evidence from the Service learning Writing Project at Michigan State University where more than 200 students worked with 50 service agencies. During those three years, they describe how students learned and applied democratic principles such as dialogue and deliberation strategies while also exploring topics related to “diversity, commitments to equity, and respect for the difficulties of resolving conflicts within a neighborhood, a community, or a nation” (91); thus, they argue, students are learning effective citizenship while becoming involved in solving social problems.

Program Modifications for Basic Writers

Several scholars teaching basic writers claim the traditional critical service learning program is not appropriate for their students. Instead, early adopters such as Rosemary Arca and Linda Adler-Kassner both describe versions better suited for this student population. Arca incorporates service learning as an option for her community college students. By the end of the semester, Arca said her basic writers are able to redefine themselves beyond a “remedial student who needs help” (138); they are able to reconceptualize themselves as valuable members of society. Arca then compares students’ reconceptualization to Freire’s goal of achieving the means for authentic thought (134). Her assignment sequence begins with exploring a community, a project that combines observations along with identifying and analyzing assumptions embedded within a

community. The second writing assignment considers the notion of service – whether actually participating in service or “observing and reflecting on the idea of service” (137). The final assignment is a problem-definition paper arising from an issue the students identify. She argues the completion of each essay “persuaded them that, as Freire suggests, ‘to exist humanly is to name the world, to change it’ ... Each leg in that journey convinced them of their power to effect change” (135). Another early adopter, Linda Adler-Kassner also argues against critical service learning courses for her underprepared students. In a 1995 published response to Herzberg’s initial essay, she relates that her students enter the course asking fairly substantial questions about education and culture and have “a pretty good handle on the idea that American culture is fundamentally inequitable *before* participating in our community service project” (554, emphasis hers). Further, she states that many of her students “have some sense that what’s happened to them – the fact that their education (and perhaps their lives) aren’t going as well as they wanted or hoped – isn’t *all* their fault” (554). What they need, she argues, is academic discourse skills.

Adler-Kassner goes on to describe two different programs she successfully incorporated at General College, the University of Minnesota’s open admission unit (now closed) – a traditional Stanford model, students writing *for* the community, and what she calls a “pipeline” project – a summer bridge course with students writing *about* the community while serving in their local black professional theater. Within this pipeline course, she asks students the same type of questions to prompt critical thinking that Herzberg asks his students. They write about the education system, surrounding culture, community service, and connections between them all; however, she hesitantly considers her course “pragmatic.” In taking a stand similar to Compositionists Bartholomae and

Bizzell, she said it's her job to help basic writers "articulate whatever consciousness they had in a way acceptable within the academy....Beginning to master a discourse acceptable in the academic community...is the value of community service work with underprepared students" (555).

Within that same 1995 *CCC* issue, Herzberg posted a brief response that her service learning program was "terribly important" especially in its intent to have students "learn academic discourse while analyzing the reasons for their prior exclusion from it" ("Response" 556). He also called for further research on this student population: "As Adler-Kassner says, this student population has not been represented in the literature on service learning, though there are instructors at a number of community college and urban campuses who have developed community service courses. A study of such efforts would be invaluable" (556).

I agree with Herzberg that we need to elaborate on how students of color are impacted through service learning programs and that there are many components of Adler-Kassner's program that could be effectively used within first year composition students. However, I disagree on one point; she argues her students do not need a critical service learning course because they are already aware of our inequitable society. I am not so sure that students can connect a failed educational system to systemic reasons, or at the very least that most students in a similar position have such an intuitive awareness. There is a wide margin between knowing about inequities and knowing these inequities are caused by systemic issues. Helping students understand these differences is a key component to an effective service learning programs – and the type of program I believe all students need to learn.

Divergent Scholarship Agendas

However, instead of answering Herzberg's call and researching students of color within our classrooms, scholars turned outward from the classroom and discussed two main issues. One issue that received considerable scholarship was from those who worked within the "extracurriculum." These rhetoricians argued for more work empowering the marginalized citizens who live outside the university gates. In her seminal 1996 article, "The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change," Ellen Cushman argues we should use our rhetorical expertise to become activists for the community members:

Activism means accepting a civic duty to empower people with our positions, a type of leftist stealing from the rich to give to the poor. To empower, as I use it, means: (a) to enable someone to achieve a goal by providing resources for them; (b) to facilitate actions—particularly those associated with language and literacy; (c) to lend our power or status to forward people's achievement (14).

Several scholars answered her call, although ways of empowerment varied from offering our expertise in the creation of community literacy programs (Flower, Goldblatt, Higgins, Long), advocacy on behalf of the homeless (Mathieu), creating oral histories for local citizens (Parks), or recruiting parent volunteers for a local school board (Coogan). Such goals present persuasive strategies regarding our potential roles within the community; however, as the extracurriculum is not a focus for this dissertation, I do not feel the need to discuss further. If interested, readers can find the scholarship effectively discussed within *The Public Work of Rhetoric* by John Ackerman and David Coogan.

A different strand of scholarship that is highly relevant to this dissertation is the discussion of ethical issues related to our discipline. Some discussed concerns related to their own pedagogy, others discussed ethical issues within the public rhetoric of the service learning story. As a matter of fact, Feigenbaum notes our discipline has spent so much time

outlining logistical, classroom, and ethical issues that the “theme of disenchantment ... has become its own trope” (6). While it’s not my intent to recap all issues that have been discussed, I do want to describe a few of the most recent ethical conversations that are important to our course designs and scholarship; as Deans, Roswell and Wurr warn, we need to be ever mindful of lessons we can learn from others (5).

Stories of service learning progress and transformation – the victory narratives that were so much a part of the first generation stories – were now being described as detrimental to student learning. Within an article that carried the subtitle “Acknowledging the Lost Subjects of the Service learning Story,” Syracuse Instructors Tracy Hamler Carrick, Margaret Himley, and Tobi Jacobi used Freire’s *ruptura* theory and discussed problems within the classroom that led to “a conflict that forces us to make a decision, to act, to break away from the old and familiar” (Carrick et al. 57). They argued, “if we move too quickly toward discursive constructions such as the reciprocity narrative, which then suture over these difficulties, we risk *fixing* complexities rather than *acknowledging* them as central to and part of learning” (59-60). They each describe a *ruptura* moment from their semester in which the celebratory public discourse was problematic for their students and influenced their future course designs.

Himley begins the article describing how the “high-handed” discourse she used within her 8-page syllabus caused a *ruptura* moment on the first day of class. A student questioned, “what if nothing happens to us at our sites? [H]e recognized that transformation – and moral improvement – not just 20 hours of service – was being required” (62). She reflects about the appropriateness of the syllabus narratives and determines she wrote for an audience beyond her immediate class; it was also directed

towards outside departments critical of the service learning pedagogy. She concludes her piece questioning how she will revise future courses. She also extended her argument to a full-length argument problematizing public rhetoric of the “the stranger” that I will discuss in a moment.

Hamler questions the moralistic assumptions underlying our assignments and reminds us that all stories are only partially told. She begins and ends her piece discussing Dana, a student who continually questioned ethical implications of the service requirement. Within her journal, she reflected about the volunteer requirement: “What exactly are they to me? A homework assignment?” (64). In a classroom discussion, when classmates negatively discussed how the site volunteers “punished” a child for hugging one of the college students, Dana discussed responsibility they have to the children – that perhaps the “director was worried about the children getting too attached to the people who would soon leave the agency and them” (65). Within the final assignment, an agency profile, Hamler said Dana and many other students needed the rhetorical space to “write themselves into” the community profiles (67). Dana, like others, “needed to look inside herself, to talk about and write about what she saw on the inside, before she could profile and what she saw and experienced on the outside” (66). Hamler concludes her piece thinking how she’ll revise future assignments and realizing that “all stories can only ever be partial narratives, and remind me that I cannot, and should not, expect or even desire ‘the real, complete story’ from students” (67).

The final story is from Tobi Jacobi who questions if we properly prepare students for – and support them during – their volunteer visits. She begins her article quoting from a community representative’s end-of-the- semester evaluation about one of her students:

“She came once; got on her cell phone and left” (67). Jacobi admits she was surprised to discover the student did not complete the service requirement because she was able to complete all writing assignments. Jacobi used the *ruptura* moment to reflect back on her own service background – when she wasn’t wanted – when the tutee wouldn’t shake her hand or look her in the eye. Jacobi recalls she was rejected, stunned; “what had I done? This had never happened before” (69). She went home and journaled and then thought of her students. They too were required to journal after each visit, but these journals were only collected three times over the semester. She concludes her piece describing how she will use these moments within the classroom to help students “engage in the act of *ruptura* without reaching for a cell phone” (71).

In the 2009 “Chaos Theory,” Stenberg & Whealy describe a similar situation. They describe how they bought into the celebratory public narrative – they wanted students to “make a difference.” Therefore, they initially placed a higher value on a group of students who had completed a service experience in Central America; “they represented the ‘outcome’ for which we at first hoped” (696). However, to these students “make a difference” meant impactful service at the site; they continually used class time to vent about “wasted time” and unreturned phone calls. The authors describe several unsuccessful strategies in their attempt to help these students rethinking the value of their service. In the end, they did not complete their hours, and most of their research papers referenced their Central American trip and not the current service site. “Ironically,” she writes, “those most deeply committed to the ethic of service failed to complete their service requirement” (702). Stenberg and Whealy help remind us to be wary of the outcomes we wish to pursue and how we approach those outcomes within the classroom.

While I have described how the public discourse was problematic to our students, Margaret Himley and Paula Matthieu each describe how the public discourse is problematic to our community partners. In her 2004 *CCC* article, “Facing (Up to) ‘The Stranger’ in Community Service learning,” Himley demonstrates how Service learning public rhetoric unfairly positions the students above the community members. She argues against rhetoric of the “stranger” because it implies that they “don’t belong (yet) to mainstream American life because of race, class, life chances, immigration, or other reasons” and further cast the “other” into subjective roles (421). She argues discourses of volunteerism, civic literacy, active citizenship, experiential learning, rhetorical training, and patriotism conceal power symmetries: “The dominant version of the rhetoric of community service may position each and every community service student in a privileged way – as the one who provides the service, as the one who donates time and expertise, as the one who serves down, as the one who writes up” (430).

One last story from Paula Mathieu who argues the public rhetoric of reciprocity unfairly defines the community as source of problems. Within her book, *Tactics of Hope*, she describes several “academic horror stories” she encountered working within the non-profit world when university representatives did not effectively consider the needs of the community (51). Problems included her “competing” with other organization to get student volunteers and one-sided relationships where the students or instructors want to use the site for classroom learning but are unwilling in helping the site in any robust capacity.

These are just a few of the plethora of lessons that have been articulated within service learning scholarship over the past few years. Himley and Hamler remind us we need to be wary of the ethical implications embedded within our syllabus and assignments;

Jacobi, Stenberg, and Whealy identify issues with students that can certainly occur within our own classrooms; while Himley and Mathieu warn us about the language we use within our publications. However, I maintain there is still work to be done within our classrooms – especially designing effective curriculum in ways that can empower our students of color – who are members of their own community. To date only a handful of scholars have described how learning changes for students of color.

Students of Color within Service learning Courses

As we can easily see, the overwhelmingly majority of our scholarship describes community-writing courses for mainstream students; however, I think it's well past the time to return to Herzberg's call and describe how service learning courses impact marginalized students. To date, just a handful of scholars, whom I will discuss in this section, address this issue. Whether they are describing basic writers at a community college or students of color attending a private university, instructors note their students have marginalized view of their academic ability. Rosemary Arca said her students arrive in the classroom "with a diminished view of themselves and of the power they have to effect change" (133). Adler-Kassner describes students as those who had been "given the shaft" by the system and "most were deemed failures long before they arrived on our doorstep" (553); she adds her urban students were the "underserved, underprepared, excluded students" described within Mike Rose's *Lives on the Boundaries*. More than a dozen years later, one of Angelique Davi's students writes her entire "high school career was a life on the boundary," two others describe "exchanges with teachers that made them feel insignificant and even unwelcome," still others describe their high school education left them unprepared for the rigors of college life (Davi, Dunlap, and Green 56).²

While many scholars describe their white students anxiously approaching the service learning site because encountering culturally other, when the situation is flipped, and students of color are preparing to serve in white community, Davi notes anxiety about race is absent. Instead, she notes as students of color anxiously approach the Service learning site thinking their skills are insufficient to provide a positive environment for the elementary school students they are tutoring. She cites one young woman wanting to return to the classroom as a time for her to “heal (her) wounds...I can feel like I am making something RIGHT!” Another student writes that he hopes he can connect to a child – to be able to listen to the child, because no one was there for him (Davi, Dunlap, and Green 56).

Many have written that students of color are comfortable with the idea of service because of their historical tradition of church service. Green writes this comfort level is reinforced when they encounter people of a similar race at the Service learning site. Melissa, an African American student with a history of service in the black church, “felt a personal connection to the homeless Black people that I encountered because they were my people. Their eyes were my eyes, their hair was my hair, and their skin was my skin” (“Difficult” 283). However, she provides a second example that is a bit more complicated: a Latina student, Elizabeth, was viewed as having an “unfair advantage” by classmates because she was received differently than her white service partner. While Elizabeth felt comfortable at the site and easily conversed in Spanish, Green said the white students could not acknowledge their own “advantage” and comfort level on the predominantly white campus “was also related to their race” (“Difficult” 289).

This brings up another important issue. Green, Stenberg and Whealy describe how their mainstream students could discuss poverty or discrimination issues as abstract issues

impacting clients at the service site; however, they could not use the same compassion to the few students of color in their classroom. Green reveals how a white student, Andrea, could write thoughtfully and insightfully about her service in the underprivileged high school she served; however, she could not apply this same compassion to Joe and Elizabeth, two “underprivileged” students of color enrolled in their fall class but had dropped out of college before the second semester. When a dynamic class discussion the second semester focused on how white students can work against racism by organizing to diversify the campus or begin letter-writing campaigns, Andrea publically reinforced negative stereotypes that students of color “can’t cut it”:

I hate to rain on everybody’s diversity parade, but ... I think we should talk about why Elizabeth and Joe aren’t in class anymore.... Well, Joe told me, he told me that the only reason he got accepted here was because he was Black. And I just think, that if I was the administration that I would hesitate to bring those kinds of students here, because they just can’t cut it. It’s got to start a lot sooner than college, and we just can’t let them in here (“Difficult” 290).

Green admits Joe and Elizabeth were admitted to the college through a recruitment program designed to bring economically disadvantaged students to the campus (a program no longer being used). However, Green said she remains “haunted” because their absence was being interpreted as an “indication of why students of color shouldn’t attend our institution because it was ‘too hard for them’” (“Difficult” 288, 289).

Stenberg and Whealy tell a similar story of their mainstream students connecting poverty issues to the literacy clients but not those sitting together in this classroom. When discussing the novel *Push*, the white students expressed disbelief that no one stepped in to help the character Precious; therefore, Stenberg and Whealy said they tended to discredit the text. A student of color, LaKiesha, stepped in to provide context: “I’ve been in

situations like this. Social workers and nurses in underfunded urban institutions don't have time to care about every abuse case that comes through. And Precious isn't a white, wealthy patient. She's not going to get as much attention as those clients who can afford to pay" (694). During private conversation with the professors, through "tears of anger and frustration" LaKiesha expressed her frustration with her rich classmates. She said she has to work and send money home; her friends steal and lie in hopes of getting ahead (694). She said her classmates did not understand "what they were talking about as a theoretical issues was not somebody else's problem, it was her problem. Inequality, poverty, and exploitation were not abstractions to be overcome so that the world could become better for other people; they were immediate problems in her life" (695).

However, the stories are not all negative. Davi describes how students learn about racism, and then they learn that their "tracking" label could be due to racism embedded within education: "For example students of color may find themselves recognizing more subtle forms of racism embedded in the educational system that may have contributed to their sense of their academic performance. As a result of this reflection, some students begin to understand the complexity of racism and its influence on their assessment of themselves as poor writers" (76).

Davi's article also describes how her students became social change agents by the conclusion of the course. In her 2006 article "In the Service of Writing and Race," Davi reveals that the inquiry-based course, reflection, and writing allowed several students overcome past racist incidents and became empowered to change. One student, Mary, recalls being "uncomfortable" when a 4th grader pointed to her and said "You look just like my family's maid." Mary and her classmates "tease[d] out the complexity of this

seemingly innocent statement” several times over the semester through classroom discussions and reflections connected to course readings; they came to the decision as a group that this incident was racially motivated (84). Before the semester ended, Mary met with the faculty and administrators at the elementary school who acknowledged the need to incorporate more explicit diversity education in the classroom. Another student, Theresa, was able to analyze her earlier education in which prior teachers incorrectly judged her because of her race, accent, and ethnicity; through the Service learning experience, she was able to reflect on her prior education and envision a more successful future as an effective teacher. She writes, “I have tasted all types and sizes and classifications such as ‘marginal,’ ‘normal,’ and ‘advanced.’ From my experiences, I have the ability to build the perfect teacher. As I travel through my memories and unravel what went wrong and what was right, I will create the model educator,” (87). Davi concludes that a goal of service learning should be to provide students with the opportunity and tools to address their feelings of discomfort: “In the best case scenario, students will feel empowered and able to address overtly the subtle racial dynamics in the classroom. Such empowerment should be the goal not only of service learning but of education in general” (92).

While these few scholars provide useful arguments about the way students of color benefit from enrolling in a Service learning composition classroom, there are limits to the studies which must be addressed. Davi, Adler-Kassner and Green all had their students in a two-semester sequence; Davi and Adler-Kassner describe basic writers in a bridge program; Green teaches a composition/literature sequence. Green and Davi also teach at elite universities; St. Joseph and Bentley respectively. Last, all classrooms crossed borders into a community of a different race in order to prompt learning.

If we look to Service learning within the Education discipline, Marilynne Boyle-Baise and Christine Sleeter, also describe the few students of color learning within a traditional border-crossing paradigm. They note that their students of color were more likely than their white counterparts to hold activist views of service learning and less likely to see the communities through a deficit view. Their 1998 study revealed that many of their students of color entered the teaching career in order to “give back” to their communities. They also found that students of color were more likely to volunteer time and effort beyond the classroom requirements, which they determined was an indication of students “on their way to becoming activists” (19).

In summation, if students of color are more likely to view their service site in a positive light and with more activist tendencies than their white counterparts, I wonder what might a student learning look like if we designed a critical service learning course for students of color to serve within their own community of color? This is the same question that Teresa Guinsatao Monberg asks, so I would like to discuss her theories in a bit more detail.

Creation of a Recursive Service Learning Program

In her article, “Writing Home or Writing As the Community: Toward a Theory of Recursive Spatial Movement for Students of Color in Service Learning Courses,” Monberg notes, like I did earlier, that our scholarship and programs center on experiences of white students from privileged backgrounds who serve in communities different from their own. While she states this scholarship is an “important dimension of service-learning that deserves attention” (24), this focus eliminates students from marginalized backgrounds from the conversation. She writes: “While we have paid great attention to how service-

learning courses might impact the civic and racial identity development of white students, we have not always paid the same attention to how these courses might impact the civic and racial identity development of students of color” (30). She then theorizes that marginalized students would be better served through a new paradigm: traveling recursively within their own communities.

Monberg argues the traditional paradigm can be problematic for students of color in several ways. One problem she sees is that the discourse can be read as a “master narrative of literacy infused with common assumptions about education, individual achievement, transformation, social mobility, and citizenship” where these narratives are generally focused on the transformation of marginalized citizens into “legitimate American subjects” (29). She discusses how marginalized students have different assumptions about literacy, race, and citizenship. Another issue is that our assumptions that students need to cross borders in order to prompt learning. As such, she notes that students who “inhabit racialized subject positions may struggle differently” (29). She then cites examples from the Davi, Dunlap, and Green article that I used earlier who note differing student anxieties when crossing borders; white students were anxious due to race while students of color were concerned about their own writing skills.

Monberg believes students of color can arrive at social awakening without crossing racialized borders; instead, she wants them to examine their own community, places they thought of as familiar, as “a colonized site” (25). She argues that when students learn how to identify differently with their own community, it will lead to social awareness and perhaps activists within their own community. She writes: “My hope is that these re/visions of home, brought into focus through recursive spatial movement, can provide

students with a deeper sense of social change and a deeper sense of what it would mean to re/write home” (46).

I share her concern about the lack of attention to paid to students of color within service learning courses; it is with this common theme of hope and social change, that I designed my project. Finding her article came right when I was learning the difference between “service learning” and critical service learning for composition classrooms. Allow me to explain. After nearly two decades of working as a journalist in suburban Detroit area, I decided to change careers. My Master’s degree in journalism qualified me to teach at a private college, and over the next four years I taught a variety of courses including speech; composition courses for basic, intermediate, and advanced writers; and several semesters of service-learning courses for upper-level business students. Since I was not educated in service learning or composition pedagogy, I was glad the college provided the required syllabus, descriptions of the major writing assignments, and the required textbook. I will not embarrass myself by discussing characteristics of that program; suffice to say, my new background in composition theory, via Gallagher, allows me to name such a program as administrative progressive without attention to developing students’ civic or social development.

Instead, allow me to fast forward to 2007 when I attended orientation for new adjunct members at the local community college where I was just hired to teach composition course. I sat in a crowded conference room with approximately 75 other adjunct faculty members listening to the campus deans describe programs to help us effectively begin school year. They discussed new professional development courses, additional technology added to the classrooms, the anticipation of the college’s re-

accreditation certification, and the need to install service learning within the classroom. My ears perked up—service learning? “Hmm,” I thought, “I’ve done this before. Now I can incorporate this type of program within my class *and* earn brownie points with the dean.” During this orientation, my dean touted service learning benefits: engaged students, more effective learning etc. He suggested for us to “start slow” by having students volunteer in the community and then reflect on their service via presentations or paper.

My implementation could not have been any slower. Since the fall syllabus for my Comp I course was already completed, I initiated service learning as an alternate for the final exit essay, and only one student performed the service. During a classroom presentation (which summarized her five-page essay), “Ashley” told the classroom that she “found value” when she returned to her elementary school and volunteered for eight hours. *Hmm.* Since her experience seemed valuable, I decided to take the service learning a step further by making it a mandatory component of my winter composition courses. I established a program with a day-time homeless shelter and made arrangements for my students to help the church volunteers serve lunch and help the clients search the closets to find clothes to wear through the cold winter days. To ease student anxiety, I put students in groups of three and built one day into the semester for each group to skip one day of class to perform their service. I thought if they were working in groups, they would bond over their service and not seem so uncomfortable when they returned to complete their required time of 10 hours throughout the semester. I also found that I connected with the students more because I volunteered with them—not only could I envision the cramped clothing closet—I had first-hand knowledge of the dark, smelly basement.

I can hear the collective groans now from the scholars trained in service-learning pedagogy because programs such as the ones I just described are clearly bereft of critical engagement. Deans would call such programs a “simple” version; Flower, “guerilla warfare.” My students went into the community with the premise to serve the less fortunate; and, to please me, they wrote a paper or two. Even the fact that I volunteered alongside my students would be rightfully questioned, because as Cushman has said, my purpose seemed to be more of validating the students’ work instead of me serving the community (“Sustainable”). I became aware of such deficits mid-way through that semester as I was researching service learning theories as part of my first graduate course in the English Program at Wayne State University. I learned of the very important differences between “service learning” as charity and the more important critical service learning programs.

Project Design

Near the end of coursework for my Master’s essay, I had one of those “light-bulb moments.” As we spent several seminars discussing Linda Flower’s *Community Literacy* text and how the Community Literacy Center works to empower both the affluent, privileged Carnegie Mellon students and the marginalized community members living near the campus, I wondered where were programs that work to empower the marginalized community members who are enrolled within our classes. At this time, I am working as a temporary, full-time instructor at a minority, majority community college. My students are non-traditional students; mostly African Americans in their 20s. I decided to focus my Master’s essay to research ways to empower these students. I enrolled in a directed study program with the director of composition Gwen Gorzelsky and critically read about the way scholars have described their course designs or theorized ways to do so. With Gwen’s

help, we designed a curriculum based on Monberg’s theories and other best practices within the field: I wanted to teach a service learning course where students serve within their own community, and hopefully they will become activists for their own community.

After my dean and department chair approved the curriculum design, I began working on the IRB protocol. Since it is widely known that the most effect service-learning programs are established by the professor before the semester begins (Cushman, Deans, Mathieu), I was also searching for a community partner, naively thinking “community” as being defined by geography, race, and class (an issue I take up in chapters 4 and 5). In June I stumbled upon the Oakland Academic Campus (OAC), an alternative high school which advertises two different programs designed to help students graduate on time. I chatted with the principal, Marcus Booker, on the phone several times over the summer, and when we finally met face-to-face in August, Booker greeted me with a big bear hug and said how much he was looking forward to our class together. At our round table, we chatted about my proposed curriculum of social justice, empowerment, and the disparities that result from inequitable funding and race. He continued to light up throughout the conversation and read me a poem he wrote called “The Dash” about how one spends their short time on this earth. We bonded over a mutual desire to teach social justice and empowerment. When I turned the conversation to questions I had prepared to make sure I put the community first: What would he like my students to do – mentor? Tutor? Do students need to schedule appointments? The questions were deflected. He asked for an OCC student to begin their service by shadowing a student first and then writing a reflection. He also envisioned a round-table discussion. He didn’t want appointments or schedules or assignments; a schedule would be too restrictive for my students. “We’re here 7-7; they can come

whenever.” After that first visit, he asked for them to shadow a student and for the students to decide how they can best help the school. “We’re talking empowerment right? They need to find out how they can best use their tools. You mentioned tutoring? Yes, we can use that. You mentioned mentoring? Yes, we can use that. Help writing papers? Yes, we can use that too. What I’m not going to say is your students have to do any of these things. They need to find their own way.” He had room available at the school that I could hold a class there, if I liked. They could hook up the laptops or any material I need. He reiterated how important he felt my program would be to his staff. Wow. Connection to the community made; we just had to wait for the start of the semester.

While waiting, I completed my course design for a social justice curriculum combining critical theories with activist and local pedagogies in order to empower the students within my classroom. I describe the curriculum in more detail in later chapters, so I will briefly discuss the characteristics here. Course readings, writing, and lectures focus on critical theories and social justice issues with the goal for students to analyze their own education and those of the surrounding areas to understand the social forces that effect our nation’s schools. Readings include Jonathon Kozol’s *Savage Inequalities*, essays from Thomas Deans’s *Writing for Social Action*, including Robert Coles and Paolo Freire; President Obama’s speech to the National Urban League when he introduced the Race to the Top education initiative. To enhance our local pedagogy and help the students become more comfortable talking about race and class issues, we also read essays from Beverly Tatum and Peggy McIntosh. As to writing assignments, students began the semester with Literacy autobiography and ended with a research paper and project for change.

Assignments throughout the semester also included response papers connected to course readings, and a group project comparing two Detroit-area schools.

While I received permission from the Dean to teach a service learning course, the course does not have an “official” designation as a “service-learning,” nor is it an upper-level writing course. It is just one of approximately 70 standard second semester freshmen composition courses (ENG 1520) offered throughout one of the five Oakland Community College campuses. Students are informed of the service learning requirement if they noticed the brief online course description: “Students will be required to complete 15-hours of service learning requirements at an instructor-chosen site. Please contact the instructor with questions.” (In chapter 2, I discuss student reactions to the lack of advertisement.)

Research design

Since I want to understand if students within my classroom could be empowered to become activists through a curriculum of activism, critical theory and service within their own community, I chose to use a qualitative research approach, specifically an ethnographic methods. Creswell explains qualitative methods are useful for “studying groups in education, their behaviors, beliefs, and language, and how they develop shared patterns of interacting over time” (481). Or as Sharon Merriam states within *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, “Ethnography strives to understand the interaction of individuals not just with others, but also with the culture of the society in which they live” (23).

The first step to establishing the research design is receiving permission from “gatekeepers” (Creswell, Merriam). I already mentioned how I secured permission from the college and our community site. I also secured IRB approval from Wayne State

University where I am a doctoral student. All participants in the study – whether students or community members – signed consent forms. I personally recruited and solicited permission from the community members. However, in order to ensure student anonymity, a colleague solicited student participation when I was not in the room. She collected all student forms and mailed them to my Wayne State advisor. I collected the forms after grades had been submitted. In all 45 students signed the consent forms (fifteen in 2010, eighteen in 2011, and twelve in 2012).

While Creswell and Merriam are defining ethnography in general, Beverly Moss, Wendy Bishop, and Charles Bazerman demonstrate how this type of research is beneficial for composition studies. Moss defines the term for composition studies as being “concerned more narrowly with communicative behavior or the interrelationship of language and culture” (cited in Brown and Dobrin 3). Within composition studies, many have considered the classroom as a “temporarily convened culture” (Bishop 3), as such, they used ethnographic methods to provide context of the entire writing situation. Wendy Bishop, in her book *Ethnographic Writing Research: Writing it Down, Writing it up, and Reading It*, states researchers “look to study how individuals write (or don’t write, or resist writing, or combine reading and writing, or are asked to write and perceive those jobs or academic assignments and carry them out” (1).

In order to examine how students were impacted by the curriculum, I rely on Bazerman’s concepts of the classroom documents as a genre system. *In What Writing Does and How It Does It*, Bazerman asserts the curriculum is a tool designed to influence social activity. Specifically, he describes the classroom as a genre system created through genre sets from both the teacher and students. He describes many predictable items within the

teacher set: syllabus, assignment sheets, lessons and notes about readings or lectures. Other documents include our communication with students: including emails, comments and grades on student papers, and grade sheets at the end of the term (318). The genre set created by students within the same system might consist of notes on lectures, readings, or assignments; rough drafts or final copies, communication to teachers. Examining the genre system allows us to understand the practical, functional, and sequential interactions of the documents so that we can understand the entire activity system.

Such an understanding can help you diagnose and redesign communicative activity systems—to determine whether a particular set of documents used at certain moments is redundant or misleading, whether new documents need to be added, or whether some details of a genre might be modified.... Understanding the form and flow of texts in genre and activity systems can even help you understand how to disrupt or change the systems by the deletion, addition, or modification of a document type. While this may tempt textual mischief, it also provides the tools for thinking about social creativity in making new things happen in new ways (Bazerman 311).

In order to understand cultures, ethnographic research involves collecting artifacts, writing observations, and conducting interviews. I collected documents from the entire genre system Bazerman describes. From myself I have copies of all course material I generated including lesson plans, syllabi, assignments, and comments I wrote on student papers (both paper and electronic). I also have recordings and detailed fieldnotes from each class session and interviews from community members (that I'll discuss later).

As to writing observations, Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw note there is “not just one ‘natural’ way to write about what one observes,” (5). In order to document student learning within my own classroom, I relied on audio recordings supplemented by “jottings” (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 18). During each class session, the tape recorder with a directional microphone was placed at a table in front of the classroom. Students knew it

was there as part of the research project. I supplemented the audio tape with brief notes I jotted in a notebook or on assignment sheets during class sessions. I converted these tapes and jottings into detailed fieldnotes usually within 24 hours. On average, I wrote approximately 9 single-spaced pages per class; in total, I have approximately 350 pages of fieldnotes just on observing my classroom over the three semesters.

While I used observational methods to research students within my classroom, in order to understand the happenings at the community site, I conducted several semi-formal and spontaneous interviews with the Principal and a few teachers (Blakeslee and Fleischer 132). Interview purposes varied from setting up the program at the beginning of each semester or checking in on program problems and successes throughout the semester or at semester end. As I did in the classroom, I audio taped each interview. However, since I was a journalist for 17 years, I easily supplemented these tapes with more extensive notes I wrote during our interview sessions.

From my students, I collected all formal and informal texts they generated during the semester. Formal texts include classroom assignments: essays, multi-media presentations, on-line postings, and final portfolios; informal writing includes copies of e-mails, workshop activities, homework, rough drafts and student journals. These journals were collected at least four times throughout the semester; after reading and commenting within the journals, I then made photocopies for my records. Lastly, I have questionnaires students filled out at the beginning and end of the semester. According to IRB protocol, I have removed all personal identification from student texts and have used pseudonyms for any specific material used within this publication.

As I collected research about students within my own classroom, Moss and Creswell remind me that my position as a teacher-researcher could shape interpretation of my data. In “Ethnography and Composition,” Beverly Moss challenges composition researchers to examine their own roles in the communities they study and the ways in which these roles influence how and what they observe in those communities. (Kirsch and Sullivan 7) She writes the teacher who studies her own class could run into difficulty because daily routines are dependent on her. Additionally, the familiarity an instructor has with her own community could result in instructors not writing about all occurrences because they believe they are not unique or unusual. Creswell also helps researchers recognize how our subject position shapes our interpretation. He writes: “[researchers] ‘position themselves’ in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences” (Creswell 8-9).

Due to the subjective nature of qualitative research, many within the field suggest triangulation of the data (Creswell; Merriam; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw). Merriam “What is being investigated are people’s constructions of reality – how they understand the world. And just as there will be multiple accounts of eyewitnesses to a crime, so too, there will be multiple constructions of how people have experienced a particular phenomenon, how they have made meaning of their lives, or how they have come to understand certain processes” (Merriam 214). She suggests using multiple methods of data collection and multiple sources of data. I have already discussed the multiple methods I used. As such, I can validate what someone told me in an interview against what I observed at the site or read within documents. She also suggests multiple sources of data. For instance, I validated student documents through observations at different points throughout the semester, as well

as their entrance and exit surveys. Triangulation of interview material included follow-up interviews with the same people and verification through observations or documents (Merriam 216). Taking notes during class (the “jottings” mentioned above) is one of several tasks where I divided my duties between researcher and teacher.

Research Questions

In summary, the goal for my study is to create a community-based writing course where students are no longer traveling across borders of difference in order to move towards critical consciousness. Instead students of color can achieve this same level of awareness by travel *recursively* within their own borders. This dissertation presents research on such a course. Specifically, the research questions pursued in this text are:

- 1) What are the characteristics of a Recursive Critical service learning Composition course?
 - a) How do students respond to theoretical frames, assignments, or discussion topics relating to critical theory?
 - b) How does this paradigm differ from current research in regards to student learning and/or development of critical consciousness?
- 2) What connections do students make among course readings on systemic inequities, prior experience, and concrete experiences offered by the course’s service component?
 - a) What does student writing look like when they do make these connections, or when they are asked to make such connections?
 - b) Does students’ writing claim to reflect the values, beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors typical of the community where they’re serving? If so, what forms do such claims take, and what function do they serve in students’ texts?

- c) How does this writing differ from mainstream students who serve within this urban community?

Chapter Descriptions

In the chapters that follow, I describe how a Recursive Critical service learning course was incorporated as part of the second semester writing curriculum during three different semesters at Oakland Community College's, a minority-majority Southfield campus. To examine the effects of this new paradigm, my dissertation will be divided into the following chapters:

Chapter Two: Defining the Recursive Learner

In Chapter Two, I describe the qualitative methods I used to identify the Recursive Learners within my class. Through conducting a close reading of student texts and classroom conversations, I was able to identify 28 of the students as Recursive Learners: those who seem to identify with this community. I determined Recursive Learners could not be identified due to demographic information (race, age, proximity, or prior education); although, having an affluent education was clearly an indication of those who do not belong to this community. Characteristics identifying those who do not belong to this community fell within the following categories: 1) they describe the school or students as different from their own education, 2) they negatively commented on the site or students, or 3) they did not interact with the high school students.

Chapter Three: Entering the Site

In Chapter Three, I examine the genre system implemented during the first few weeks of the course to determine how it shapes students' initial engagement with their service site. I begin the chapter discussing the assignment criteria, a description/reflection

criticized within field. Then address critiques of narrative writing assignments within critical service learning courses. Next, I conducted a close reading of each text to determine emergent themes within their papers and determine how writing differs between the two sets of learners. Findings reveal Recursive Learners view the site more positively than Outsiders and are more likely to express activist tendencies than Outsiders. However, they also write conversion narratives expressing anxiety when entering this familiar site.

Chapter Four: Writing As the community

While chapter three demonstrates how students enter the site, Chapter 4 describes the pedagogical framework, assignment sequencing, and classroom activities to determine semester-long effects of a Recursive Critical Service Learning Program. I begin by discussing assessment methods used within the discipline: program descriptions and anecdotes. I then present my own program descriptions and anecdotes; however, I supplement the data with pre-course and post-course questionnaires. I end the chapter discussing student development in terms of course outcomes: critical consciousness or activism.

Chapter Five: Wrapping it Up

To conclude the dissertation, I recap data presented within Chapters Two, Three, and Four and discuss effects of my program. I begin by discussing learning outcomes for students of color and the importance of such data considering the paucity of research in the field. Next, I compare these findings to existing literature discussing within current terminology of critical consciousness and/or activism. I end the chapter arguing that Recursive Critical service learning courses should be adopted by other institutions teaching

the same student population; I then describe limitations and modifications of such a program.

Chapter 1 Notes

¹ The goal of this chapter is to describe the scholarship of critical service learning programs and not the history of service learning as its own discipline; however, by way of providing some background of that context, I will briefly point to three useful texts. Many of the early lessons were described within our discipline's first anthology, the 1997 *Writing Community* by Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Ann Waters. They described the burst of service learning programs as a "micro-revolution" (2) and published a number of essays documenting early successes and problems. Within *Writing Partnerships*, Thomas Deans classified first generation scholarship into three different writing paradigms: writing about, for, or with the community; he also described the theoretical frames within each version. Lastly, the 2010 *Writing and Community Engagement*, which I mentioned in my introduction, recaps important first generation work and introduces pedagogy and ethical concerns of second-generation scholars. Deans, Roswell, and Wurr said second-generation scholars became "more committed to welcoming diversity, enhancing community assets, and developing community leaderships" (7). In addition to historical overviews, these texts also describe many additional scholarship threads readers would find useful. These authors, and many others teaching service learning composition courses, share a belief that we should use our rhetorical expertise to develop students into better citizens, to prepare them for civic participation after graduation. However, just like scholars teaching traditional Rhetoric/Composition classes, how we use that expertise has widely varied.

² Ann Green relates a similar story about Lucy whose high school teachers told her she was not good enough to be in AP classes or that she would be the only black female in some of her classes (qtd. in Davi, Dunlap, and Green).

CHAPTER 2
WHO BELONGS TO THIS COMMUNITY?
TRYING TO IDENTIFY THE RECURSIVE LEARNER

As we did each week, the 21 students, in this first year writing class are all sitting in a large circle facing each other for our weekly discussion about our community site – an alternative education high school just a few miles from our campus. Ninety-eight percent of the students who attend the Oakland Academic Campus (OAC) are African American. Our classroom, at the Oakland Community College Southfield Campus, is also primarily composed of students of color; during this fall semester, there are fourteen African Americans, three Chaldeans, an Asian, a Latina, and three white students. At this point, six weeks into the fall 2010 semester, students have established their position around the circle and leave a spot for me at the front of the classroom.¹

I began the conversation by asking students who have completed their second visit to talk to us about what they witnessed this past week. Cathy, a 23-year-old single, white female who graduated from Lamphere school district four years ago and is planning to transfer to local university to pursue a business degree at the end of the semester, began the conversation by telling us about a high school student's mom who wanted to make sure her son was doing his work within the computer lab: "The mom sat next to her son and stayed there the entire class; he was doing his work." Dionne, a 45-year-old African American grandmother and life-long Detroit resident who is also on her second visit, described a tutoring session she witnessed between AmeriCorps volunteers helping several high school students compose essays for a local writing contest. "It seemed natural to me," she said. "The students didn't seem wild. Some are probably ADHD or normal like we are, but I didn't see anything wrong. I didn't see

anything out of the ordinary.” “There were kids paying attention and raising their hands,” Cathy added.

While Cathy and Dionne began the discussion focusing on positive traits they witnessed from their recent visits, the tone quickly changed to negative when several classmates portrayed the OAC students in less flattering terms. Karissa, a 34-year-old African American mother of two young children who is also a life-long Detroit resident like Dionne, described many of the students she saw this past week in a gym class as “disrespectful.” She said the gymnasium, which also doubles as the school’s cafeteria at lunch time, has five exit doors and that the teacher, Mrs. Sullivan, had a difficult time keeping track of the 36 students because they kept opening the doors to let in students who were skipping from other classes. “I saw boys sticking gum on the wall and letting other students into the gym through the side doors. Some of the students are respectful; some are straight hood.” Karissa, an unemployed autoworker who is a student in our nursing program, said Mrs. Sullivan, “had enough” and took away the boys’ basketball. The boys then tried to get Karissa on “their side:”

The boys kept asking me, “Do you think it’s right that she took the ball from us?” Everyone wanted to hear what I had to say. I told the boys, “You know what? If I was you all’s teacher, you all wouldn’t have no equipment. You see these tiles on this floor, every one of you all would have four blocks in here. You all would be walking around in gym talking in a respectful manner. You are disrespectful, disrespectful. It’s a blessing that you all have somebody to come in here and stick with you all.” They made me so mad I didn’t know what to do.

Judith, a 34-year-old Latina mother of four children who is also in our nursing program, was quick to jump in to discuss her visit to an unnamed teacher’s English classroom next: “It’s inexcusable to say that anything I saw was normal. I would home school my children before I would let them sit in a class act like that!” She glanced around the circle at her classmates while trying to find the right words to describe student behavior. “The names they call each

other... The entire time we were there, they were calling this one kid a faggot or a homo ... I'm sorry, I would expel these students and open that district up to the entire Detroit area. They obviously don't want their second chance.² There has to be students who want to learn."

As soon as Judith finished, several voices shouted at once. Gary, a 25-year-old single man of Nigerian descent, took control. He pointed his finger at Judith across the room, and stated: "That's what I'm saying! They need to be tougher on those kids. This is their last chance and [school officials] are letting them do whatever they want." Judith, nodding her head, said: "They were supposed to take a test today, and they never got themselves organized enough to take that test. I would have the students who wanted to learn, sit down and take the test, the rest of the class could have a zero." Karissa rejoined the conversation and echoed what Gary said earlier: "They need to be tougher on the students."

"Hang on!" shouted Omar, a 30-year-old single father who graduated from OAC nearly a decade before. As a self-described "originator" from this school, he warned his classmates that officials cannot be too tough on the students, or they will all leave:

A lot of them don't do good with hard discipline, so if you say, "Get out!" Then it's over; you're not going to have a school. I watched that when we went there; the kids would just go. You start off with a bunch of kids and by the end of the class semester you only got 12 kids.

"Keeping them there just because you can't be hard on them doesn't make sense," Judith said. Karissa nodded in agreement and returned to discuss the gym class mentioned earlier: kids listening to I-pods, texting on their cell phones, or exiting right out of the building. Karissa and Dionne argued back and forth for several minutes regarding their assumptions about appropriate student behavior.

"It's just like when we were in school, we skipped," Dionne said dismissing Karissa's concerns.

Karissa, however, wanted more accountability from the students. “But why put the extra stress on the teacher? Five doors to watch...” she repeated.

“Kids will leave,” Dionne said.

“But they’re there for a second chance,” Karissa insisted.

Dionne was unfazed; she said to mark them absent. “When you call the parents and tell them their kid left, it’s up to them and the parents.”

Karissa said OAC was already doing something similar but said it does not seem to be effective. She overheard a hallway conversation between a teacher and assistant principal, Mrs. Parks. The teacher wanted Mrs. Parks to help her get the students back to class, but Mrs. Parks couldn’t help her because she had three students in her office waiting to be reinstated but had yet to contact the parents.

“You can’t say that’s normal!” Judith exclaimed.³

Who Decides “Normal” Behavior?

While discussing the service site in such negative terms might make a reader uncomfortable, it is through conversations such as these that it becomes a bit easier to glimpse the Recursive Learners, as those who have affinity with this alternative education community like Dionne and Omar, and those who clearly do not like Karissa, Judith, and Gary. Similar conversations as this one were repeated several times during this semester and within the two semesters that followed. However, before I go further and discuss the implications of these discussions, I want to take a step back and discuss why it is important to identify the Recursive Learner and how I set up the program.

I designed my course, based on Teresa Guinsatao Monberg’s 2009 article, “Writing Home or Writing As the Community.” Monberg proposed a new service-learning paradigm

“that enable[s] students of color to give greater agency to the (often historically underrepresented) communities with which they may already identify” (41). Within the text, she readily identifies the student population as a desire to shift attention away from the “privileged, white, middle-class students” that dominate the service learning programs toward “the diverse range of students who may not fit this description” (43). While she alternates terminology between “students of color” or “historically underrepresented students,” she states her intention is not to conflate the terms: “Students within each of these categories may face varying degrees of structural disadvantage and/or privilege” (46).

However, understanding her idea of a community with which they “may already identify” (41) is not so apparent. She wants students to “move *within* their own borders or communities, so they might listen for the deeper textures present in the place(s) they might call ‘home’” (23). Other passages move away from identifying community as a “home” and describe the community as one “they may already know” (41), is “familiar to them” (44) or is a “local community with which they have affinity” (44). So, does she mean one’s “home” or just a community they are familiar with? I’m not so sure which of these two definitions of “community” she meant, but I knew that students within my minority-majority Southfield community college classroom would benefit from such a program.

Since it is widely known that the most effect service-learning programs are established by the professor before the semester begins (Cushman, Deans, Mathieu), I wanted to identify a community partner that might replicate a familiar, local community. I decided my freshman students could find such connection by returning to a high school; therefore, I created the partnership with the neighborhood alternative education high school, the Oakland Academic Campus (OAC) which is a small, single-storied facility. During the 2010-2011 school year,

98% of the 428 students were African Americans, and 96% of the seniors graduated that year (Booker).

Once I established the partnership, I tried to identify the Recursive Learner based on demographic information. For example, I thought affinity could be determined based on similar race and age (e.g. freshmen or sophomore students of color). I also thought *community* could be based on geographical proximity to the school (e.g. those living in southern Southfield, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, or northern Detroit). Last, I thought familiarity could be determined through similar marginalized education – those who attended an alternative education school, received a GED instead of a diploma, or had similar test scores as the neighboring Southfield school district. During the 2010 school year, 14% of the Southfield students scored “proficient” within the 9th grade Michigan Education Assessment Program (“Fall 2010”). Naturally, I didn’t presume the identification was so narrow that Recursive Learners had to have to have all four characteristics (age, race, proximity, and education); however, I thought if their background overlapped in two or three characteristics, they would most likely be Recursive Learners.

I soon realized identification was much more complicated and, itself, a recursive process. While I could make a preliminary determination of affinity based on these demographic characteristics, some students remained a Recursive Learner throughout the semester; some did not. Still others alternated between belonging to this community – or not – at several times during the semester. For example, if we return to the opening vignette, all five students were preliminarily identified as Recursive Learners through the demographic information they provided within entrance surveys. All are minorities living in or near Southfield who received a marginalized education. However, at this point six weeks into the

semester only Omar and Dionne discuss the OAC students and site as insiders – those familiar with the site and student population; Karissa, Judith, and Gary clearly do not share the same affinity. I will introduce readers to students later in this chapter who meet all four demographic characteristics but place themselves outside of this community.

In summation, while I hoped to describe a paradigm where students of color serve within this community of color, what I discovered, however, was the Recursive Learner was not determined by ethnicity, age, or geographic location. Within this chapter, I wish to narrate the process I went through trying to identify which of the 41 participating students seem to be traveling recursively through their own community and those who are crossing borders into a community of difference – whether that difference is identified by race, educational background, or some other factor. Before I begin the analysis process, I wish to return to the conversation I interrupted among the five students who were discussing the OAC students' behavior. It occurred within the first time I taught the curriculum, during the sixth week of the 2010 semester.

“What’s Wrong With Doing the Right Thing?”

After Judith’s outburst: “You can’t say that’s normal!” many students shouted at once to be heard. I first called on James who was one of the first students to align himself publically with this community: “Omar’s right,” he said. “If you say, ‘Just crack down on them.’ Half of those kids will be gone; you won’t have a school.” This idea was immediately appealing to his classmates. “It doesn’t need to be there then,” retorted Judith. “What type of standards are you setting? The kids rule the school,” added Karissa. “If they want to leave, let them leave,” Gary said.

James stood his ground. “You guys are blaming them and kind of angry at them, but their life has been difficult. They need some kind of positive energy to motivate them, but you guys are all just saying these kids are bad and I’m going to punish you.” Judith and Karissa wouldn’t let up; they were saying society has rules and that the school has to set higher standards for the children.

Omar addressed the class once again and tried to help us understand the current students by describing his own state of mind when he attended the school nearly a decade before. He said he grew up in a nice neighborhood and both of his parents have master’s degrees; his dad is an engineer, and his mom is a teacher. He said they unsuccessfully tried multiple methods to get him on the right track. “I’m gonna say this; when I was growing up I had a lot of issues. I got in more trouble than the average person, but it didn’t click. I had mentors, but it didn’t click – until it clicked in my head, ‘Ok, Omar, you have to do this.’” I asked if there is a way we can help “make it click?” for the students currently attending. Omar shook his head. “I don’t know. That was like 10 years ago,” he said. “I had counselors – good counselors, one-on-one programs, and everything. My parents, they did everything they could, but that didn’t faze me. It didn’t mean nothing.” Omar clearly identified that he had a good home and educated parents, but he resisted their assistance. Now, he is asking his classmates to help the OAC students.

I thought that was a terrific point to transition to our goal of activism. I said: “We need to get past blaming the teacher, blaming the students, and blaming the parents. How can you throw in your small imperfect pebble to make a change?”⁴ I then called on three different students – silent voices we hadn’t heard up until that point – all of whom offered positive attributes about what they witnessed during their recent site visit this past week. Salvadore said

he went into the art room and saw students doing “amazing work with art.” Rochelle hopes to connect to at least one student throughout the semester. Last was Anthony, a quiet young man who rarely speaks up in class. He said he graduated from a similar school and now wants to help the OAC students as best he can: “I think they just need motivation; I think we can connect to them better than the teachers,” he said. “My dad said this quote all the time: ‘What’s wrong with doing the right thing?’”

Indeed.

Day One: Introducing our Community

While Anthony’s comment ended that particular conversation, I made similar affirmations about making the world a better place at some point during each day’s lecture. It was especially prevalent on the first day of class when I introduced the course requirements. Each semester, I would spend the first hour of our 3-hour class discussing the syllabus, assignments, service-learning component, and our service site. This much time is necessary because when registering, most students are unaware of the added service-learning requirement. It is not designated as a “service-learning course,” nor is it an upper-level writing course. It is just one of approximately 70 standard second semester freshmen composition courses (ENG 1520) offered throughout the five OCC campuses. However, if students looked a little closer at the on-line course description, they would see a “tagline” statement: “Students will be required to complete 15-hours of service learning requirements at an instructor-chosen site. Please contact the instructor with questions.”

Since the greatest majority of the students are “surprised” to hear about this additional time commitment, I begin course introductions by defining service-learning concepts in addition to our course theme of social justice and education.⁵ I also make a point to describe

OAC. Again, since I taught the class over three semesters, each introduction was a bit different. During the very first semester, I discussed the site and student projects in abstract terms. I displayed a photo of the building exterior on the projector screen and described it as a “minority-majority alternative-education high school just a few miles west of here.” I said we would meet the school staff the following week when we take a field trip there and that Principal Marcus Booker describes his students as: “kids who made a couple poor decisions and need credit recovery.” In the subsequent semesters, I introduced the site via a two-minute video clip a local television station created when the school was named the 2010 Michigan Alternative Education School of the year. The video highlights the school, staff, and students in glowing terms even identifying a teacher who received an award because of her community partnerships – including the 2010 partnership with my class.

While reviewing the syllabus, I also spend some time discussing the “Project for Change.” Again, the first year I was very abstract and repeated Marcus’s goal for the OCC students: Spend their first visit shadowing one of the high school students – to learn about them a bit. By the second visit, Marcus and I hoped they could envision a project to enhance the school: how can they share their time and talent to make the school a better place? For the second and third semesters, I shared past student projects: a digital yearbook, a school newspaper, grant proposals, and brochures describing how students tutored or mentored within the classrooms and talked about how several students fulfilled their hours while creating said projects. For example, I mentioned Corrine’s project because many of the community college students the first semester initially doubted their ability to tutor the high school students or to effect any change. On Corrine’s first visit to a math class, she discovered 15 students failed the prior quarter mainly because they did not complete their homework. By her second visit, she

set out to be a “mom” to the students; she talked to the students about life after high school and continually badgered the students to turn in their assignments. By the third visit, two students turned in assignments; more students were soon to follow. The semester she was there only 10 students failed, and Corrine believes her influence helped these five students pass.

Since assumptions about “appropriate behavior” seemed to take my first semester students by surprise and also seemed to be a characteristic that determined lack of affinity to this site as the opening narrative demonstrated, I made sure we discussed alternative education in general and OAC in particular; I wanted students to be forewarned about what they would see. For example, when I asked students “What do you think of when you hear the words *alternative high school students*?” In 2011, Nigel answered: “I think it’s someone who doesn’t want to learn.” However, one of his classmates, Mackenzie, dispelled that myth when she mentioned she went to an alternative school in L’Anse Creuse and received a 4.0 grade point average. I then let the conversation flow a bit and introduced OAC.

A similar conversation occurred in 2012 when Kathryn and Alicia, both described how they excelled at their alternative education high schools in Ferndale and Berkley respectively. However, I didn’t have to introduce OAC; Matthew, a 50-year-old, African American seated in the back row, did it for me when he asked: “Why OAC?” I deflected the initial question and asked Matthew what he knew about this site. He said his son went to OAC and that “about 80% of the students there are incorrigible.” To Matthew, and the rest of the class, I discussed common behavior they would see: the students use their cell phones during class and profanity is common. I said: “I’m not trying to sugar coat it; I’m trying to get you all to look beyond any behavior issues when you’re there.” Kathryn added that kids acted like that at her alternative high school, Tri-County in the Berkley School District, too. She was ridiculed by classmates

for turning in homework, and on one occasion, someone threw a chair at her because she had the correct answer to a math problem. “There’s problems all over, not just at OAC,” she said.

After her story, I discuss positive site attributes: it was named the 2010 Michigan Alternative School of the Year and had one of the highest graduation rate for African American males in the nation. However, I said, in order to help these students graduate, the school staff uses instruction techniques that are different from what they might be used to. Mr. Booker believes his staff has to be able to teach *in spite of* the behavior.

I highlight these early conversations to give readers a feel for how the site was described to students on the first day of class because in order to have affinity to this site – to view this site as familiar – my students needed to understand the lenient behavior policy as “normal” for this community. One can see that Matthew believes students are not behaving in a “correct” manner; therefore, he would probably not have affinity to the OAC community. However, since Kathryn, Alicia, and Mackenzie defend alternative education students based on their former schools, they might be Recursive Learners.

These conversations also helped me identify several recurring themes that were used for my qualitative analysis (Creswell, 2014; Denzien & Lincoln, 2000). In order to determine if one was “familiar” with this site, I analyzed student texts and my observations based on two central areas: 1) discussion about the site, students, or culture, and 2) involvement at the site. By these means, I was able to identify 28 students who seem to belong to this community – the Recursive Learners and 13 students who do not – those I am calling Outsiders. Within the remaining pages of this chapter, I will outline characteristics for each type of student, and I conclude the chapter discussing importance for identification of students traveling within this paradigm. (See Appendix A for complete listing.)

They don't belong: Identifying the Outsiders

I want to begin the identification process by discussing the 13 students whom I decided do not belong to this community. Since the purpose of this dissertation is to describe how Recursive Learners write *as* the community, I will keep this section relatively brief and will only elaborate if I believe my readers might need clarification of my identification process. Characteristics identifying those who do not belong to this community fell within the following categories: 1) they describe the school or students as different from their own education, 2) they negatively commented on the site or students, or 3) they did not interact with the high school students.

Five students were quickly identified based on their prior affluent education and writing about the school and African American students in traditional “border crossing” narratives that are common within our journals. For example, Nicole writes that she enjoys hearing stories from her minority classmates, so she can learn about “others.” A couple weeks later, she hopes to change OAC students into becoming better students: “If I go in with positive, enthusiastic attitude, they will learn from my example.” She did remain positive throughout the semester but always wrote as an observer to this community instead of one within the community. Two of her classmates were not so positive; they describe the OAC students’ behavior as “not normal” in comparison to their own education. Anderson writes: “I have never seen anything like it. I went to Waterford schools which had open doors the entire time I was in school ...but nothing could prepare me for what I saw.” Similarly, Ronald states: “no way did kids at my high school behave like that.” The other two students, Rochelle and Roger, both attribute their inability to bond with the OAC students is because of their race. Rochelle describes her visit to the art room as “not too successful” and that she “should’ve done a better job” to

communicate with students. She writes: “I feel like I was really intimidated because the students at OAC are dominantly African Americans and I am the only Asian American there.” She vowed to be more comfortable on her next visit, yet she dropped the course before that next visit ever occurred. Roger, an international student who already earned a bachelor’s degree from his home in the Philippines, does not mention discomfort; instead, he views the OAC students as disrespectful because they were talking while the teacher, Ms. Sullivan, was discussing their assignment:

Chatting out loud while the teacher is around, for me, is a sign of disrespect. I am not really sure if it is just a cultural difference. I came from the Philippines, and we consider teachers as “authority.” But here, in the United States, teachers seemed to be only considered as a person who teaches. In Philippine schools, when teachers walk in the class, everyone is silent. If teachers hand an in-class assignment, students readily do it. I don’t know why, in room 219, students were different.

A later journal mentions his surprise that a teacher was sweeping the floor; something he believes is completely beneath the role of an educator. In sum, prior education from an affluent school prevented these five students from viewing this community as familiar, and this demographic detail is the only characteristic that remained consistent throughout the study; by that I mean none of the Recursive Learners received an affluent education.

Five additional students also wrote border crossing narratives similar to those already mentioned (Crystal, Judith, Tyson, Mackenzie, and Ciara). However, none received an affluent education; they either attended DPS, attended an alternative education school, or received a GED. For example, Ciara, a 19-year-old African American female who graduated from the Detroit Public Schools, was not comfortable going to the site and did not engage the students while she was there. Within her initial journal, Ciara states that the proposed service site makes her uneasy because she is not a “social person” especially around people she does not know. She writes, “I have no problem with donating my time but not at a school. When I was in high

school, I didn't have a very good experience." Ciara did go to OAC for the required number of visits. However, she spent the majority of the time working with the art teacher gathering material to write a grant, thus, restricting her engagement from the OAC students.

Karissa was named an Outsider for several different reasons. While she is an African American student who graduated from the Detroit Public Schools and appeared comfortable and engaged during her site visits – even going six times instead of the five required, during each visit, she critiqued the community or students. The scene at the beginning of the chapter, where she describes students as “disrespectful” and “straight hood,” occurred during her second visit. By her fifth visit, she escalates to referring to a student talent show as “so ghetto and out of order I had a headache.” Within her sixth and final journal, she suggests the need for additional police officers within the building:

As I reflect on this experience, I still have to say that these students need discipline, guidance, rules, and consequences. If I could recommend that this school needed police officers in their school, I would. I have seen only two security guards and one of which plays with the kids and I feel that it's out fear.

It's clear to see that even after a full semester of reading, serving, and reflecting, Karissa was never able to view this community as a familiar site and is, thus, an Outsider. Last are Jazlyn and Mikhaela, who each critiqued the site within initial journals; however, neither returned to the site until the end of the semester; nor did they complete enough assignments for me to really make a decision.

They belong: Recursive Learners!

While identification of the Outsiders was relatively easy, identification of the Recursive Learners was a bit more complicated. As previously stated, some African Americans belonged to this community, others did not; some lived near the site, others did not. The only overlapping

characteristic is all Recursive Learners received a marginalized education. Since identification could not be made via demographic information, I analyzed student texts looking for statements of familiarity with this community. These usually took the form of describing the school as similar to their own education, positively commenting on the site or students, or interacting with the students while they were there. However, not all of the Recursive Learners wrote positive site descriptions, as readers will soon see. Like in the prior section, I will begin by briefly describing those who were easily identified and end with discussing those who were a bit more difficult to categorize.

Five of the 28 students were clearly labeled as Recursive Learners because they selected their own community to serve in, an option I allowed for students within my 2012 program and will discuss more fully in a later chapter. Jacqueline served at a food pantry, Sabina forged a relationship as a home-health aid, Jadyne returned to her former school Henry Ford in Detroit Public Schools, Alicia served within her church, and Matthew, the father who previously described OAC students as “incorrigible,” worked with the homeless.

Several others that I identified as Recursive Learners were engaged and comfortable at the site because they all served within their own school district. Axel, Izabella, Jacinda, and Salvadore all attended Southfield Lathrup – a feeder school for OAC. Of the Southfield students, Axel, is probably closest to being identified as a true Recursive Learner because he told us he spent two years at Lathrup before being expelled for grades and behavior issues and was supposed to go to OAC; instead his parents enrolled him into Loyola, a private Catholic school. He knew many of the OAC students (including his younger brother) and spent the semester helping students build an electronic portfolio. Izabella and Jacinda, who also have siblings at the site, spent the semester volunteering within the classroom of their former English

teacher whom they each describe as “awesome;” Jadyne also volunteered with her former teacher at Henry Ford and described him in a similar positive light. As to Salvadore, he remained relatively quiet throughout the semester but was the first student engaged at the school. During the second week of the semester, he approached Mr. Booker with a goal to teach photography skills to the OAC students; he modified the plan a bit and ended up creating an electronic yearbook featuring photos he took of all students and created a mock election. The yearbook was presented to the seniors during their award luncheon and was even used as a template the following year.

Eight additional students were easy to identify as Recursive Learners because they were engaged at the site and generally wrote positive descriptions about the teachers and students. Pamela, a 56-year-old, African American female, describes her visit as comfortable, fun, and enjoyable. She said Mrs. Stewart was “warm and genuine,” and the students reminded her of her nephews. “All during this time I felt comfortable and admired [the students] for thinking about their future.... I enjoyed the laughter and teasing. Their playfulness was gratifying.” She helped the student create vision boards – posters using magazine images and clipart representing the students’ future goals. Pandora, a 21-year-old African American female, from the Detroit Public Schools, writes about her comfort even when the visit causes quite a stir for the young male students. She describes the Art teacher, Mrs. Molly as “awesome” and the students as “calm, quiet, and participating” and repeats that many students are talented artists. She then transitions to seeing some negative behavior in the hallway which she describes with humor and comfort. She writes: “A lot of male students made disrespectful comments about my butt ... and followed me around. There were a lot of students that thought I was a new student to the school. In one of Mrs. Molly’s class a student yelled out ‘I can’t wait to go to

college' and the whole class busted out laughing." After this initial visit, Pandora established herself as a tutor within one of the math classes – helping student with trigonometry and algebra.

Five additional engaged students are Elizabeth, Kathryn, Nigel, Samuel, and Sebastianne. For brevity's sake, I'll just quote from Kathryn, who is 20 year-old-white female who attended alternative education school in Berkley that she describes as "a lot like OAC." In her earliest journal, she expresses comfort even though she will be one of the few white students working within this African American environment. "How a person looks, does not change that everyone deserves the same right to learn and be treated the same....Working with students that are not at the same skill level or have talents you can benefit from, is quite an amazing thing." She then spent the semester being the "wingman" for Mrs. McNephew in the art room. During each visit she engaged the students in conversation about future goals, and her very last journal reflects on her perceived impact: "[My visits] made me realize how much of an impact I made on some of the students' lives here at OAC. While some were moody, sassy, immature, others were really happy I talked about college and how they can get there as an adult."

Another student who articulated comfort at the site is Sapphire, a 19-year-old African American female who signed up for the class hoping the service-learning experience would fill the void she currently feels after the death of her grandmother that she had been caring for. She writes that she's "comfortable with the chosen site." Another journal details her prior experience at Taylor Public Schools as "just as bad" as OAC: "We had gang violence, racism, and bomb threats among other things" and expresses her anger at how these students are being judged:

The children at OAC have been labeled problem children with disciplinary issues, and that's what everyone believes. I am absolutely not intimidated by OAC and what people label these students as. If more people would help them instead of labeling them, maybe then they wouldn't be problem children/bad students..... This negative stereotype is holding back our students.

Sapphire demonstrates her understanding and empathy for this community before she began her service; she then entered the site with confidence and immediately began engaging the students within Mr. Roberts's room which she detailed within seven lengthy journals. What makes her journals so unique is most of her text describes negative student behavior – as many Outsiders have done. However, within those passages, she reveals the compassion she has for the students and a desire to help. Both of these characteristics lead me to believe she is a Recursive Learner. Here is just one passage from her fifth journal:

I have never seen such things! These students just don't care. It is really disheartening. These students have an opportunity to recover their lost credits and they still don't care about their education. Mr. Roberts attempted to ask each student what their dream was. Some of the responses were prostitute, mobster, Frank Lucas, stripper, and Kat Stacks (a troubled hip hop groupie to say the least). I cannot believe they said such things in school and directly to a teacher. Some of the students even responded that they didn't have a dream and that really broke my heart. It made me wonder what happened to them that made them give up on their world and possibly him or herself? Where does this come from? How can they have given up on themselves this early in life? Who or what is responsible for such a tragedy? I find myself wondering this quite often when I visit OAC. I wish they were more receptive and would at least talk to me and do better in school; but most of them don't want to listen, they don't care. I think it's partially because so many people have had no interest in them in the past that they are shocked at the idea of someone being interested and perhaps they don't know how to respond to such a situation so they push me away. And I cannot blame them for that, I understand completely. I just wish I could change their way of thinking, but that's something that they have to do within themselves.

I quoted her passage to demonstrate how negative site description did not prevent me from determining she belonged to this community. Within the first portion of the text, Sapphire

describes a classroom activity, student responses, and her own opinion of inappropriateness of those responses. However, just one-third of the way through the text, she empathizes with the students by stating they “broke her heart,” and she tries to understand how some students lost their way. She then wishes for a connection to the students but understands that it will not come because so many people have let them down in the past. She believes their only mechanism for coping is to push people away. “I cannot blame them for that, I understand completely.” Because of her empathetic response and correlating desire to do more to help the students, I clearly see her as one serving within a familiar community.

While comfort level with the OAC students was a one of the determining factors to being a Recursive Learner, not everyone came outright and stated “I’m comfortable.” One way that I gauged this comfort level was if they entered the site with ease and initiated a plan early in the semester; three students fall within this category: Corrine, Anthony, and James. I briefly described Corrine’s project earlier in the chapter; she was acting as a “mom” within the math class encouraging students to complete homework. During her first visit, she wrote down the names of the 25 students who were failing the course. She then checked in with them each visit – sitting with them, encouraging them to do their homework, and helping them with any of the problems they had. By the end of the semester, only 10 students were failing. Within her fifth journal, she writes: “One of the students that I helped brought her grade up from a C to an A.... One thing for sure is I saw more students doing their assignments today more than any time I been to OAC, and this is a positive thing for me to know because my input must have done something. I thought that my time was being wasted at first but now I see it wasn’t.”

Anthony, a 19-year-old African American who attended DPS for “most of” his school career before transferring to what he called an “automotive high school,” described a proposed

plan in his first journal. He wanted to incorporate a “Major-n-music” business venture to help students further their musical talents. “My plan is to help students who don’t know what to do with their talents and help them connect with other organizations and programs.” He switched his plan a bit to serve in more of a mentoring capacity and even brought two of his high school friends to the facility to mentor alongside of him. Here’s a portion from one of his journals:

I believe a lot of these students are just misunderstood because what I saw was something different than what other people have been saying about them. Yes, some of them need work but I think when you give them something to look forward to and give them a goal that they would like to reach, then they would be more likely to succeed. The only thing I didn’t like that day was that a student wanted to buy some food but she could not only because the school did not have change. I don’t care what they say, they need to eat. It’s not like she doesn’t have money, it’s just they were lacking the funds. I think someone needs to address that; don’t be surprised it this topic is in the newspaper.

Like Sapphire, Anthony clearly emphasizes with the OAC students and wants to help them – whether that is to provide the students with goals or prompt discussion within the school newspaper about a student who could not receive lunch because the cashier did not have change.

The final student that I would like to discuss within this category is James, a 19-year-old bi-racial student who said he wanted to provide change within a student’s thought process regarding our unequal society; however, he also relates how he’s one of them. Within his initial journal, he said he was raised in the Detroit ghetto but saw life differently when he moved to Farmington Hills: “I can honestly say the difference is amazing.... I would feel good about myself if I could get even one person who is living like this to change their thought process and realize the steps they need to make to get where they want to be.” At the site, James forged a relationship with a student on the first day (Josh), with a goal to initiate a “pyramid program” –teaching Josh about social change with the hope that he would educate his classmates.

However, those plans fell through, and James then initiated himself into a leadership role within the school newspaper we created during the 2010 semester.

Four additional students also seemed to belong based on their initial journals; however, they did not remain in the course long enough, or did not write enough for me to triangulate results. I labeled them “probably” recursive. Ayaan, Anjali, Esme, and Jenessa all articulated an early desire to go to the site and volunteer with the students; however, they all dropped the course before writing reflections about visiting the site. Ayaan, 24-year-old African American male, said he had been searching for an opportunity to volunteer and was “very excited” about working with young people in the community. “It is important for me to know that I’m not just talking about how I can make a difference in somebody’s life, but I am actually doing it with my actions. I feel like this will give me a better sense of belonging in my community.” By the third week he said acknowledged that the “students really do need someone that will be there” and discussed his own plan to use his time and talents as a hair dresser within the school’s fashion club. Esme, 22, a graduate from the Detroit Public Schools (DPS), expresses similar sentiments about the desire to volunteer at OAC and even hints that her school might have been worse than OAC because it was comprised of students expelled from DPS. She looked forward to the opportunity “because I actually want to be a high school teacher for an alternative school. Helping others learn is a great passion of mine.” Jenessa simply states she feels “fine about volunteering my time for the service learning component.... It’s good we get to spend quality time with students who might need it but don’t know how to ask where to get it from.” Based on these early brief journals, it looked like they were on their way to becoming Recursive Learners; however, I do not really have enough conclusive data.

I'm Not Sure if They Belong

My methods of analysis are certainly not full proof or else I would have been able to identify the four remaining students as Recursive Learners or Outsiders: Gary, Kiara, Demetria, and Marcus. I've scoured their texts more times than I can count – sometimes labeling one a Recursive Learner, only to change my mind the following week. The main reason I have difficulty identifying these students is they avoided specific statements of affinity or critique about the site, and they maintained a relatively neutral role at the site.

Since all are so similar, I will just use Marcus's text for our conversation. He is a 20-year-old African American graduate from Detroit Public Schools. Within his first classroom journal, he feels that donating his time for the service-learning project would be beneficial "in learning more about other people's situations, and being more open and subjective to them." Since the high school students are of the same race, age, and education, I wonder how he considers them as "others." I initially labeled him as an Outsider because his content is so similar to the "border-crossing narrative" mentioned earlier by Nicole.

Another characteristic that determined affinity is the level of engagement with the OAC students. Marcus, however, remains an interested observer rarely interacting with the students beyond a few brief conversations about the benefits of college life. For example, his first visit he admits to being an observer during the entire visit but vows to engage the students "a bit more in my time there." He then concludes his journal with: "I felt very comfortable in that high school setting, and look forward to returning for my next visit." If he is comfortable, why didn't he engage the students? His ambiguous role is more clearly displayed during his next where he moved through three different English classrooms. Allow me to use excerpts from his text and then I will discuss. First, he wanted to return to Mr. Roberts's room where he

observed during that first visit; however, he had second thoughts when he noticed there was a substitute teacher:

Just by looking in on the class, I could tell that the students were more focused on socializing and horse playing rather than doing their work. I didn't think that I could be of much help to that class, but I asked the young man who opened the door for me who I had recognize from my last visit what were they doing in there? And he replied "fooling". I took that into consideration and ask him is their another English class I can go to? And he pointed me along the way to Ms. Arndt's class.

He has no problem engaging a student in a door-way dialogue; however, one can clearly see that the collective classroom behavior prevents him from wanting to enter the room. He then moves to Mrs. Arndt's room where he said he received a friendly greeting from the teacher and students. I'll begin his journal when he describes students' behavior during a reading activity where extra credit was being offered to encourage participation:

I noticed that the students who really needed the extra credit would not read, and kept goofing off. A rather heavy-set kid began to read and the page he was reading was about eating, and the students cracked jokes around him about what he was saying as he was reading it. He brushed it off with a little bit of a laugh and a few come backs of his own; this then initiated a "sting off" as they were calling it as jokes flared across the room. This carried on for about five minutes, and then the teacher took the class back under control.

While the passage is brief, he implies the behavior was inappropriate during this activity and that the teacher allowed it to continue for "about five minutes." The class ended just a few minutes later, and instead of staying for Mrs. Arndt's next class, Marcus went to Ms. Stewart's room. He described her as "a wonderful teacher" because she "actually engages" her students in her lesson, and gets them to pay attention and the students as "focused and organized." He had a chance to walk around and talk to all the students and relates the various conversations he had. Here's his discussion with two girls:

The last table just had two students, two young ladies whose minds seemed to be focused on the wrong things. As I was asking them my

normal run down of questions, one young lady said that she would graduate hopefully, and that she had a problem with skipping. I told her that you can't graduate by cutting class, you will miss out on too much. She agreed and admitted she had to change that. Her friend then said that she would be a porn star if she could, but she was graduating on time. I sat and talked to them for only a short period of time because it was nearing time to go, but my main conversation with them was to show them the light in what making better choices can do for them.

He ends his journal wanting to return to Ms. Stewart's class and that: "I am glad I have a chance to impact students' lives in a positive way, and look forward to my future visits to OAC because I know they will only get better." In analyzing Marcus's text, he finds his comfort within rooms where the students are behaving, as demonstrated by his refusal enter Mr. Roberts's room, his critique of the students within Mrs. Arndt's room, and then the praise for Ms. Stewart's instructional techniques. So, if he values positive behavior, can he really be a Recursive Learner within this site?

Perhaps.

Concluding thoughts

While reading the text from Marcus and the other three students who are difficult to identify, I'm thinking of Beverly Moss's study of African American churches. Within the article, "Ethnography and Composition: Studying Language at Home," Moss said her fieldnotes were significantly longer when writing about her visit to African American churches where she not a member compared to the fieldnotes about her own church. She writes: "I found out I had been looking for events that stood out. Since so much of what was happening during the church service was not new to me, I had either assumed that many of the routine events were unimportant or hadn't even noticed certain events" (167). Her text helps me explain what could be happening within my students' writing. My Outsiders are drawn to writing about the

behavior because it's so different from what they're used to, but Recursive Learners like Marcus skip over such details. I will analyze this point a bit more in Chapter 3.

A second point I want to emphasize is one I made throughout the chapter, Recursive Learners could not be identified due to demographic information (race, age, proximity, or prior education); although, having an affluent education was clearly an indication of one being an Outsider. Through a recursive identification process that included a close reading of student texts and classroom conversations, I was able to identify 28 of the students as Recursive Learners: those who seem to identify with this community. When examining the demographic

information presented within Table 1 to the right, 96% of Recursive Learners are students of color (20 African Americans, 2 Chaldeans, 1 white), and all received a marginalized education. They clearly are the students Monberg identifies as historically underrepresented in our field. The balance of this dissertation will describe how these students were impacted by a social justice curriculum as they served within their own community.

participating students	Prior school districted	MEAP scores
3	Oak Park	1
1	Inkster	3
17	Detroit	8
1	Lincoln Park	9
3	Southfield	14
1	Ferndale	15
7	Alternative School	
2	GED	
1	Nigeria	
36 students (88%) received a marginalized education (graduated from a school district where less than 15% of the students were proficient in 2010 MEAP scores, alternative education, or GED)		
1	Phillipines	
1	Waterford	31
1	Farmington Hills	45
1	Troy	54
1	Birmingham	56
5 students (12%) graduated from schools where at least 30% of the students were proficient in 2010 MEAP scores		

Table 1: Education Profile of Participating Students

Chapter 2 Notes:

¹Students self-reported demographic information within entrance surveys. According to IRB protocol, all student names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

² This “second chance” Judith mentions repeats a school mission described to us by OAC Principal Marcus Booker during the second week of class. Booker said many of his students are enrolled because they need a “second chance” to recover lost credits from prior high school.

³ In order to provide readers with the most comprehensive picture of this classroom, I have included dialogue from all students. However, since Omar and Dionne did not participate in the study, readers will not see their writing examined within this paper.

⁴ I was using terminology we discussed earlier today from Alice Walker’s “Anything We Love Can Be Saved.” Within the passage, Walker believes society avoids activist tendencies because we cannot measure up to the significant changes incorporated by prior generations. She urges us bring our “small imperfect stones” and build an “edifice of hope.”

⁵ See chapter 4 for full discussion of course assignments.

CHAPTER 3
PREPARING THE RECURSIVE LEARNER:
NEW PARADIGM NECESSITATES NEW TOOL KIT

The school where I chose to do my service learning at is one that I am very familiar with. I chose to give my time and assistance to my old high school Henry Ford. Henry Ford High school is not what most would call a good school. Out of the four years I spent there, it was on the news many, many times. It is known for its gang fights, shoot outs, killings, low test scores, drug trafficking, low security guards, low staff, and much more. On the outside looking in, you would think that this would be one of the worst schools to send your child to. You would probably think why on earth would someone send their child to a school like this? I look at things differently because I was a former student, and I knew what was really going on. Some things that were being said were true and some were not. Volunteering at Henry Ford High school I felt like I was coming home.

– Jadyn, a community college student reflecting about her first visit to the community service site

Jadyn’s view of this Detroit public high school – where she considers the presence of gangs, drugs, and guns as part of “coming home” – is certainly different than traditionally presented within our scholarship; however, it is considered “normal” for many students raised within communities marginalized by race, ethnicity, and class issues. As such, it raises many important questions for our field: When we allow students to serve within their home community, and they are so different from our own environment, what do we need to know about these communities before, during, and after we establish our programs? How can we learn about these communities? Specifically, within this chapter, I examine the sequence of activities and assignments during the first few weeks of the semester to determine how it shapes students’ initial engagement with their own community. I then analyze student writing about their first visit to our community site to address the following research questions:

- What connections do students make among course readings on systemic inequities, prior experience, and concrete experiences offered by the course’s service component?

- Does students' writing claim to reflect the values, beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors typical of the community where they're serving? If so, what forms do such claims take, and what function do they serve in students' texts?
- How does this writing differ from traditional students (e.g. the writing of privileged students when serving within urban communities)?

My discussion of these topics presents important work to the field because these are questions that have yet to be asked when discussing learning outcomes for marginalized students, such as the Recursive Learners within my course.

Using Bazerman's concepts of a genre system, I begin the chapter explaining the genre set designed to prepare marginalized students to enter our community site and then write a brief 500-word description/reflection assignment about that first visit. I then address – and respond to – criticism from the field regarding this type of assignment for its failure to provide robust student outcomes. Following this discussion, I present my analysis of student texts focusing on the themes presented within the essays. Since many scholars have already written about the traditional, affluent white student crossing borders into a community of color (those whom I called “Outsiders” within Chapter 2), my emphasis will be on discussing how marginalized students write about their own community – the Recursive Learners. I end the chapter with implications for the field.

Background

Within chapter 1, I mentioned one of the most common service-learning programs discussed within composition literature is a curriculum designed to prompt critical consciousness of privileged, white students by having these students cross borders into a community of difference. Bickford and Reynolds described the philosophy as providing students with a “jolt” of

the unfamiliar along with a “set of tools” to learn how to analyze this unfamiliar environment (236). I also described several varieties of this pedagogical tool kit. Some instructors provide students with skills to analyze power embedded within literacy education, poverty, or homelessness; still others equip students to learn about structural ideologies formed around race or class structures. However, embedded within all programs is the assumption that course readings and writing assignments should help students connect their community experiences to social critique.

Within that chapter I also mentioned that a curriculum designed for civic and racial development of students of color is missing from our discussion and pointed to Teresa Guinsato Monberg’s hypothetical version within her article “Writing Home or Writing As the Community.” While summarizing the few articles about students of color within service learning programs in composition, education, and literature, she concludes the most effective program for these students would combine pedagogies of race, critical theories, and activism while they serve within a community familiar to them. She writes:

If students of color are more likely to approach service-learning courses with robust (rather than deficit) views of “the community,” and are more likely to take an activist stance toward/with their communities (Boyle-Baise and Sleeter), then service-learning paradigms need to shift to more fully engage these capabilities (41).

As an adjunct instructor at a “minority majority” community college, I was interested in adopting Monberg’s ideas. Therefore, in order to determine the most effective pedagogy, I researched all the programs she suggested (and many others) as part of my master’s essay. As Deans, Roswell and Wurr said, there is enough collective research so newcomers do not need to “muddle through by trial and error” (5). While writing the essay, I was also enrolled in a directed study program with the director of composition. Together we crafted a syllabus and assignment

sequence that leads students of color to learn social critique and activism while serving within their own community.

While implementing a new curriculum is a daunting task itself, I was facing an additional challenge of researching my own classroom. Beverly Moss predicts instructors who also study their own class could run into difficulty because daily routines are dependent on them (qtd. in Kirsch and Sullivan 158). Therefore, I continued to work with the director of composition during the first semester when I taught the course. To keep the classroom focused on teaching instead of researching, I tape-recorded the sessions and made brief jottings of key moments during the class sessions. After class was over, I transcribed the session, reflected on day's activities, and photocopied student texts.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the program, Bazerman claims we “may look at the entire cycle of the term’s work or ... examine the cycle of texts involved in a single unit or assignment sequence” (327). To that end, this chapter will review the genre sets composed by myself and those composed by the students that lead up to students’ writing about their first visit to our community site – the first five weeks of the semester.

The Recursive Learners’ Tool Box

I taught variations of this curriculum three different times. For the first two semesters, Fall (2010) and Winter (2011), the curriculum was fairly consistent – focusing on theories of race and critical service-learning suggested by Monberg, as well as those suggested by and Davi, Dunlap, and Green. The 2012 semester, however, I revised the curriculum to eliminate the focus on race that I will discuss in more detail within chapter 4. A consistent strategy incorporated all three semesters was adopting a local pedagogy – having students bring their own stories into classroom discussion in order to better facilitate their understanding of social justice issues. Davi states this

pedagogy is “one of the ‘most effective local strategies’ in helping students develop a sense of their own understanding of race” (57). While Davi focused on helping students understand racism embedded within American education while crossing racial borders, I focused on helping students understand their own education while serving in a similar facility – what Monberg refers to as “moving recursively over time” (28).

Within the early weeks of the semester, course readings, writing, and lectures focused on critical theories and social justice issues. Two different readings were particularly instrumental in helping students understand this concept. While more than 20 years old, Jonathon Kozol’s *Savage Inequalities* provided students with the historical context of an inequitable nation where students living within affluent communities receive a superior education compared to students living in communities marginalized by race and income. It also allowed students to use the text as a “jumping off point” to describe their own education. For example, Ayaan, a 24-year-old African American man from Detroit, writes:

As I read this chapter I am instantly saddened! It seems like the same cycle that we are seeing not only here in the city of Detroit, but in most, if not all, urban neighborhood school systems. We not only see a lack of effort to improve these systems from community administrators, but from the educators, students, parents and the community as a whole. ... I gathered from reading this that the resources in these schools are outdated, the teachers have a "don't care" attitude which causes the students to have the same attitude. I can really relate to this chapter being that my whole post-secondary scholastic career was back and forth from Detroit Public Schools to Muskegon Public Schools. I know the difference of what money can do as far as education goes. Our facilities were cleaner, more well-kept and bigger; programs for students were more organized, and the over-all goal for students were higher. (Similar to those of the students in the Glencoe & Winnetka school districts in Kozol’s chapter.) All it takes to improve a district is a little care and love! If you show the students that you care about their future (which in my opinion means taking care of the community as well -- if someone has something to take pride in as a whole – their whole attitude on life changes as a whole). They will in turn do better, live better, and like I said take more pride and care of those things around them.

While Ayaan noticed differences between his education in Detroit and Muskegon, he is now able to connect the problem as an insider seeing this “same cycle” being repeated throughout the nation. This early in the semester, he is also able to articulate activist tendencies – a plan to end the cycle by caring more for the students at the service site.

Ayaan’s comments echo the sentiment presented within another instrumental text we used, a 2010 speech by President Obama. Within this text, which is a call to action to fix the broken education system through his Race to the Top education initiative, President Obama paints a disheartening picture of African Americans negatively impacted by race and economics: a status quo where discrimination, inferior teachers, and disengaged parents have created an achievement gap between races. One third of the way through the speech, Obama states:

We’ve tolerated a status quo where ... African American students trail not only almost every other developed nation abroad, but they badly trail their white classmates here at home – an achievement gap that is widening the income gap between black and white, between rich and poor. We’ve talked about it, we know about it, but we haven’t done enough about it. And this status quo is morally inexcusable, it’s economically indefensible, and all of us are going to have to roll up our sleeves to change it.

Student writing about this speech seemed to center on Obama’s solution to end the status quo; they believed the path to successful education is through better parental involvement and eliminating ineffective teachers. For example, Sebastianne, a 32-year-old African American woman from Detroit, writes:

As I read President Obama’s speech, my jaw, literally, dropped more than once after seeing the status quo. The obvious was African Americans trailing their white classmates. (Tell me something I don’t know.) When President Obama made the comment about students being “passed along,” I thought about Redford high school. While I did not attend this school, my [sister] did...She admits that she should not have graduated. She said, “I seldom went to class and almost never did my work.” However, they gave her a passing letter grade of a “D” needless to say Redford is closed. But this is an example of teachers not being accountable as well as a parent not being responsible. Neither teacher nor parent followed up on my sister’s location or showed concern for her education. Thus, you have people, as

Pres. Obama stated, who can't "read their diplomas." Not saying my sister is stupid, because she is smart and has a great deal of potential. But she could be so much further along in society.

As an insider, Sebastianne already knew about the achievement gap between races; however, through the local pedagogy of discussing one's experiences, she can see the connection between Obama's text and her own family; she now believes that her parents should have intervened in her sister's public school education.

The final course readings designed to prepare students to enter the service site centered on service-learning pedagogy and tutoring skills. Students read and responded to excerpts from our course text, Thomas Deans' *Writing and Community Action*, including essays from Robert Coles and Paolo Freire, and based on Davi's findings – that students of color anxiously approach the tutoring component of our service learning programs because prior teachers made negative comments about their writing skills – we also spent considerable class time extrapolating theories from *The Practical Tutor*. I asked the students to respond to the following prompt:

After writing a one-paragraph summary of the text, please select one or two of the following questions to write your response:

- What, if any, information from the handout sounds intimidating?
- How do you feel about the idea of tutoring (excited? comfortable? frightened?) Why?
- What have others told you about your writing skills?
- What academic skills do you think you need to be a tutor?
- What interpersonal skills do you need to have to be a successful tutor?
- How can we, as a class, help you develop the skills you identify as weaknesses?

Within their responses, half of the class described their writing skills as "good" or "strong;" while the other half expressed anxiety similar to what Davi found. For example, Corrine, a 41-

year-old African American woman who earned a GED through Detroit Public Schools nearly two decades ago, states she has never been a strong writer and acknowledges weaknesses using appropriate grammar and organizing her thoughts; she also writes that her most recent Composition I instructor told her during the final week of class that she needs a tutor. She concludes her paper stating the idea of tutoring makes her feel both frightened and awkward “knowing I need tutoring myself.” She writes:

I do not feel as if I have all the [credentials] to tutor. I’m scared I may lead someone in the wrong direction. If I have to tutor someone, I just hope and pray that I have the patience and positive thinking that I need...I may have to graduate from college in order for me to be a successful tutor because I still have a lot to learn...until then, I hope my instructor will help me.

To help students such as Corrine, I met with them privately to discuss their concerns and reiterate that not all service projects will involve tutoring – or even writing. I also designed several role-playing activities. For example, I had the feeling that many students might be intimidated about incorporating dialogue within tutoring sessions, so two students acted out a scenario from *The Practical Tutor* where a tutor is trying to prompt a student into revising his paper – through the role play and conversation that followed, I had hoped student anxiety about tutoring would be reduced.

One last strategy designed to help students enter the service site with an understanding of America’s unequal education system involved a field trip touring the two types of schools that Kozol writes about within *Savage Inequalities*. Principal Marcus Booker conducted the tour through our service site, the Oakland Academic Campus, a simple one-story building where security guards patrol the hallways, and the only extracurricular activities offered to the minority students are classes in art and gym. (Surprisingly, we learned gym classes are held in the lunchroom, and there are no locker rooms or shower facilities.) We then carpooled the five miles north to one of metro-Detroit’s most affluent high schools, Wylie E. Groves, appropriately located

in Beverly Hills. Principal Fred Smith walked us through the elaborate two-story structure which features over-the-top amenities including a theatre, Olympic-sized pool, green house, daycare center, and three different types of rooms to educate student musicians: band room, orchestra room, piano room.

I ask students to take notes during the tours and then write a paper connecting their visit to a reading or concept we covered in class. Many students incorporated physical descriptions between the two schools like I did within the above paragraph and then connected their descriptions to President Obama's speech. Here is a passage from Sapphire, a 19-year-old African American woman, which is representative of the texts students wrote:

President Obama discussed the social injustices within our educational system. Students in different cities and states are not provided the same information but are tested on the same material. These social injustices are evident when comparing Groves High School in Birmingham and Oakland Academic Campus ...[she lists many physical differences] OAC should have updated and larger facilities to better enhance students' education...Social injustice is extremely prevalent in the United States educational system, and OAC is a perfect example of that. In President Obama's speech to the National Urban League, he said "Education is a prerequisite for prosperity." We are systematically and irrevocably programming our children for failure.

Within the text above, Sapphire certainly understands the concept of social justice as it relates to differing educational facilities within our local community, and she believes these issues are setting up the OAC student for failure. These are important concepts that I want my students to articulate before we enter our service site. I had hoped that by viewing OAC as a product of injustice, my students might be better prepared to view the site with more empathy. I will discuss student responses in a bit more detail within chapter 4 when I examine critical theories in more depth.

After all these strategies – a basic understanding of critical theories, how to tutor, and touring the facility – I believed the students were ready for their first visit to our service site. Within

this section I will describe my narrative / reflective assignment while simultaneously addressing critiques from the field. I begin by addressing those that say service-learning assignments should prompt students' critical thinking about socio-economic factors. I then I present multiple arguments for incorporating narrative assignments including benefits to the students, instructors, and discipline. Following this discussion, I present my analysis of student texts focusing on the themes featured within the essays and comparison analysis between Recursive Learners and Outsiders.

Assignment Description

In designing the writing assignment for students to submit after their first visit to our community site, I was ever-aware of the busy schedules of the community college student: nearly all have work and family responsibilities. Therefore, I only required 15 hours of service while many within the field require 30 hours. As to the actual writing assignment, it is also abbreviated from what is suggested within the field. I ask students to write a brief 500-word paper combining the genres of description and reflection about first visit (see Appendix A for full assignment). My assignment would fall under Adler-Kassner and Collins call the "report/reflect" pattern. When they analyzed student papers within the first wave of the service-learning field, they categorized student writing as: "Here's What I Did, Give Me Credit, I Did My Time;" or "Here's What I Learned Working With _____ (fill in the 'other' worked with)" (3-4). They then criticized the field for failure to emphasize social critique:

With all the effort and energy being put into service-learning [courses], we assumed that someone would have given serious thought to ways in which writing might be used critically to promote hard ethical and cultural challenges, to sponsor new learning about the larger culture, to give an edge of critique to the service-learning process (3).

They did note that Herzberg's model was the only exception. Within his model, which I explained in Chapter 1, he argues in order to connect service-learning courses to development of critical consciousness, student writing needs to extend beyond personal reflective assignments. He states: "Writing personal responses to community service experiences is an important part of processing the experience, but it is not sufficient to raise critical or cultural consciousness" (309). Like Herzberg, Chris Anson suggests journal questions should focus on intellectual analysis or consciousness-raising regarding abstract concepts. He argues an assignment without social critique, could become "directionless [and] ends up filling space without creating new ideas or insights" (170). Many other voices criticized student writing devoid of connection to social issues citing multiple problems including lack of student direction, inferior quality of responses, and tasks that are unreasonable, inappropriate or empty.

While I hear the concerns from the field, it was my goal to use the "report/reflect" genre to help students acquire a voice and through classroom dialogue, be able to make the connections to social justice issues. In creating my assignment, I draw on Dewey and Freire; both of whom believe student learning is enhanced with students write about concrete experiences and reflect on those learning experiences. Their theories are enhanced through Davi's discussion of the benefits of incorporating a local pedagogy, having students bring their own stories into classroom discussion. For Dewey, a prolific educational philosopher, reflection is to think about what occurred and facilitate transfer to new situations. He defined reflective thinking as an emancipator which leads to new knowledge. As such, it "enables us to act in deliberate and intentional fashion to attain future objects or to come into command of what is now distant and lacking" (qtd. in Macedo 212). While Dewey focused on primary and secondary schools, his ideas about reflection related to action have been adapted by many within higher education and specifically service-learning

courses. For Freire, reflection and action help oppressed citizens break through what he calls a culture of silence and become agents of change in the world; this is done through what he calls praxis. He writes: “Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed—even in part—the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world” (87). Since both educators believed in the power of using concrete experiences that are connected through reflection, one can see that that my assignment has obvious benefits to student learning. By having students write about their visit, they were better equipped to discuss these visits in the classroom.

The other beneficial reason for this writing assignment is that when students write about their own lived experiences, it helps develop our local pedagogy. Davi discussed how students learned from one another when they were able to discuss their prior education and these written reflections and class dialogue helped her students move from awareness to critical consciousness. “Finding the voice to express those ideas seems essential for any student trying to achieve success in a writing course and in college” (Davi 90). I found the same benefit. These journals provided a voice for often silent students within the class; thereby helping them to participate in classroom discussion. For example, I was able to read student journals and select concepts to discuss in greater detail during our next seminar.

Essay analysis

Now that I’ve discussed the benefits of the assignment to both students and instructors, I would like to describe how I analyzed the essays students wrote about their first visit to our service site. To collect and analyze the data, I followed the qualitative process John Creswell describes

within the Fourth edition of *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (2012).

The first step is to prepare and organize the data for analysis. Forty-one students signed the IRB-approved consent form agreeing to participate in the study; of these, 36 students completed this assignment. From this collection, I removed one paper from the study because it was not submitted until the last week of the semester; I felt this student's view of entering the site would be tainted by the three months of conversations and assignments. I also removed four papers from the 2012 semester that were not written about entering a high school; I believed the most effective means of comparison was to create a database of students entering a similar site. This left a corpus of 31 essays.

The second step Creswell describes is to explore and code the data and categorize into broad themes (243). Since these 31 essays constitute a small database, Creswell suggests to review by hand instead of a computer program (240). I formed initial codes based on who or what was featured within the narratives. For example did students write about themselves or someone at the community site? Did they focus on positive or negative attributes about this topic? However, the answers to my questions became too difficult to manage by hand or within an Excel spreadsheet, so I changed to using the computer program, Dedoose, and began the process all over – creating major and minor coding categories, Dedoose labels Parent and Child codes. I began with the four Parent categories: Self, Teachers, Students, and Environment and created child codes to capture subtopics like behavior, assignments, or language style. I then coded every clause from each essay using these initial codes. When I noticed the need to create new codes, I went through all essays again to ensure coding formula was consistent.

While I could easily determine *who* was being featured within the essay or if the comments were positive, neutral, or negative within the categories above, Creswell reminds us that this type of inductive analysis requires us to read the data several times to develop a “deeper understanding about the information” (238). He’s right. Sometimes the coding categories changed several times during the analysis. For example, within Figure 1 below, I demonstrate how a passage from Salvadore, a 20-year-old Chaldean student was revised during a second reading.

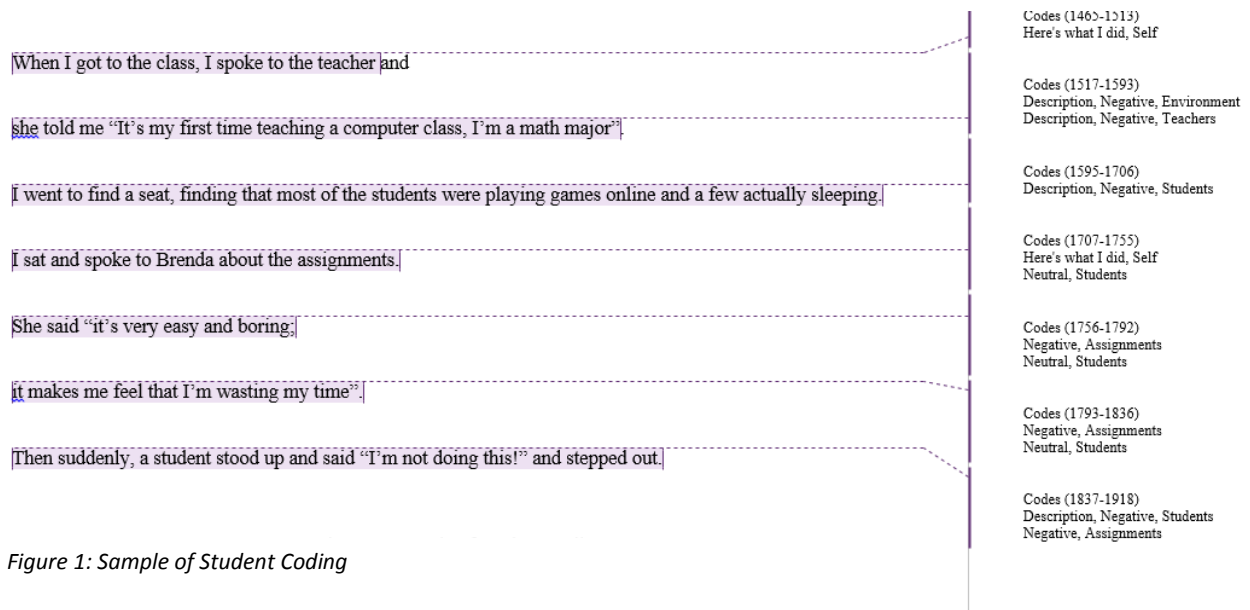


Figure 1: Sample of Student Coding

On first glance, I believed that describing students as sleeping in class or walking out of class represent negative characteristics of high school students, and they do. However, a closer analysis, I believe Salvadore is attributing the negative behaviors to having an unqualified teacher (a substitute) who created an “easy and boring” assignment. Therefore, these clauses received a second code as “negative, teacher, description.” Here’s another passage that I initially coded as a “neutral, environment” passage on first read but later changed to “negative, descriptive, environment.” Demetria, a 57-year-old African American woman, writes:

Under the majority of the desks were 10th grade literature books the students were using until recently. Mrs. Stewart said they are now using the new 12th grade literature books.

Initially, I coded this excerpt as “neutral” because Demetria doesn’t overtly describe the setting in negative or positive language. When I later returned to this example, I paid closer attention to why she might be writing about the literature books and realized that these seniors were using text books two grades below their grade level. Therefore, I changed the code to “Negative, description environment.”

In addition to re-reading the texts to ensure consistent coding of expected categories, Creswell also said to be open to unexpected or hard-to classify themes during the coding process. Two of my categories seem to represent these ideas: “justify” and “normal.” These codes represent rhetorical moves Recursive Learners made within their essays that reflect the attitudes, behaviors, and values of the community site. “Justify” was used a code I used when student writing attempted to understand the high school students’ behavior. For example, Anjali, 19-year-old African American female, writes about students working on e-portfolio interweaving positive and negative examples throughout her essay. However, at the very end of her text, she wrote four sentences theorizing reasons for misbehavior:

I like to give the students at Southfield Region Academic Campus the benefit of the doubt. Maybe the students were acting like that because there were visitors in the classroom. It could be that the students were acting like this because it was their last class of the day. Maybe the students figured since they got a whole semester to finish the autobiography assignment why should they start right away.

Within these four sentences, Anjali is using her writing to understand reasons for the negative behavior she witnessed during her visit. For example, earlier in the text, she writes: “The students could have said over a million of swear words but only had two words on their screen.” By using the “Justify” strategy, she theorizes that the students were not working on their

assignment because it's the last class of the day or there are guests in the classroom. Unlike Salvadore and Demetria where I inferred negative intent, Anjali explicitly makes the connection for the reader. Here is another example from Nigel, a 40-year-old African American man:

In the process of 'supposedly' doing their assignment, about half the students socialized and mingled, a bit interferingly,
but that can be expected going from class to class.

Within this passage, Nigel includes the "justify" move at the end of the sentence, so it's readily apparent he believes students cannot be expected to immediately work on their assignments. Noting if students "justified" within their essay is important to how I tabulated students' view of the service site; I will discuss this rhetorical move in greater detail later in this chapter.

The second unexpected category was when my students described characteristics of the high school environment, teachers, or students as "normal." For example, Jady's text that I used to start the chapter, describes her former high school, Henry Ford High School within Detroit Public Schools, as "one of the worst schools to send your child to" and mentions examples such as gang fights and drug trafficking. However, for this 19-year-old African American female, "Volunteering at Henry Ford High school, I felt like I was coming home." Initially, I coded passages about gangs, drugs, and shootings as "negative environment;" mistakenly, I was imposing my own middle-class, white ideological assumptions that the site was dangerous. However, if Jady describes it as "coming home," I should not infer negative intent. Therefore, I coded the passage as "normal, environment" and used this code when Recursive Learners described their environment in a way that contrasts mainstream descriptions. For example, Anthony, a 19-year-old African American man, wrote the following passage describing students lingering in the hallway during lunchtime:

The school was a normal high school as far as the kids were concerned ... Because it was lunch time, a lot of the kids would skip and just stay in the halls. You saw the guys just posted waiting for the girls to come by just to talk.

To Anthony, it is normal for students to be out of the lunchroom and lingering in the hallways. I, therefore, created a new coding category for “normal” to help gain a better understanding about how student writing reflects the attitudes or behaviors typical of the community where they are serving.

Coding noted

Now that I mentioned the coding categories, I'd like to discuss the occurrences of said categories. Simultaneously, I'd like to discuss any differences between Recursive Learners and Outsiders. First, however, I need to mention how I arrived at the numbers. Once all essays were coded, I separated the Recursive Learners and Outsiders as determined within Chapter 2 and then determined the percentage each claim was represented within the category (See Table 2).

For example, within the 20 papers written by Recursive Learners (Line A), there were 360 claims noted within the “Self” category, 379 about the OAC students, 166 about OAC Teachers, and 119 about the environment. Added together, there were 1,024 total claims within Recursive Learners papers. Since there are twice as many Recursive Learners as Outsiders, the only equitable

		Self	Students	Teachers	Environment	
A	Claims within Recursive Learners' Papers	360	379	166	119	1024
B	Recursive Learner percentages	35.2%	37.0%	16.2%	11.6%	100%
C	Claims with Outsiders' papers	182	260	120	57	619
D	Outsider percentages	29.4%	42.0%	19.4%	9.2%	100%

Table 2: Total Number of Category Claims

way to compare the two types of students was to convert these numbers into percentages; I divided the total number of claims for each category by the collective total number of claims for that type of learner. The percentage of claims are listed within Line B. I used the same formula when calculating claims for the Outsiders. When comparing student writing, both sets of students had identical orders for the frequency of claims they used most often in their papers. They each wrote about the OAC students the most often, followed by describing what they did at the site (Self), the OAC teachers, and the environment (See Figure 2).

While the table and chart depict the frequency of claims students wrote about themselves and the local site categories, I was also interested in discovering how each set of students viewed these categories. Did they describe the local students, teachers, or environment via negative claims or positive? Is there a difference between how the Recursive Learners viewed the site compared to Outsiders? In order to determine this number, I began by determined the frequency percentage for each child code. For example, if you examine Table 3, within the 379 claims Recursive Learners wrote about the OAC students, 85 claims were positive. This means that 22.4 percent of the claims Recursive Learners wrote about the OAC students were positive. In continuing along

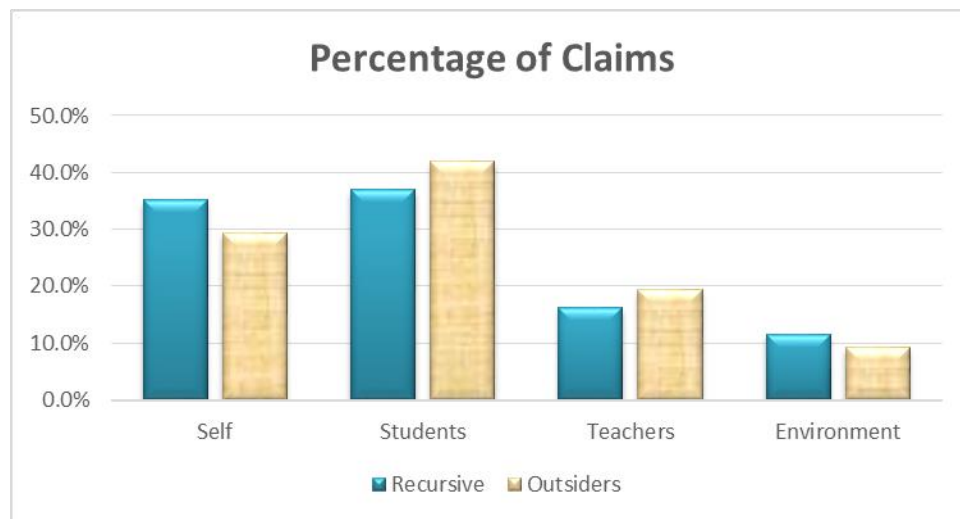


Figure 2: Percentage of claims

through Row A, 25 claims (6.6%) were normal, 81 claims (21.4%) were neutral, 149 claims (39.3%) were negative, and 39 claims (10.3%) were justify. I entered the same formula when calculating claims for the Outsiders. So while Table 1 determined the categories students wrote about, Table 2 presents a better view of how students viewed the site. In comparing these percentages, the Recursive Learners wrote more positively about the local students than the Outsiders did because they had almost twice as many positive claims (22.4% vs 10.4%), and they had less negative claims (39.3% vs 52.3%). However, I do not believe the value is accurately portrayed by counting frequency of claims because one still needs to consider how the neutral, normal, and justify categories factor into the essays. For example, what is the impact of the 25 normal claims within Recursive Learners papers? Can it be measured? I created a formula to attempt to measure this phenomena; however, it is far from perfect. Naturally, I figured positive claims should have a value of (+1), and negative claims should have a value of (-1). As to the neutral and normal claims, I determined they should be equal in value because neither is a positive statement nor a negative one. Initially, I thought to “count” each as a zero weight, but realized a zero number would be missing from the total value. Therefore, I decided to weight them at ($\frac{1}{2}$) each. The justify claims were a bit more difficult to determine because they are being used to neutralize statements about negative student behavior. Remember Nigel’s example where he simultaneously criticizes and excuses student behavior:

In the process of ‘supposedly’ doing their assignment, about half the students socialized and mingled, a bit interferingly, (negative, student)

but that can be expected going from class to class. (justify)

Since the first clause was labeled (-1) for “negative student,” I decided the Justify claims needed to be (+1), so it would reflect the neutral value intended within student writing. Therefore,

I created the following formula to determine a Value for how students viewed the site. (See table 3):

	Positive	Normal	Neutral	Negative	Justify	Value
	+	+1/2	+1/2	-	+	
Claims within Recursive Learners	85	+1/2(25)	+1/2 (81)	- 149	+ 39	=28

Table 3: The Formula

When applying this formula to the claims within my student essays, I believe we have a more realistic view about my students' intentions in writing about our service site. In examining the Total Value columns, we can now see that the Recursive Learners did value the local site more positively throughout all categories than the Outsiders (63.2% to 20.9%) respectively. Specifically, they discussed the OAC students and environment more positively (7.4% to -19%), teachers (54.5% to 48.8%) and the environment (1.3% to -8.8%). These findings confirm prior research from Boyle-Baise and Sleeter that Monberg mentions: students of color are more likely to approach service-learning courses with robust, rather than deficit, views of the community site. While their research specifically identified students as "students of color," I use the term Recursive Learner because there was one white student whom I determined in Chapter 2 belonged to this community. However, all my Recursive Learners received marginalized public school education and, therefore, fit within the same criteria as Boyle-Baise, Sleeter, and Monberg discuss.

While a very important part of my findings revealed Recursive Learners wrote more positively about the site than Outsiders, I want to discuss how these categories (Self, Student,

Teacher, and Environment) were represented as themes within students' texts. Additionally, I want to discuss differences between how the Recursive Learners and Outsiders wrote about the service site.

Finding #1: Contrasting View of Environment – Normal?

As I mentioned during my coding analysis, one important finding of the study is that many students referred to the students, teachers, or environment as “normal.” Specifically, 42 percent of the student essays (13 of the 31 within the study) had at least one statement describing the local site as being similar. Of these, 12 students were Recursive Learners, several of whom understand the students because they are reminded of their own environment. For example, Pamela writes the experience reminded her of her nephews, Sebastianne saw “kids being kids,” and Kathryn writes: “When you get down to the layers all teens are punks, rebels, and just trying to find themselves in a niche trying to fit in.” The Outsider who wrote about the environment as familiar is from Karissa, who attended DPS nearly a decade before. She writes:

Well, let me tell you it was just like when I was in high school all over again. As I walked down the hall to my assigned class I hear a female teacher from the science class yelling, “Sit down, this is the last time I’m going to tell you.” And I hear the student which sounded like a young man chuckling and saying, “Why are you upset? I’m just trying to tell you something,” and the teacher replied, still yelling, “Sit down now!”

To Karissa, it is perfectly natural to walk through school halls and hear teachers “yelling” at students. From her perspective, she also seems to side with the student who is trying to communicate with the teacher. Passages like this made me initially want to classify Karissa as a Recursive Learner; however, throughout the semester Karissa’s position as an active parent in her children’s school prevented her from developing an affinity to the site where she would see it as her own community. However, to really grasp an understanding of the Recursive Learners’ view of the site as normal, I would like to present a tale of contrasting extremes – the polar opposite

views of the environment from Jady, the Recursive Learner whose passage I used within the opening pages of this chapter, and Judith, the Outsider whom I quoted several times in Chapter 2.

The Anomaly: Judith's "Unacceptable" Environment

Readers may remember Judith from Chapter 2. During classroom discussion, she described student behavior as “not normal” and “inexcusable.” Her entrance essay was equally as harsh. She begins her essay describing a literature classroom where an unnamed teacher tried to incorporate a group activity as preparation for an upcoming quiz. She said the activity resulted in “chaos” because students were not happy with their assigned groups; instead they created their own groups. “Unacceptable” student behavior escalates to the point where the quiz was never assigned. She writes:

The students were loud and for the most part doing whatever they wanted. Students were cursing, talking on cell phones leaving the class whenever they felt the need.... Rules for the game they were playing were laid out and simply put not followed. The students yelled out answers, looked on their cell phones for answers and just choose not to participate. ... In the end the test was not given. ...As I sat and watched in horror how these children acted, I was appalled. In disgust, I stood and watched a class of teenagers who ran the class. The teacher had no control of the students. The racist, derogatory terms the students openly called each other was enough to make me wonder if any of them had any idea what hate crimes are. I stood with my arms folded at one point and when asked if I thought anything was funny I said “no, you should all be ashamed of yourselves.” I saw students hitting each other, punching and twisting each other's arms. Never did it seem like that was unacceptable behavior. At what point will the children in this class be taught how to act? The answer to that became clearer when I returned to the college and shared my story. After being told it is “normal” for kids to act like this, I realized that normal doesn't require change. As long as the people who live in this area think that it is normal to call each other “faggots and bitches” then the behavior will continue.

I am going to continue to attend this class because I need it for my R.N. However I am pretty sure I am not going to change any situation that is considered normal. My children attend a school in which we received 3 phone calls when my 10th grade daughter had on a low cut shirt. Three phone calls about the same shirt on the same day. It was important to the school that the teacher, the counselor and the principal all talked to me about the

situation. I then received a follow up call and email the next day. I have been in her school several times and I have asked her about classroom behavior at her school compared to OAC. I am thrilled to announce that it is not “normal” to call your teacher names and to run around the classroom for the entire hour. And for that I know that the service I need to complete will be here in my house with my 4 daughters working 2 jobs to make sure they will never have to go to a school where bullying and racism are considered normal.

I quoted this large portion of her text, so that readers could clearly hear Judith’s voice, along with the anger that she radiated throughout the semester. She is not just “appalled” and “disgusted” by the high school students; she tells the students during their class that they should be “ashamed of themselves.” We can also sense similar feelings of dissatisfaction when she discusses her classmates’ conversation as being “normal.” The dissatisfaction with the local site and her classmates is more pronounced when she describes her view of normal behavior: she is “thrilled” because three school officials made the “important” decision to call her when her daughter wore inappropriate clothing. Implied within this statement is that similar calls would be forthcoming if her daughter behaved like the students she just observed. She concludes by stating she has no desire to return to the site I selected; instead, she will continue to work two jobs needed to afford housing within the school district where her children attend and will provide parental support to raise her children appropriately.

Within her 2007 article, “Exploring Differences in the Service-Learning Classroom,” Anne Green mentions one of the most difficult emotions she faces when teaching anti-racism pedagogy within Service learning courses is student anger and frustration. She notes that these are normal emotions which need to be acknowledged and worked through. “It is important to recognize that anger, guilt, and fear cannot be avoided as possible responses from students” (Green 48). She said we need to help these students through their emotions to cause the disruptions that result in additional learning.

I tried many times that semester to help Judith through her anger, beginning with a phone call when I saw her essay posted and various additional calls, emails, and discussion before or after class. She did eventually return to the site week 13 and viewed the site in a more positive light; something I will discuss in greater detail in chapter 4. Within this chapter, her entrance essay stood as the voice of opposition, and helped me understand her subsequent silence within the classroom and refusal to go to the site.

The Recursive Learner's View: Jady's View as Normal

Within the opening vignette, Jady describes returning to her former high school, Henry Ford in Detroit Public Schools, in terms that seem familiar to many of my students who also attended DPS or another marginalized school. Jady mentions gang fights and police action as being routine occurrences that make her feel “coming home.” She returned to help a former teacher, and describes the value she feels while helping the “children” at the school. She writes;

I got a chance to ... observe everything that went on from the drama in the classroom, all of the drama in the hallways, the wild children in the lunch room, the police running around everywhere, and much more. Within just visiting the school only twice, I realized that nothing had really changed since I graduated. When I got a chance to sit in the class I noticed that the students were more interested in me and how things were when I went there. After telling them some of my stories I realized that I connected with them and gained their trust. Though there were still some students that were not really budging when it came to someone new like me interfering with how things were run in their class, but I still gave them my time. That day I got a chance to introduce myself to them and get to know them more. Not much work was done, but I still had a great time being back in the classroom.

Jady's description depicts a scene that Judith would probably describe as chaotic and unacceptable, but through Jady's frame of reference, the school is normal; she had a “great time” and wants to return again. She also believes she made a positive impact on the “children” because she connected them and “gained their trust,” and she envisions future visits being just as successful.

Many other Recursive Learners concluded their essays in similar fashion – looking forward to their next visit to the site.

Finding #2: More Positive View of Students and Teachers

Another important finding of the study can already be seen within the contrasting texts presented between Jady and Judith: that the Recursive Learners view the site in a more positive light than Outsiders. In examining the remaining 17 essays where students centered their narratives on the OAC students or teachers, 11 texts (or 64 percent) are positive representations of the site, and all were written by Recursive Learners. Conversely, of the 6 student essays centering on negative representations of the students or site, only one was written by a Recursive Learner, the other five essays (30 percent) were written by Outsiders.

The negative essays written by the five Outsiders are similar to those presented within Chapter 2 by Anderson and Roger; they describe negative student behavior and discuss how this behavior is so different than their prior education. (Implied within the discussion is that the behavior is wrong, disrespectful, not normal.) I will just use a passage from Anderson, a 19-year-old, white male, as representative of the five essays. Within the reflection section of his essay, he writes:

I have never seen something like it. I went to Waterford schools which had open doors the entire time I was in school and I had many classes with many minorities, but nothing could prepare me for what I saw. I was astonished to see that only about five of the students actually cared about the class, assignment, teacher, and themselves. The five people who did their assignment were the only kids that in their paragraph had actual goals outside of high school. I felt terrible to read some of the other students' paragraphs that talked all about the hardship they have faced in their short lives. I wasn't expecting college writers by any means, I wasn't a college writer before I went to college either, but I wasn't prepared for how far behind some of these student were. I would like to spend my remaining hours helping Ms. D. because she desperately needs it and so do her students. It may take a few hours for the students to adjust to me and to

accept my help but I am willing to do what it takes to make sure these students achieve the goals they put forth in their paragraphs.

By comparing the OAC students to the minorities from his own school he eliminates how class and funding via the more affluent Waterford schools provide an inequitable comparison. We do get one brief glimpse of compassion (he feels terrible about reading their hardships) and empathy (he writes he wasn't a college-writer either and wants to help the five students achieve their goals). However, he paints himself as being needed by the teacher and students. Many others within service-learning scholarship have described answers like Anderson's as being the "White Knight" riding in to "save" community members – a type of view we do not want students to adopt. Since this assignment was submitted so early in the semester, I was able to meet with Anderson and chat about my concerns.

The negative essay written by Recursive Learner was from Corrine, the 41-year-old African American woman I mentioned earlier. She describes a variety of behaviors she determines to be inappropriate, and unkindly describes the students as lacking incentive, acting like they were "raised in a poor environment," and even suffering from "some type of brain dysfunction." However, within her conclusion, she articulates a plan to help the students. She writes:

I feel so bad for these students and I decided to write down all 25 students names who are failing the class, and, hopefully, Monday at 11 when the class starts I can try and have a 5 minute speech with the kids and let them know that the answers to the quiz they took Friday were in the notes that they had I'm going to see if they tell me what matters to them the most just try to see where their heads are, and if any of them cooperate, then I can try and persuade them to become a little more focused with their school work. I think that if these students stop playing around in the classroom, they can all get better grades. They act as if they were raised in a poor environment and do not care what type of grade they get because that is what they are used to. These students need help bad, and I plan to try and help them out.

Corrine ends her essay justifying the behavior; she wonders if the behavior could be due to environment? Their values? Additionally, like Anderson, she wants to evoke change within the

student. However, this White Knight scenario seems more appropriate coming from a 41-year-old woman from the same racial background compared to a 19-year-old white male.

The remaining 11 essays written about the local students or teachers describe many positive characteristics and help one see their view of the service site reflects values/beliefs of the local community. Patricia, a 54-year-old African American woman in my 2011 semester, chatted with the local boys within an English classroom. She describes the boys as “energetic” and in “high spirits and were teasing each other about their future plans. She writes she is comfortable throughout the visit and that the boys remind her of her nephews: “All during this time I felt comfortable and admired them for thinking about their future....I enjoyed the laughter and teasing; their playfulness was gratifying.” Sebastianne, a 32-year-old African American woman in my 2012 semester describes positive interaction she had with the girls in a gym class. She writes:

The girls and I got along really well. When asked about their plans after school, most said they were going to attend OCC, too. We had a good time getting to know one another, and I was challenged in a cup stacking game by the students and teacher. After that class, I walked the halls and saw kids being kids. Other than a few curse words, they were behaving themselves.

Six other students wrote positive essays about the local art teacher, Mrs. McNephew, or Literature teacher, Mr. Roberts, that I classified these essays as a “heroic teacher” theme. Pandora, Samuel, and Kathryn wrote glowing praise of the art teacher including her effective classroom decor, securing (or even purchasing herself) supplies for the art projects, and how she proudly discusses student artwork. The essay from Kathryn, a 20-year-old, white female in my 2012 semester, is representative of how they all wrote about Mrs. McNephew. She begins her essay as she’s greeted by a “friendly security guard” and then being “welcomed” into art room with a hug from the teacher whom she describes as very excited, happy, and awesome “she understood her students.” She also writes about helping a student:

I sat next to the only girl in the class and helped her she was having family problems and wasn't able to make it to class the past couple days. She had it hard at home but had big goals in the future, she wanted to go to Marygrove College. She was very well mannered and was very thankful for me helping her and explaining how to create this animal/creature. ... Over my entire visit was a success, in mine, the teacher's eyes, and students I helped. From helping get projects passed out to work areas set up and cleaned up, I was her wingman. ... I felt comfortable helping out the students, you just have to get past the swearing and name calling and give a few "that's not nice! Or how would you feel if I called you that?" comments back and the bickering ends there. When you get down to the layers all teens are punks, rebels, and just trying to find themselves in a niche trying to fit in.

If we look very closely between the lines, we can see that some students were misbehaving ("you have to get past the swearing and name calling"); however, Kathryn chooses not to discuss any of these negative details. Instead, she describes her interaction with a student using positive adjectives as "well-mannered" and "thankful." Also, like many other Recursive Learners, Kathryn concludes her essay by justifying the behavior through stating all teens are punks or rebels.

Jacinda, Marcus, and Sapphire describe many effective pedagogical strategies Mr. Roberts adopted to engage his students. Jacinda, an 18-year-old African American within my 2010 semester, provides a unique perspective regarding Mr. Roberts's teaching style because he was her English teacher just five brief months ago; she is the true recursive learner. She describes the students coming back from lunch as fidgety, like she and her classmates were just a few short months ago.

Little did I know the class that I was arriving to was the class of my 12th grade teacher. He goes by the name Mr. Roberts. From experience, I know he was a well-grounded teacher. With a philosophy like Mr. Booker's, he is one of the few teachers that I believe really gets an enjoyment out of student's success and him being a part of it. Walking into the class the students were a little rowdy from lunch, so he quickly put a stop to it reminding the students what they were there for and what was needed to be done. ... I sat at his desk observing how the students were acting, and they were very fidgety. Then I thought of how my class mates and I used to be coming back from lunch, and it was about the same. ... Class went on and Mr. Roberts got into the lesson. Many of the students needed assistance, so

I helped since I knew how to do the work. I helped out three kids, and they seemed to get a better understanding of the assignment. This one gentleman refused to cooperate with anything, he was sent out of the class room

Within Jacinda's text, we see several ways she casts Mr. Roberts in a positive light; she states he's "well-grounded," enjoys students' success, and disciplines rowdy students. She also views the student behavior as normal "fidgety" after lunch, like she and her classmates were. Two of her classmates were not as forgiving when discussing student behavior; however, they each focused their essays on how Mr. Roberts teaches in spite of negative student behavior; a quality Mr. Booker values within the teachers at his school. Sapphire describes what she saw during a silent reading assignment in February, 2012. She said it took Mr. Roberts 20 minutes to get the class under control, and even then "he could only do so much." At one point she was asked to step out of the classroom, so that he could chat with the students. When she was invited to reenter the classroom, Mr. Roberts was talking with the students that their perceived popularity will not matter in college; however, she writes the students "were completely unreceptive to what Mr. Roberts was trying to tell them." She ends her description saying Mr. Roberts asked her for her next visit to be during the 11 a.m. class "because they are more mature and he gets more done with those students." As a future teacher, Marcus, a 20-year-old African American, focused his 2012 text on how Mr. Roberts is a "good teacher" who cares for the students but that the students do not respect Mr. Roberts or the "learning environment." He described several engaging strategies Mr. Roberts incorporated including explaining the assignment and his expectations, redirecting a misbehaving student, answering all student questions, and conferencing with failing students how they could improve their grades. His conclusion discusses a private conversation with the teacher. He writes:

The one thing he said that stood out the most to me was that "OAC can be depressing". This stood out to me because just sitting in on one class period, I could understand exactly why a teacher would find this school frustrating and or depressing. There is no real effort or focus in the majority of OAC's students, a lot them are misguided in a sense because they glorify the wrong

things. Mr. Roberts is a good teacher, and wants his students to succeed but there is only so much the teacher can do, until the children have to make a change.

Their discussions about Mr. Roberts are very similar, and so are their conclusions. They both say they were comfortable at the site, that their visit was a success, and want more involvement in future visit; a very positive future they envision at the site. The essays from these 11 students present a completely different version of the service site than Judith and the other Outsiders describe.

Finding #3: Articulates activism

Another important finding of the study that I discovered is that the Recursive Learners were more likely to express activist tendencies than the students who did not belong to this community. Specifically, ten students, nine of whom are Recursive Learners, end their essay indicating they want to effect change within this community, which I infer as being predisposition to activism.

In order to determine activist tendencies, I wasn't just looking for overt statements like: "I want to make a difference for this community" (although a couple of students did just that, and I will describe them in a moment). I was looking for students to indicate a desire to help the community to some extent or how their next trip to the site would benefit the local students. For example nine student essays conclude on a positive note or describe what they want to accomplish on their next visit; however, none were categorized as having activist tendencies. These include students like Izabella who said she is "eager to return" to the site and Kathryn who "looks forward" to her next visit and that she'll dress more like a teacher. Neither student considers her action in relationship to larger change or even to the local students. Conversely, there were seven students who conclude their essays wanting more interaction with the local students, but they were still not considered activist tendencies. For example, on future visits, Pandora hopes "to be able to tutor or

mentor a student,” and Ronald wants to continue volunteering in Mrs. Stewart’s class “permitting that [his] schedule allows” because he believes he could “help some of her students on a more personable level.” There were even students like Marcus who conclude with several sentences about wanting more direct student contact on his next visit. He writes:

One thing I would improve for my next visit is my interaction with the students. I could engage them a bit more in my time there, but this time I was really just observing. This is a minor mistake in which I could fix myself, and will fix my next visit. I felt very comfortable in that high school setting, and look forward to returning for my next visit.

I considered comments such as these centered on their personal role at the site, and not connected to larger issues of social change or activism. Again, while nine students looked forward to their next visit, I did not consider the statements to reflect activist tendencies.

What I did consider to be activists are essays like this one from James, a 20-year-old bi-racial student in the 2010 semester. Throughout his 2½ page essay he documents his conversation with a high school student about racism and inequity; simultaneously, James describes his goal for incorporating a pyramid program – hoping that by spreading a positive message to others within the school, it will spark in them the desire to end the negativity that is preventing personal success.

He writes:

I would definitely consider my visit at OAC success. I think that I will be able to make a connection with Josh, and open up his eyes to the unfairness in in this world that has helped him get where he is now, struggling in a school that is made for people who have struggled in other schools. I think we will be able to develop a realistic plan for changing the way he views what is happening around him, and with that, change his behavior. I believe that he, and many others like him want to change for the better, but find it very challenging to, and don’t know why they do. ... If everything goes as plan, he will be the first, of what I hope can become a pyramid of change. I believe that our visits at OAC will bring major changes to these students, and I will take the extra credit for the service learning class, so I can get even more involved.

There are a couple things to note here. First, as a bi-racial young man, educated through Detroit Public Schools and then the more affluent Farmington Hills, James speaks as one who's been there. He understands the students, and his dialogue with the students was positively received by the OAC students. Secondly, his plan to spark change in the community is geared towards helping the students succeed; a move I consider to reflect activist tendencies. Last, within his conclusion, he indicates he wants to serve time beyond the minimum I mandated. In their analysis of pre-service teachers in 1998, Boyle-Baise and Sleeter considered volunteering beyond the minimum as an indication of early activism, so it appears he meets their criteria as well.

Several others also seem on their way to becoming activists; they want to connect to a student to help him/her succeed; they all try to understand behavior and end wanting future visit to have an impact. Allow me to drop in their conclusions and then collectively discuss them at the end.

Anthony, a 19-year-old, African American writes: I believe a lot of the students have a lot of potential... I feel that we have to try to connect with them. I saw how if you can connect with just a least one person it can make a difference. That is what I want my service learning to be about, helping to connect with students so they can succeed. When I was in Dr. Mark's class I could not stop think about how easy the work was. He was giving them two days to do an assignment that seem to be so elementary to me. I started to believe I was in a special education class but I didn't want to ask or offend anyone. I feel like they should not just give easy work either. It hurts in the long run. We need to help better the school for their students and help the students help themselves to become leaders and to set an example.

Nigel, a 40-year-old African American, writes: Most of these students have a behavioral problem. But from my perspective the behavior issue derives from wanting attention. During the rest of the time that I will spend at OAC, I will approach students on that issue. I will develop an advisor type of relationship, with suggestions leaning towards respect and encouraging students to be more attentive towards the teacher. Even after all the disruptions most of the students still passed in their classwork Kids are going to be kids, enjoying each other and their time together. I will make a difference.

Samuel, a 27-year-old Chaldean, writes: [Mrs. McNephew] expressed that if her car broke down next to the school and she had to walk, she had the fear that she might get raped, robbed, or killed because the school being so close to Detroit. How much longer must this go before we make a change? Does it have to get a lot worse before we step in and act?... The tools needed for this project come from within yourself; you just have to know how to use them.

Salvadore, a 20-year-old Chaldean, writes: Even though I spoke with Principal the first day about making a class with approximately ten students to learn about photography, I think that some classes could be better than what it is now. Teachers need to find more ways of engaging the students to peak interest and focus in class. I'm excited to go for the second visit because I want to start working on my project.

All four men want to make a difference at the site and want to see the students succeed: Anthony wants to help them become leaders in society, Nigel envisions making a difference through a mentoring relationship, Samuel describes social change in abstract terms that are currently disconnected to specific project, and Salvadore believes he can engage the student through his photography course more effectively than the current teachers are doing. All of which I believe are indications of activism tendencies.

Five others students could also be considered as expressing activist tendencies, but they are not as strongly stated as the prior examples. Each wants to help the students, which does not seem connected to a grade or personal schedule. I already mentioned Corrine's plan to help students in the geometry class. The other four also made brief statements hoping their help makes an impact with the students. For example, Jacinda wants to continue helping in Mr. Roberts's room which would "really benefit the teacher and students." Anjali states: "I personally do not want to believe that those students are that behind in their education level, and there is nothing I can do about it because my help alone will have no real impact." Nicole writes: "I want to try to make a change in at least one of the students ... I hope to find a good fit in the school someplace

where my help is needed.” Last is Esme who wants to help the students with several financial literacy plans. She writes:

I can use what I know to help out the students at S.R.A.C. I can meet with these students give them information on different colleges, help prepare for the SAT/ ACT, and teach them some life skills such as correctly filling out everything from money orders to financial aid.

While Esme doesn’t actually state a phrase like “I want to make a difference or change” in someone’s life, I believe that she will make such an impact through helping the students understand these very important concepts.

To recap, ten students, nine of whom are Recursive Learners, end their essay expressing activist tendencies. Five students articulated language of social change, while five others want their visit to have an impact on the local students. In looking back at these students, I see that all of the students were students within my first two semesters, seven of whom were in the very first course. I’m thinking that even though the assignment was the same, students in the first semester really had no idea about what they would do at the site; they were the pioneers, so to speak, who forged a path for students in the following semesters to follow. Students in 2011 and 2012 had the benefit to see how prior students entered the site with a plan, so perhaps they were not so worried about what they would do. Additionally, if you recall, I eliminated four 2012 students who volunteered within their own community, because I wanted a more equitable comparison across all semesters. However, Mathew’s work with the homeless is clearly one social change; this is a topic I can explore in Chapter 4 when I examine effects of the entire semester.

Finding #4: Recursive Learners Also Write Conversion Narratives

I want to end this chapter by discussing the five students who wrote conversion narratives. One student was an Outsider, an Asian who describes entering the African American community with trepidation due to her differing race. Since such discussions have been covered already, I see

no need to discuss it further. Instead, I want to discuss the four conversion narratives written by Recursive Learners, all of whom are African Americans writing about the African American community. These students begin their essay stating their anxiety about working at the site; they then describe their involvement with local students or teachers and how that involvement led them to become more comfortable. I want to feature the essay from Axel, a 19 year-old African American. Readers might remember Axel from Chapter 2, he was supposed to go to OAC after being expelled from Lathrup; his brother even attends the school during the semester we are volunteering. However, he like the other students within this group, nervously enters the site. I want to print Axel's first paragraph because he discusses this setting within his conclusion:

This past Monday I was at OAC attending Ms. D.'s class. Before I got into her class, I sat in the office. I was waiting for our fellow classmate [Kiara] because I didn't want to go in the class by myself. While I was waiting, a student from OAC sat next to me; then [Kiara] arrived. [Kiara] and I started having a conversation about the service learning site and what class we were going to attend. I guess the student overheard our conversation and gave us the heads up that Ms. Durden's 5th hour class was one the rowdiest and worse classes ever. I decided to take on the challenge even though I was warned from one of the students and went to Ms. Durden's class.

Axel makes a point to describe his anxiety through internal dialogue – stating he needed a classmate by his side (“I didn't want to go in the class by myself.”) His classmates made similar rhetorical moves. Kiara (mentioned above) and Izabella briefly mention their discomfort because of the unfamiliar site; Sebastianne, however, writes that she as she is being escorted to the classroom by Booker, she “can't help but feel nervous” but does not elaborate about what makes her feel nervous.

The narratives then follow a similar trajectory: they alternate between description and reflection throughout their visit, and at some point, they describe an interaction that leads to their understanding and comfort. Axel's understanding came through working alongside the students creating the same product. He said the students were working on a web page, and he decided to

work on it too “so it would be easier to help them.” He writes, “I realized that their assignment took a lot of work. It was impressive that a lot of them had something so difficult.” After this reflection, Axel describes how he helped the students with their own assignments or motivated “a few kids [who were] slacking.” By first working on the assignment, Axel became comfortable enough to approach the students, and he has a deeper appreciation of the assignment and the students. His classmates came to similar realizations through conversations with the high school students. Kiara, who worked along-side of Axel, writes: “I ran into someone who is close to me, and I never thought I would possibly see him again. ... It was my little brother, and seeing him made me feel better... Knowing that he was fine, because we had lost contact.”

As the essays draw to their conclusions, students reflected about their connection to the site. Axel concludes his essay with the end of the class period. He helps the teacher pack up the laptops, and as he is walking out of the building, he reflects on the initial office conversation: “After I left the building I was thinking about what that one student told me in the office and it was the complete opposite. I enjoyed working them.” The remaining students were not as rhetorically savvy; however, all articulated a stronger connection to the site. Kiara expresses personal satisfaction that the student she chatted with is going to college to be a nurse, Izabella ends by looking forward to future visits, and Sebastianne concludes by describing her comfort; she writes: “There was no need to fear. I enjoyed being around the young ladies.”

To conclude this section, it’s important to note that these four African Americans entered a site of their own ethnicity with some level of anxiety, which seems to be similar to what has been discussed by white students entering a community of color – and has not been mentioned within our scholarship. Prior research involving students of color (that I mentioned in chapter 1) revealed those who served in a white community, expressed anxiety about their writing skills (Davi).

However, the few scholars who discussed students of color serving within a community of color do not mention student discomfort at all; instead they have been used as examples to enhance learning of white students (Green; Stenberg and Whealy). Essays from these four students provide a new scenario for us to consider: students of color traveling recursively through racial borders do express anxiety entering a familiar community. I wish my students had elaborated on why they were nervous, fearful, or uncomfortable. Was it because of something they saw during our prior tour? Classroom discussions about local student behavior? Anxiety about what they will do at the site? These questions should be explored further. For now, we need to be aware that anxiety was an issue for these four African American students.

Concluding Thoughts

I would like to return to the research questions I posed at the beginning of the chapter. I believe the writing my students produced reflects the values, beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors typical of the community where they're serving; although, I can't answer this question for certain because that comparison would require more direct knowledge about the community members than I currently have. However, I believe that my Recursive Learners described the site as normal or they theorize reasons students were misbehaving through the rhetorical strategy I named "justify," they demonstrate empathy for the local teens.

As to the second question: How does this writing differ from traditional students (e.g. the writing of privileged students when serving within urban communities)? Not only did they use the "justify" strategy or describe the site as normal, my research also revealed:

- Recursive Learners view the site more positively than Outsiders
- Recursive Learners are more likely to express activist tendencies than Outsiders

Both of these findings are important because we no longer need to look to other disciplines to determine how marginalized students enter a community site; we now have data from a service-learning composition course.

Last, it's important to remember Recursive Learners anxiously enter their own community. This finding reminds us that all students could potentially approach service-learning sites with trepidation even though they are of the same race, class, age, and educational background (Axel and Izabella's stories). Within the next chapter, I will examine the entire genre set to determine if the curriculum sparks the development of critical consciousness as it was designed.

CHAPTER 4 MEASURING ACTIVIST INTENTIONS

“I have started making friends with members of the white race,” Corrine, a 41-year-old African American female.

“The students I had dismissed as careless and rude were none of that during this project. In a matter of 30 minutes all of the cards were signed and decorated. It was a huge success and made me wish I had set up something nicer for the students to make. As I handed the students candy canes for helping, they were all very thankful,” – Judith, the 34-year-old Latina whom I featured throughout the past three chapters as being so “appalled” and “disgusted” by the high school students that she was refusing to return to the site.

“I have become more aware of my ability to help society,” Sapphire, a 19-year-old African American female.

“I’m going to be a lawyer and will work to end this injustice,” Nigel, a 40-year-old African American man.

As I have done within the prior chapters of my dissertation, I begin the chapter with student voices. All students quoted above, students of color, articulate a change within self at the end of the semester – a goal that Teresa Guansato Monberg desired when she theorized a Recursive Service Learning course. I would also argue that comments from Sapphire and Nigel extend beyond personal change and demonstrate critical consciousness and, perhaps, activist tendencies. Granted, all four passages are pronouncements of changed attitudes that we’re cautioned about “accepting at face value” (Jay 257) or are anecdotes that others say we no longer need (Deans, Roswell, and Wurr). I hear their warnings; however, I must disagree. Since prior anecdotal evidence has only documented student learning within traditional border-crossing paradigms, I believe we do need to hear some voices documenting student learning within this new paradigm: students of color serving within a community of color; they are becoming more socially responsible without crossing into the prerequisite border of difference our discipline insists we need to spark student development. At the same time, as a responsible researcher, I also realize providing anecdotes

alone is not a significant enough assessment measurement to be considered evidence of “social awareness;” therefore, I will supplement these student voices by triangulating data through several other sources. Specifically, within this chapter, I will discuss the sequence of activities and assignments I implemented with the goal to develop students’ activist tendencies; I then analyze student texts compared to pre-course and post-course questionnaires. Specifically, I address the following research questions:

- What are the characteristics of a Recursive Critical Service Learning Composition course?
- How do students respond to theoretical frames, assignments, or discussion topics relating to critical theory?
- How does this paradigm differ from current research in regards to student learning and/or development of critical consciousness?

My discussion of these topics presents important work to the field because these questions have yet to be asked when discussing learning outcomes for marginalized students, such as the Recursive Learners within my course. By describing characteristics of a service-learning course designed for students of color to serve within their own community, I provide a way for instructors to create similar programs for students to serve within their own community and still achieve an increased level of social awareness.

I begin the chapter by discussing how service learning instructors assessed student acquisition of critical consciousness within their classrooms. Then, returning to Bazerman’s concepts, I describe how the cycle of texts within my genre system helped students develop a social awareness and perhaps even activist tendencies. Following this discussion, I present my research methods that include excerpts from student papers, pre- and post-course questionnaires,

and analysis of themes within their final research papers. As I have done in prior chapters, my emphasis will be discussing the marginalized students within my class, the Recursive Learners. I end the chapter with implications for the field.

Assessment Background:

Within Chapter 1, I described characteristics of several critical service-learning, community-writing courses where instructors emphasized social critique. While program variations ranged from tutoring adults at homeless shelters to working with children in afterschool programs, embedded within each article I discussed is the belief that the course developed students' critical consciousness or its predecessor social responsibility. To determine if students achieved this outcome, many presented a rich description of their program design supplemented with student texts. For example, in our earliest text from Bruce Herzberg in 1994, he had hoped his course would enhance students' social responsibility which he identified as "a sense of the reality and immediacy of the problems of the poor and homeless along with a belief that people in a position to help out should do so" (308). In order to determine if students achieved this outcome, Herzberg presents student reactions to course readings, classroom discussions, and events within the community site. Throughout the article, we see students struggling to understand the systemic reasons underlying poverty, homelessness, and illiteracy; by the conclusion, Herzberg points to students' final research papers as evidence they many achieved social responsibility. He writes they came to an "understanding of the way that social institutions affect our lives, and a sense that our responsibility for social justice includes but also carries beyond personal acts of charity" (317). As an early adopter, Herzberg was arguing for composition instructors to adopt this initiative; therefore, his analysis of student texts does not extend beyond summary statements like the ones I have used above.

A few years later, Schutz and Gere had a similar goal for their article: arguing for service-learning courses within our discipline through describing their program model. They begin by discussing how they modified Herzberg's program to place a greater emphasis on student analysis of the tutoring context; however, they believe the tutoring context itself prevented students from fully realizing social awareness. They write their course, "did not enable students to move beyond the personal or 'private' dimensions of their work to consider its larger, more 'public' aspects as effectively as [they] would have liked" (134). They then offer a rich description of a different type of course: student writing about an issue of local concern within the university community. Like Herzberg, they document student successes and failures as they struggle to understand "the complexities of the operations of power in their own community and in the larger society" (140). So Herzberg, and Schutz and Gere were measuring student consciousness through student discussion of systemic issues instead of personal.

Many of the articles within my first chapter also described their program design; however, some others were theoretical. For example, Bickford and Reynolds argued students do not understand local grassroots activism; therefore, activism has to be placed at the front of the curriculum through our syllabus, projects, and activities. "The way we frame projects and activities impacts both what our students do and how they understand it (i.e., whether it contributes to "change" or just "helps" someone)" (241). To help them become activists, they argue to have students practice acts of dissent within the classroom or campus. In theorizing how to create a service-learning course for students of color, Monberg also suggests putting activism at the forefront of our pedagogy. She suggests for students to design tours, targeted at their home communities or "rewrite the way forms of travel and tourism are marketed to their home communities" (45). I agree with placing activism at the center of our curriculum; however, neither

of program model seemed feasible for me. I found what I was looking for through Angelique Davi's program design.

In her 2006 article, "In the Service of Writing and Race," Davi reveals that the inquiry-based course, reflection, and writing allowed several students overcome past racist incidents and became empowered to change. Since many of her students have lived experience of racism and other forms of oppression, she focuses on helping them recognize "the role that education played in establishing or reinforcing some of their own and others' attitudes about themselves as learners and thinkers, about their race, and about their culture" (77). Like Herzberg, she provides a rich description of her program and documents student voices and texts as evidence that demonstrate how her students "move from awareness to critical consciousness" (92). Within the discussion, she also describes how two students became "empowered" to act based on what they learned in class. One student, Mary, recalls being "uncomfortable" when a 4th grader pointed to her and said "You look just like my family's maid" (84). Before the semester ended, Mary met with the faculty and administrators at the elementary school who acknowledged the need to incorporate more explicit diversity education in the classroom. Another student, Theresa, believes prior teachers incorrectly judged her based on "her accent, her race, and her ethnicity" (86). Davi states the student plans to confront these former teachers. This was the type of empowerment I envisioned when I created my own course.

Recursive Learners Tool Box

Within chapter three, I discussed how the genre set during the first few weeks of the semester prepared students to enter our community. I also discussed how a local pedagogy and texts by Kozol, Obama, and Deans helped students learn about critical theories and social justice

issues. Within this chapter, I will revisit some of those texts to demonstrate how I put activism at the forefront of the curriculum.

To measure student understanding of “social justice,” I have them define the term on a pre-course questionnaire taken the very first day of class.¹ Less than half of the students (15 of the 35 participating students) had some level of understanding of the concept similar to those reflected in the following two passages:

“Social justice is nonexistent. It should be social *injustice* because that's what happens in the U.S.” writes Saphire.

“My understanding of social justice is for the impossible to happen which is for everyone to have equal financial treatment and be able to be treated equally,” Jazlyn writes.

However, 57 percent of the students couldn't correctly identify the terms. Nine students did not provide an answer at all, which I took as an indication that they could not answer it; 12 others provided answers similar to the three below:

“Justice that people get within their society,” Mikhaela.

“Social justice is as it says social,” Izabella.

“I haven't heard too much, or researched much about social justice, so I'm not able to give a thorough answer,” Sabina

The excerpts I use above are all from African Americans aged 19-20 years old; three of whom graduated from the Detroit Public School system, the two others from alternative high schools. I highlight their passages because some have argued that marginalized students are aware of injustice after having lived through discriminatory practices their entire life; therefore, our courses should not focus on social critique. My research disagrees as 21 students had difficulty articulating social justice issues within the first day of class. Therefore, the concept was a significant focus through the early part of the semester – beginning on the first day.

Since I know there are many silent voices, especially when African Americans are asked to discuss difficult questions from a white authority figure (hooks), I incorporated a variety of measures for students to express their opinion. Sometimes we would have classroom discussions, other times they would journal and perhaps share with a classmate. However, many times the richest discussions were those held within our on-line forums. This strategy was incorporated very successfully from the first day of class. For homework, I asked them to use their resources to find a definition for “social justice” and describe how social justice, or social *injustice*, might affect education differently across racial or economic backgrounds. To foster a sense of community outside of the classroom, I asked them to post their answer within our online discussion forum, and to respond to two other classmates. Many discussed inequities within their high school or discussed how they moved their own children to a better district. For example, here’s a portion of the 2010 thread that was started by Judith; there were 26 replies within it:

Judith: Dictionary.com provides a simple definition of social justice. Social justice according to the website is about distribution between advantages and disadvantages among a society. How does that pertain to education? I think those differences are easy to see around us. Detroit for example is struggling with simple necessities like toilet paper and books where as a school district in a higher income area say Grosse Ile is not worried about toilet paper. All schools in the area are suffering cutbacks and loss in some way but it seems as though the poorer the area the harder hit the schools are. I know I personally have seen the differences in school according to location. My children attended Lincoln Park and I choose to move to Trenton to give them a better chance for success. Much of your child's education is based on a parents input however if a school has little to no resources it can become a losing battle. Simply moving 7 miles away my children have opportunities they did not have before. My children are in a district that favors college education and encourages achievement. It is unfortunate that not all schools can offer the same programs and/or classes.

Rachel’s response to Judith: I totally agree. It's a sad situation but it's very true. It amazes me that there are such noticeable differences in school districts. I am also a parent that had to move to a suburban area to give my child a chance at having a better education. On another note I found it hard to believe how Detroit closed all of their schools only to leave vacant

buildings. Meanwhile students are being crammed into one school, with no supplies might I add.

Judith's response to Rachel: What school district did you move your children from and to? What differences did you notice?

Rachel's response to Judith: I moved my son from a charter school in Detroit to the Berkley school district... They always had problems keeping staff. My son had 3 different teachers in one school year. They didn't have a lunchroom and the children had to eat in their classrooms. Over time they began to have a rat problem and I decided that I'd had enough. The biggest differences that I've noticed is the new school's ability to afford things that the old school didn't. Just the difference in the appearance of the schools is shocking. Students don't have to share computer time because there are enough computers. There are only 17 students to a class whereas it was 26 before. The school offers a variety of extra-curricular activities and after school programs. At the previous school there was only a choice between music and art. These are just some of the differences.

Pandora's response to Judith: Yes DPS has closed so many schools and plans to close more as next year. The schools are going to be so overcrowded now. My little sister attends DPS and she says that her school is over capacity.

Judith's response to Pandora: Very true about the Detroit schools. Where are the standards for class size, availability of supplies etc.? I have never understood why cities will close schools because of enrollment thus allowing class sizes to be as many as 40.

James's response to Judith: I went to DPS schools for a while, and I can say that what you said about the schools is completely true. I've witnessed it first hand for years. The books, the neighborhood, and everything else you mentioned are the perfect combo for a bad learning environment. These students, coming from schools like the ones in Detroit, barely have a chance in this world!

Corrine's response to Judith: I agree Judith, it is a shame how the school area determines what education children will receive. If the world could find a way for children to get a good education and not where the schools are located, every child would have an open opportunity for a better education.

Dorinda's response to Judith: You're right, I wish they would not have cut music, art, gymnastics etc., from Detroit Public Schools; those classes help kids to rest and unwind. No offense, but I think they are trying to keep blacks from learning again because they're only closing black schools.

While students had difficulty defining the concept when they entered the course, when asked to complete a similar assignment for homework, they are able discuss the concept and can connect it to economic disparities within the local education system. They easily describe the deteriorating school systems in metro-Detroit whether it's their school, a sibling's, or their child's; we also see several students discussing the important role that parents and schools have educating the children. Interestingly, while four of the students all discuss DPS, Dorinda is the solitary voice regretting that Detroit is losing students, and she is the only one who mentions race as an issue; she writes: "they" are holding back blacks from learning and succeeding.

To help the remaining students understand social justice across race and class boundaries, I introduced the topic during a classroom discussion week 2. I created a comparison chart with Detroit Public Schools on one side and our area's most affluent districts, Bloomfield Hills, on the other. I said: "Social justice means that everything is equal – that there's no difference between race or income level. We are all treated the same. Are they equal?" Students discussed how there are differences with technology, quality of lunch food, amount of money for afterschool clubs, etc. After 30 minutes or so, I mentioned that no one discussed how race can be a factor. I said that for homework they would be reading an article from Beverly Tatum that would help us become comfortable talking about race. Until then, I just asked them to get out their journals and write about one of the concepts we just talked about: How does social justice connect to schools? Is there a connection due to economics or race? I selected three journals to demonstrate the different level of awareness and/or willingness to engage in the topic.

Jacinda: When Professor Mooty brought up the fact that race plays a role in social justice, it triggered many possible answers or solutions to the problem that we still have today. Long ago laws separating between the races were demolished. As of today they seem as they have never been lifted. In some cases we got into today, there was discussion about education and how maybe income plays a role in how social justice comes into play.

I wonder if money is a reason for separating the races now-a-days. This is something I would have to think about more

Pandora: I think that when we discussed DPS schools and Bloomfield we missed out on a couple of differences. DPS is majority black and W. Bloomfield is majority white; that's the big difference why their schools have more. DPS is overcrowded and there are more closing next year. I am very comfortable discussing my race. The children in W. Bloomfield treat their schools better than a DPS student would. I attended DPS and out of county so I know.

Nicole: I love hearing and listening to other people's stories and experiences. It helps me understand people more and understand what other people go through in their lives.

African Americans Jacinda and Pandora discuss the impact of race and economics to their own education. For Jacinda, it also seems to be the first time in her young life that she is connecting social justice along race, class, education borders. Nicole, a white female, avoids the topic completely. To help students become more comfortable talking about any racial implications within these topics, the following week students read Beverly Tatum's "Racial Identity Development" and then Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" the following week. (I will discuss these readings and student responses more within chapter 5.) Our course text, *Writing and Community Action: A Service-learning Rhetoric with Readings* by Thomas Deans, provides the foundation for understanding the social impact of literacy as well as the ethical concerns when entering, serving, or writing about the community. Deans writes the readings "challenge some common conceptions about literacy and suggest ways to account for its variety and complexity" (68). We read Anne Lamott's "Shitty First Drafts," bell hooks's, "Writing Autobiography," Mike Rose's "I Wanna be Average," where each writer narrates a pivotal moment within his/her background and overcomes some obstacle prevent academic success. My students also wrote a literacy autobiographies to problematize their own educational background.

In addition to Deans's text, our second course text, Jonathon Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* helped students understand history of inequality within school systems. I mentioned in the prior chapter that students were able to connect Kozol's readings through field trips to one of the area's most affluent schools, Groves High School in Beverly Hills. Within this chapter, I want to show how students came to a greater understanding of the text when they created their group presentations. I randomly assigned groups of 3-4 students, and they were to create their own statistical comparison of two schools within the metropolitan Detroit area, and then connect the presentation to Kozol and a group definition of social justice. I selected to use this 2011 presentation to show readers the comparison of OAC to Groves's sister school Seaholm.

	Seaholm	SRAC
Amount per student	11,000-12,000	\$12,500
family income	\$111,500	66,000
# students	384	278
student/teacher ratio	10-1	18-1
# counselors	4.5	1.2
2009 9 th grade meap scores	96.80%	> 1%
Graduation rate	98-99	70%
% of students going to college	97%	50%
Parent involvement	80-85%	20-25
District standing (out of 583)	12 th	385

Table4: OAC VS Seaholm

Ronald began the presentation displaying photos he took of \$32 million in renovations at Seaholm; all the photos showed the beautiful amenities at one site: pool, auditorium, weight room, football field. He also discussed stopping in during a "machinist class." Ronald asked what they were doing; however, he said he didn't understand the student response. "It was like they were speaking a foreign language. They were learning things that would blow your mind." He also described a college prep program with "so many colleges I never heard of... it's limitless," and

student projects displayed on the walls so well constructed, they “look like college presentation.” Conversely, OAC photos showed a lack of facilities ranging from dark lighting, plain floor tiles, dingy up bathroom stalls, a sign that said “classro” instead of “classroom” Ronald concludes: “It’s the small things that make a big difference.”

Nigel took over the presentation to connect the images to readings within the text, and he said the garbage on the floor in the bathroom “is full of bacteria.” “Social injustice is within these lower-income schools...Mostly minorities receive less. Higher income, mostly white receive more.” He mentions a passage from Kozol about Gov Thompson “throwing money in a black hole” and then segued into his “testimony” to the class:

It’s a vicious circle. Goes back to slavery days. Always set to keep a minority down. Keep somebody down from trying to achieve more. Just think when a guy goes out; he’s trying to feed his family or he’s trying to buy his son some shoes or he’s trying to get himself some shoes. The things that he has to do to even get him some money to obtain the things that he needs. If he’s got a felony, he can’t get no job. I mean how many times can a guy walk around and wish and want and hope that he can get something. Sometimes a guy has got to do what a guy has got to do, and sometimes it ends up being illegal. It’s like a forced play – a revolving door with jail system. It’s kind of sad, but it’s true. I’m saying that, because I lived like that. I lived like that for 20 years. This is a testimony. For 20 years I was out there on the street. I wasn’t doing nothing bad; I wasn’t caught up in no drugs. Nothing that I couldn’t get back. I never took anything from anybody.

Just seeing what’s going on in other states was going on right here. It’s the same thing. It doesn’t seem like it’s getting any better. I guess I would like the black people or the minorities to understand that we got to stick together; we have to watch out for each other to achieve things that we want... I was kind of feeling strange doing social justice subjects continually in Prof. Mooty’s class, but it actually gave me an opportunity to understand the reality that we are living in today and to realize that the steps that I am taking even though they are a little slower, they’re going to be very beneficial in the future. I appreciate you guys listening to my testimony because that was from my heart.

I wanted to acknowledge the moment without interrupting their presentation, so I pounded my fist to my heart and then pointed to him. He thanked me later for the gesture. Since their

presentation neared the end of class time, there wasn't much discussion from classmates, so I would like to take readers to a discussion that occurred week 7 during the 2010 semester. Gary, a young man educated in Nigerian said:

What I am learning about education in the United States is shocking. Coming from Nigeria you hear America is an opportunity to have a life that anybody can be anybody. And you come out here and you see kids going through some of these situations.... People should be able to have an opportunity to be whoever they want to be... So why is it that America can't even take care of their own people? Why should people have to be going through this kind of conditions just to go to school?

Through connecting the reading to his own presentation, Gary is beginning to understand the differences within American schools. However, his awareness was even more significant the following week. Judith had just finished telling her classmates that she noticed differences Kozol discusses just by moving her family seven miles so her children could go to a better school district. Gary said: "I don't get it. I don't get what we're talking about. In Nigeria every school in the country learns the same thing. I don't understand how schools are doing things so different here." I educated Gary about the difference between national, state, and local curriculums; the baseline standards, but schools with more money and more advanced children might be teaching trigonometry while children in the same grade at a different school might be learning pre-algebra. It depends on where you live. He wondered why people didn't change school districts. A classmate said it wasn't so easy; she mentioned her grandparents paid \$5,000 for each of the grandchildren to go to Cass Tech. Anthony added not everyone has the money to get that type of education. Gary: "I'm shocked. How can it be different? Why should it be different? That's not fair! That makes sure they're making sure people never get caught up." There was a flurry of conversations that ended with Gary asking: "Why don't people complain? Why don't you move?" Judith said: "It's not that easy." For Gary he was coming to greater awareness through connecting the readings to our discussions about local education.

Tossing Our Pebbles

While the Kozol readings and presentations were instrumental in helping students see these same issues at work within our own community, our focus on activism, helped students articulate how they can envision making a difference. We used this portion from Alice Walker's, "Anything We Love Can be Saved" as a class motto:

It has become a common feeling, I believe, as we have watched our heroes falling over the years, that our own small stone of activism, which might not seem to measure up to the rugged boulders of heroism we have so admired, is a paltry offering toward the building of an edifice of hope. Many who believe this choose to withhold their offerings out of shame. This is the tragedy of the world. For we can do nothing substantial toward changing our course on the planet, a destructive one, without rousing ourselves, individual by individual, and bringing our small imperfect stones to the pile.

Students were asked throughout the semester how do they plan to "toss their pebble" to make a change for their community? I follow this up by asking students to research an activist committed to social justice/equality and bring in a biography of one they admire the most. We then discussed the different ways activism unfolds. These are small classroom activities leading up to the capstone project our Project for Change:

Project for a Critical Social Change: Become an activist! Find some way you can toss your own "small stone" to make the world better. The project must use writing to create social change, answering the question: What can I do to make the world a little better? You may continue with the research problem you wrote about for the first half of the semester or create a small group to determine a new social problem; however, the project must be related to OAC.

Many students worked as tutors or mentors at the site and came to a deeper understanding of social issues at the site. However, please allow me to present this discussion within the final section of this chapter. Now, that I have provided readers a rich description of my curriculum, I want to describe the multiple ways I assessed student acquisition of interpersonal change or social awareness.

Assessment 1: Survey analysis

One way I determined personal student growth was comparing identical pre- and post-course questionnaires. Forty-one students completed the pre-course surveys administered on the first day of class. Of these, 8 students dropped the course, and another two students finished the course but did not complete the post-course questionnaire. Therefore, pre-course questionnaires from these ten students were excluded from the analysis. This left 31 questionnaires (10 from 2010, 12 from 2011, and 8 from 2012). Those within the analysis include 20 females and 11 males; they ranged in age from 18-57 with the average age of 26.7.

As to ethnicity, there are 21 African Americans and 10 non-African Americans (5 Whites, two Chaldeans, one Philippino, one Latina, and one Nigerian). Having this two-to-one margin of African Americans to other races caused difficulty when trying to determine curriculum impact that I want to discuss before discussing the data. Since the Recursive Learners category is an

	African Americans			European Americans			Other		
	pre-course	post course	Change	pre-course	post course	Change	pre-course	post course	Change
I am concerned about local community issues	3.90	4.30	0.40	4.00	4.40	0.40	3.80	4.60	0.80

Table 5: Unfair Racial Comparison

artificially constructed category (and certainly subject to a variety of interpretations because these students represent a variety of ethnicities), I was thinking to provide my readers with a direct comparison of students based on race alone. However, the unequal numbers project an inaccurate picture of student growth. This is easily seen when discussing identical positive increases to the first survey question (Table 5). African American and White students both had positive increases of .40, and students from Other races had a .80 positive increase. Since there are only five students within each of the non-African American categories, if one student had a positive increase, it

resulted in a .20 change for the entire category. Therefore, the .40 change for Whites represents change for two students, and the .80 change for Other is four students. Conversely, the .40 increase for African Americans represents nine students who rate this category more positive on exit than entrance. I was concerned that future readers would extrapolate the data without understanding close attention to unequal numbers; therefore decided not to sort based on these low numbers.

However, since research is missing regarding students of color, and my Recursive Learners / Outsiders comprise students of all ethnicities, I will also provide readers with data from the 26 students of color (deleting the five white students). However, since my goal is to discuss how one writes about their own community, I will not discuss. If readers are interested, you can view the data within Appendix B.

Both the pre- and post-course surveys included twelve identical 5-point, Likert-scaled questions about personal social values, civic attitudes, and efficacy toward community service. Items marked “strongly agree” were coded as 5, “agree” as 4, “neutral” as 3, “disagree” as 2, and “strongly disagree” as 1. I entered each student score into a spread sheet and then determined average scores for each question. Table 1 represents the same data two different ways. The first column presents data for all 31 students; the second and third columns compare findings between the 22 Recursive Learners and 9 Outsiders.

Based on survey results, the curriculum had a positive impact on these student outcomes. In looking at All Students column, students entered the course with an average score of 3.97 (just below the 4.0 “agree” level) and exited with an average score of 4.22; a positive growth of .25. Specifically, there were positive ratings within each category (.22 for social values, .44 for efficacy, and .12 for civic attitudes). In looking at the responses to individual questions, as a class, there was positive student growth within 11 of the 12 survey questions; the only decrease was the

question, “I feel that social problems directly affect the quality of life in my own community,” which I will elaborate on within the next section. When comparing Recursive Learners to Outsiders, Recursive Learners had slightly more positive gains (.32) to (.13); they also had higher exit scores within 11 of the 12 categories. The only category where Outsiders rated their ability higher at exit than the Recursive Learners was a question within the Social Values section: “It is important to promote racial understanding.” Recursive Learners left the course at 4.55, while Outsiders were at 4.63; (4.0 is agree; 5.0 is strongly agree, so these scores are comparatively equal).

Social Values: Students have increased social responsibility

As to the five questions about one’s Social Values, there was a positive gain of .22 for the whole class with Recursive Learners ending the semester with triple the growth compared to Outsiders (.31 to -.01). All students noted increased concern when asked about the rights and welfare of others, the importance of working with people from other cultures, and the promotion of racial understanding; the most significant increase for the entire class was a 45-point jump in response to the question: “I am concerned about local community issues” (3.90 to 4.35).

As I mentioned, the only question that demonstrates a decreased value was the class average of -.12 to the question: “I feel that social problems directly affect the quality of life in my own community.” In looking across the row, one can easily see that the decrease is due to the -.83 change by the Outsiders. But that’s an unfair picture, because 61 percent of the students (19 of the 31 students) changed their answer from the beginning of the semester: seven students have a greater sense that social problems affect their community (6 Recursive Learners), while 12 students have decreased perception or wouldn’t answer the question (evenly split between Recursive Learners and Outsiders). That being said, I’m not really sure what the results mean. Why do 12 students believe social problems have less effect on their community at the end of the

semester? Did they believe social problems only at schools or communities like OAC, and perhaps believe that their school / community is better; therefore, they do not have social problems at their school? I can see that this might be the case from those who attended affluent schools (Anderson and Nicole); however, most of the other eight students attended DPS which is remarkably similar to OAC. As to the seven students who have a greater sense that social problems affect their community, all are students of color living in Southfield or Detroit. Again, I'm confused by the results from this question.

Increased efficacy

As to the two questions regarding their ability to affect change, there was a .44 gain represented within increased ability to “make a difference in my local community” and that they can have a “positive impact on local social problems.” This is important because if students have increased social responsibility and activist intentions, they need to believe they have the ability to effect such change. Interestingly, both sets of students have identical positive gains (.44); however, Recursive Learners rate their ability .65 higher entrance at exit (4.38 to 3.73).

Civic attitudes

As to the five questions about one's civic attitudes, there was a positive gain of .12 for the whole class with Recursive Learners ending the semester with almost double growth compared to Outsiders; Recursive Learners had positive gains of .18 and ended the semester at 4.28; Outsiders went down -.04 and finished with a final rating of 3.78. Both sets of students note positive gains when answering abstract questions about the importance of working toward “equal opportunity” for all people or “changing social systems.” Recursive Learners (.23 + .15 = .38) Outsiders (.11 + .0 = .11). However, when asked about more personal involvement, results were not all positive. At the conclusion of the semester, students were not much more inclined to give their “income” to

those in need; both started and ended the course within “neutral” category. Recursive Learners ended at 3.71 and Outsiders just a few tenths below at 3.56. And when asked specifically about their personal involvement within the community, they went in opposite directions. When asked about volunteering their “time” to help those in need or the importance of being involved in a “program to improve my community,” Recursive Learners gained .47; Outsiders lost -.30.

Instead of just theorizing why students changed answers from the beginning of the semester to the end, I finally asked them during the 2012 semester. After they filled out their post-course questionnaires, I handed them back their pre-course questionnaire and asked them to reflect about any differences they note. Alicia, Sapphire, and Sebastianne all discussed how they became more empowered through the semester. Ali said, “Community service taught me how I can make a huge difference for others even though I feel inadequate to do so.” Sapphire said, “I have become more aware of my ability to help society.” Sebastianne writes: “And because of this I am going to be more active, not only in my kids’ school, but my community in general.” However, when Jacqueline reflected on her decrease of -.67 from beginning to end, she writes: “I honestly don’t know.”

Measuring Individual Change

Now that I’ve discussed the entire genre set and variety of ways I analyzed student texts, I’d like to officially discuss student outcomes in terms of change, social awareness, or activist tendencies. While I can demonstrate some type of personal growth within the majority of my students ranging from increased awareness of social justice issues to a greater ability to understand individual role of social activism; sadly, five students left the semester without a similar development. Similarly, ten students reached a level of personal change; unfortunately, however,

they cannot envision self within the solution of social responsibility. The remaining 17 students, or 53 percent of the class, did articulate some level of change by the end of the semester.

Before I discuss these students, I want to discuss how I created the data set. If we return to all 41 students within the study as mentioned within Chapter 2 table, I eliminated nine students who did not complete course requirements (dropped the course, or didn't write a research paper or final reflection). While some of these students like Ayaan, Esme, and Izabella articulated comments that led me to believe they were activists in the making, I could not determine if the curriculum had an impact to their social awareness. Ayaan and Esme dropped the course immediate after participating in their group presentation (like half a dozen other students throughout the three semesters); Izabella stayed until week 13 or so but was unable to write a research paper – even though I met with her for over an hour to help her get started on the paper. This left 32 students to analyze for based on degree of curriculum impact.

While examining for student development, I came across a taxonomy that Kristie Fleckenstein used within her award-winning book *Vision, Rhetoric and Social Action in the Composition Classroom*. In discussing how students become social change agents, she divides them into three categories: “proactive,” “reactive,” or “inactive.” She then theorizes characteristic descriptions for each category. I will be using similar terms to think through student development.

Inactive. This is the lowest level of student personal development. I do note the students had some type of increased awareness about social justice issues or social responsibility; however, they cannot envision themselves as a solution to social problems.

Preactive. These students now have an increased understanding of social responsibility: understanding that we all need to work to make the world a little better place. Some of these students entered the course with some awareness of this concept but still articulated a stronger

sense of desire to improve their role within the community (like Alicia, Sebastianne, and Sapphire mentioned above); others made the connection for the first time. Regardless of how they entered the course, all had some type of intrinsic shift due to our curriculum this semester.

Proactive. These students made a change this semester as a result of our curriculum, or they made a difference within the life of one of our high school students (as documented by the high school staff).

Before I discuss the students who had some change during the semester, I want to begin with those who had no change.

No change

As instructors, we always hope students exit our course achieving the outcome we desire; however, we know this doesn't always happen. Such was the case for five of my students. After scouring the entire semester's worth of material, I cannot locate any evidence to demonstrate the curriculum prompted any inter-personal changes. Three of these students are non-traditional aged African American parents who entered the course with a strong awareness of social justice issues and are pursuing a second career within education or nursing fields. Matthew and Kiara want to become teachers, Demetria an LPN; all grad from DPS a while ago. The other two students without noticeable change are young, single African American women only a year or two removed from their Detroit Public School education. Jazlyn and Jadyne were both disengaged within the classroom and failed to complete course requirements. I'd like to present these students through story of these opposites: Matthew and Jadyne, both of whom were in my 2012 semester and each self-selected to serve within their own community.

Before Matthew walked through my doors, this 50-year-old African American man was already an activist for his community. He is a steward at his church working within the homeless

outreach mission. Twice a month these men drive around looking for homeless citizens to assist; they then transport the citizens to the church for a meal, shower, rest, and prayer. Within his entrance and exit surveys, Matthew marked 5s for each of the categories; he entered the course articulating an understanding of social justice that very few achieved by the end of the semester. As a displaced Fortune 500 employee, Matthew is now embarking on a new career as a teacher. He is currently working as a substitute teacher at a charter school where he heard about service-learning courses; he enrolled in my course to learn more about the initiative as a possible future pedagogy. However, Matthew did not want to volunteer at OAC. His son attended the school a few years before because he had been low on credits. He viewed the students as “incorrigible” and said his son was not prepared for college. Fortunately for Matthew, I had revised my syllabus this semester to allow students to serve at a site of their choosing. Unfortunately, by continuing his service with the homeless mission at his church and writing a research paper exploring the plight of the homeless, Matthew does not articulate any new knowledge. He is clearly an activist for social change, and, as such, it’s not surprising that the curriculum did not have a transformative impact. He represents the type of person I hope my students will become; however, my curriculum was not responsible.

On the other hand, 19-year-old Jadyne does not demonstrate any increased understanding of social responsibility. For example during the fourth week of the class, we read the Robert Coles essay about service learning and then applied Keith Morton’s definitions of project, change, and charity to our roles at OAC. I had students work within groups if they liked and could look up any definitions. Jadyne’s answered:

The definition I found for reciprocity is mutual exchange; state or relation. This relates to my service experience because I get a chance to exchange my time with the children who need it for the satisfaction of knowing that I helped someone.

The definition I found for nobless oblige was to show acts of kindness. This relates to my experience because I am being kind to all of the students that I help.

My definition of charity is basically giving to those in need. Participating in this service-learning that is exactly what I am doing.

My definition of a project is basically another word for experiment. An experiment to see how much of an effect I can have on another person.

My definition of social change is to make changes socially. I am making a change in the students that I help.

Oh my! Jadyn did not offer these responses during our discussion, and when I collected her journal the following week, I wrote a detailed response back trying to correct her misassumptions about what we are doing and the role we should adopt at the site. I couldn't get through to her. I'm thinking much of the reason why I could not connect to her or help her understand changed value is she returned to her former high school with this view of self and site. She writes that she wanted to return to former teacher's classroom at Henry Ford High School, because she "wanted to give back" to her community. She also writes that she is looking forward to returning because she believes the students, "the wild children" need her. However, I overheard Jadyn admitting to a classmate that she wants her teachers to see how successful she's become because she "used to sleep in his class." Within my course, the pattern continued: I noticed her sleeping on two different occasions, and she didn't complete many assignments. (Her research paper was still in a draft stage as a personal narrative of her educational journey instead of a research paper on social issues at the site; she also did not write a final reflection essay or complete post-course questionnaire). Unfortunately, in chatting with her teacher at the end of the semester, he didn't see any improvement from the prior year. He saw her behavior "about the same as when she was a student." Since she hasn't really changed behavior since she left school, I don't believe her teacher would view her as a success; I also do not see any increased social responsibility. She'd

fall under Herzberg's category of students thinking social justice is just a "personal acts of charity" (317).

Inactive: Change within self

I spent a great deal of time and review of course documents to prove that I didn't lightly make judgements regarding acquisition of student outcomes. Within the remaining categories, I will not go into as much detail. In reviewing the entire semester of documents, I believe the curriculum sparked a change within 10 students. These changes go beyond simple statements of learning like when Jazlyn reflects at the end of the semester: "I learned not all white people are racists." They needed to have a greater understanding of social justice issues or I envision them to changing something within self.

Demonstrating student learning within this category is probably best viewed through Judith. Readers should remember her from prior chapters. At the beginning of the course, she didn't have anything nice to say about the local students: she described student behavior as "horrible" and "shameful" and avoided the site until week 14 when she asked the students to make Christmas cards for the seniors where she works. When reflecting on that visit, she discusses how positive and thankful the students were and wished she did something nicer for them (described within the opening vignette in this chapter). By the end of the semester, she also had positive gains within six survey questions representing a .33 increase (ending the semester at 4.25).

Five others also had this internal change sparked within, but since they were positive throughout the semester, it was not as visible as Judith's development (Anjali, Jacqueline, Kasey, Marquis, and Porsche). I will just use Porsche to represent those in this category. She entered the course with a strong background of service within her community volunteering in her church and a local nursing home for 15 years and wants to be a teacher for at-risk kids. The curriculum helped

her define the issues. She went from defining social problems at the beginning of the semester as: “Confusion in the community between peers” to knowing “we all need to work to change the world” at the end; she also had positive gains in nine survey categories (+.67).

There are four additional students who have greater understanding of social responsibility; however, they cannot envision themselves as part of solution. Instead, Ciara, Karissa, Mikhaela, and Mackenzie will now be more involved with making sure their family members receive a beneficial education.

Pre-active: Social Responsibility

The remaining 17 students can envision self as part of the solution. Within this category, nine students had some type of “shift” during the semester and now can envision themselves as part of the solution. Some of these students entered the course with some awareness of social justice and then articulated a need to change; others made the connection for the first time,

Three of these students showed signs of activism within their initial OAC visits, and by the end of the semester the intent was even stronger. James was the first student to enter the site and articulate a plan. He initially wanted to implement a pyramid plan and help the student create their own network of support; however, when that plan didn’t work out, he assumed a leadership position within the newspaper we created. He also volunteered to return to my class in 2011 to discuss the program with the new group of students. Gary and Nigel both articulate making a difference via future action. Earlier in the chapter I mentioned how both of them came to a deeper understand of social justice issues. During exit conferences, both articulated a future role of activism. Nigel stated: “I’m going to be a lawyer and will work to end this injustice!” His final paper was titled “an awakening from an unlikely source” where he discusses the need to end our segregated society. Similarly, Gary said: “This is something I can write and let people know what

is going on. With what I know now [volunteering] will be different. You look at things in a different way; not just going in to help. Need to effect change.... I know I don't have time to volunteer, but I can write about it and let people know what is going on.”

There were also four students who articulate greater understanding of their roles to help others. Three of these women I mentioned above within the survey discussion area. Sapphire, Alicia, and Sebastianne all reflected about their increased awareness of social responsibility and activism. As to specific survey increase, Sapphire had the highest point increase; she went up in six categories for a 1.25 increase. Sebastianne increased in the most categories; she went up in all 12 categories, for the second highest increase 1.0. Alicia, like Matthew, entered and exited the course scoring all 5s. The other student is Roger; who received an affluent education via tutors and private schools as the mayor's son in his native Philippines. Throughout the course he came to a greater understanding of social awareness and activism: “I learned I was part of the problem; activism no matter how small can make a difference.”

Proactive: They Made a Difference!

Finally, I would like to discuss ten students who I consider Proactive. These are students who engaged in some type of activity that made a difference. This difference could be for the students at the site, or it could be something they did as a result of what they learned this semester. For example, six students were singled out by OAC teachers for having a positive impact on the high school students. Anderson, Axel, Corrine, and Jacinda all tutored within classrooms and entered and exited with positive goals to forge connections with the local students. I have mentioned their growth throughout the entire dissertation, so I do not see the need to mention them here. Two other students, Salvadore and Pamela, made projects that benefitted the high school students or staff. Pamela created vision boards to help the students think of future careers, and

because of her project, an OAC teacher said a student now wants to become a nurse. She also had positive gains within 9 survey categories for a 1.0 increase going from 3.92 to 4.93. Salvadore created a graduation video that was displayed at senior lunch and then the template and photos reused the following year; he also had positive gains within six categories reflecting a .67 increase to end at 4.33.

The other four students include two students who are involved within their own communities and two others who switched majors this semester and now want to be teachers.

Sabina entered the course with a strong background of service within their church, and initiated a new volunteer service with a family through her church where a family member is caring for a grandfather. Sabina mentions she is going to continue volunteering with the family so that the granddaughter will be able to go to school. Samuel, a local real estate agent mentions he is now having conversations with clients and even total strangers about social justice issues. He entered and exited the course citing all 5s on his survey. As to his role at the site, Samuel never found a comfortable niche. He tried to work with the community garden and the newspaper but never officially completed his hours. Two other students are on their way to becoming activists because they changed career paths mid-semester and decided to become teachers, Anthony and Nicole, both of whom I featured within chapter 3 as expressing activist tendencies. Anthony's survey results are a bit inconclusive because he had positive gains in three categories and loss in four others for ended the semester at 4.08 (a minor change of -.08). He was also involved at the site through a different type of program. He brought in two of his friends that he calls brothers, and they worked to forge connections with the students. He said, "If there was someone there when I was in high school, it would have been a whole lot better." As to Nicole, she had a positive gains within three of the Social Values categories raising her exit score to 4.33. When chatting with her

at the end of the 2010 semester, she mentioned she had been thinking about being a teacher for “a while” but that “reading Kozol’s book, I thought I should really be a teacher and go and change all this.” I hope they are all successful!

Concluding thoughts

One of the goals for this chapter was to further explain the characteristics of a Recursive Critical Service Learning Composition course by describing how students responded to theoretical frames, assignments, or discussion topics relating to critical theory and activist pedagogies. To that end, I was able to show how students made strong connections to the readings regarding critical theories, especially Kozol’s *Savage Inequalities*, and have a greater awareness of social justice issues.

In answering the second question, I believe all of us teaching a social justice curriculum will have success in helping students achieve a renewed sense of social responsibility; however, students within my paradigm became more socially conscious without crossing into the prerequisite community of difference the scholarship insists we need. Based on the qualitative assessments I employed within this chapter, 17 students learned something new about themselves and or their community responsibilities, and, of these, 14 students are Recursive Learners. There’s still much more work to be done. Within the next chapter, I will explore several ideas for improving the program for those interested in creating their own program.

Chapter 4 Notes:

¹The 30 surveys represent participating students who filled out both entrance and exit surveys throughout all three semesters. Within the 2010 semester, I asked students to define “social problems.” In the following semesters, I asked them to define “social justice.”

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS OF CRITICAL SERVICE LEARNING CLASSROOM

The purpose of this dissertation has been to examine the possibilities of a service-learning composition course where students travel recursively through their own community borders instead of across borders of racial difference in order to move towards critical consciousness. Specifically, I examined how this paradigm works with students of color serving within their own community of color. Within this chapter, I will discuss several issues related to the curriculum including problematic identification procedures and program modifications. I also make several recommendations for future courses.

I want to begin this section by discussing a story of my own border crossing. When I started a family, I began a new career working part time in the Public Relations department at a Detroit hospital. Immediately, I bonded with Jackie, a colleague working a few offices over in the Human Resources department. Throughout the next ten years, our friendship flourished through shared lunches, after-hours social events; she even hosted a baby shower for me, and I for her. A highlight of our friendship was a trip we took to Las Vegas. When I left the hospital in 2003 to begin a new teaching career, we promised to stay in touch. However, even though our homes are only a mile apart, our monthly luncheons became quarterly, then yearly, then stopped altogether.

Last fall we reconnected, and our friendship picked up right where we left off: luncheons filled with chatting about our children's events, family vacations, and our new careers. During this time, Jackie repeatedly invited me to a "Ladies Club" she created: a monthly gathering of female friends at her home: various soccer moms, neighbors, and a few former co-workers like myself sharing coffee and conversation. I finally took her up on that invitation last December and attended her "Ugly Sweater Party." I spent a few wonderful hours chatting with her friends over mimosas and French Toast Casserole. These ladies, all strangers to me, would stop their shared

conversations and include me in a mutual topic: How do I know Jackie? Do I work? Have kids? We then chatted about our friendship with Jackie, politics at the high school sports teams, vacation schedules, and graduation parties.

The following month, the Ladies Club began rotating among the existing members. While I was invited, I didn't attend another meeting, and I know why: I was not comfortable going to a stranger's home without knowing the hostess. To return to my dissertation, one could say the Ladies Club represents a local community, and as such, it represents a symbolic border crossing. Interestingly, even though the ladies and I share many demographic characteristics that usually determines affinity to a community site (geography, race, age, social economic status); I could not bring myself to see their Ladies Club as my own community, and, therefore, was unwilling to attend the later events.

If I had attended the Ladies Club in January and wrote a description/narration piece about entering this community like I asked my students to write, most likely I would begin with trepidation, anxiously describing my feelings entering this unfamiliar home. I could see myself worrying about: "Did I bring the right dish to share?" "Did I dress appropriately for the monthly theme event?" My narrative would probably segue into entering the home and describing events within the home: the decor, food, people, and my conversations with the ladies. Within one group, I might discuss the weather: "Yes, Michigan winters are brutal; I can't wait until our February break. Do you have plans for Spring Break?" I would politely listen for the Ladies to answer, as convention dictates and perhaps share my own vacation plans as well. I would then move on to another group and host similar conversations. Somewhere within the narrative, I would say I was "comfortable at the site," because I know the ladies would welcome me into this home as they did within Jackie's in December. I created this scenario because it brings to light a variety of issues

that I will discuss in this chapter. One issue is how to effectively discuss who belongs to this community.

Problematic Determinations

Since the goal of my dissertation was to examine if the curriculum could prompt student outcome of critical consciousness by having students travel recursively through their own community, one of the first steps had to be determining who belongs within this community. Within Chapter 2, I described how I forged a partnership between my minority, majority community college classroom and a local alternative high school just a few miles down the road. I also described several overlapping demographic characteristics between the students in my classroom and the students within our community site. Both are primarily young African Americans who live in the Southfield area and received a marginalized education. I presumed Recursive Learners would have similar characteristics (age, race, proximity, and education). However, I discovered none of these characteristics defined the Recursive Learners; although, having an affluent education was the only overlapping indication of one being an Outsider.

Since I did not ask students if this was their community, I relied on other methods to determine the 28 students who belong to this community. Within Chapter 2 I described the qualitative analysis I used to analyze student texts, conversations, and their involvement at the site. As a result, I determined characteristics of Recursive Learners involved three main characteristics. They tended to:

- 1) Describe the site as familiar or comfortable
- 2) Write positive descriptions
- 3) Interact or empathize with local community members

Outsiders had the opposite characteristics. They tended to:

- 1) Describe the site as different than their own, uncomfortable
- 2) Write negative descriptions
- 3) Observe instead of interact

Students very rarely met all three criteria points, and several even had characteristics of both Recursive Learners and Outsiders. For example, readers might recall Sapphire, the 19-year-old African American, who enjoyed being in Mr. Roberts's room. She initially described the site as somewhat similar to her own school, but then immediately qualified the statement and said the Alternative School within her Taylor district was much worse than OAC. Second, while her reflection discussed many negative characteristics of student behavior, she also wrote many positive passages about Mr. Roberts. Third, she interacted with the students by helping them with their writing assignments, and she even empathized with them about their future.

Instead of revisiting any other students whom I described in Chapter 2, I want to return to the Ladies Club scenario. Based on the three criteria points, it would be hard to classify me. While I describe myself as comfortable, I enter the site with anxiety. I also write a neutral description and mostly observe the ladies involved within their own conversations; more specifically, while I do converse with the ladies, I move from one group to another without extending beyond surface conversations. I liken my interaction to how Marcus was roaming the halls looking for a place to volunteer. Not entering the classrooms, but he remains at the doorway not willing to enter. Based on demographics, though, (that would have been provided within my entrance survey), most likely I would have labeled myself as a member of this community.

I write about these difficulties and limitations because it was one of the more challenging questions I examined within the dissertation. I even reassessed many students between the initial

draft sent to committee members in February and this one in September. I also revised many passages to more effectively discuss my assessments methods. That being said, I have a fairly good idea that my assessment measures were able to separate the 28 students who seem to belong to this community – the Recursive Learner — and 13 students who do not.

The Curriculum Works

Regardless of whether I identified a student as a Recursive Learner or an Outsider, the curriculum works; students became more socially responsible without crossing into the prerequisite community of racial difference many argue is needed. Within Chapters 3 and 4, I described the pedagogy I implemented and how I measured student outcomes through analysis of student writing and data from questionnaires. Within this section, allow me to present a brief recap of those sections.

As to successful pedagogical strategies, I agree with Angelique Davi that one of the most beneficial methods was the incorporation of a local pedagogy – having students bring their own stories into classroom discussion in order to better facilitate their understanding of difficult topics. By examining their prior education, many students were able to make connections to educational issues like tracking, the achievement gaps, and the “banking method of teaching” presented within course readings by Jonathon Kozol, Bruce Herzberg, Paolo Freire, and even President Obama. The connection was especially poignant after we visited one of the area’s most affluent high schools, Groves. Allow me to present texts from two very different students: Gary, the Nigerian immigrant who became aware of America’s unequal education for the first time, and Porsche, a long-time DPS student who made the connection to her own education.

Gary writes: Anyone that reads though [Kozol’s] chapter and does not feel sad about the way minorities and people of a poor background are being under-funded by the government and board members of education – the lack of basic materials needed for the young children to do well in school and

lack of good school environment with well-equipped facilities – does not have a heart....Another incident that really gets to me is kids of most black-populated school are been taught basic business math and other subjects because society does not expect them to go to college. By doing so prepares them to work as clerk and regular low-level workers in their businesses and industries. ... They say USA is the country where anyone can reach for the skies and become whomever or whatever they want to be. I think that was only meant for people of the rich and white race because the schools in the rural areas/black populated areas are not given the same opportunity as the kids of the suburbs; the majority of them will never be as successful as suburb kids.

Porsche wrote: While reading this chapter in Kozol, I was reminded of the schools that I attended when I grew up in Detroit. The lack of resources, caring, and staff, ALL lead to a lack of education. I can vividly remember many of the teachers at my high school having the same attitude as the staff from Chicago's Calmut High School. The sad thing is that I was so accustomed to the negativity that it just became a part of school. There were teachers that cared and some that were there to pick up their paycheck. The high drop-out rates, low reading and math levels are just a norm for the environment where I grew up. It seems like many had lost hope. It's sad because the businessman that stated, "No one expects these ghetto kids to go to college. Most of them are lucky if they're even literate. If we can teach them some useful skills, get them to stay in school and graduate, and maybe into jobs, we're giving them the most they can hope for" (Kozol,76), is how many people feel and in some sense has truth to it. I hope that my time at OAC may end up meaning something to at least one of those kids because at one time in my life that was me.

Both students can easily see connections to Kozol's two-tiered education system. Gary kept his post related to Kozol and what he has learned from his classmates about education differences between inner city Detroit and the surrounding suburbs; Porsche easily sees the comparison to her own education.

While the student texts illuminate how the combination of local pedagogy and critical theories were instrumental in helping students like Gary and Porsche become more aware of social issues connected to school, data comparing student entrance and exit questionnaires quantified the development even further. I mentioned that collectively, the 31 participating students made modest

positive gains by the end of the semester. Students entered the course with an average score of 3.97 and exited with an average score of 4.22; a positive growth of .25. For readers who need a reminder about these numbers, a 3.0 score meant “neutral,” 4.0 meant “agree,” and 5.0 meant “strongly agree.” In comparing entrance to exit course questionnaires students filled out, there were positive gains within each category analyzed (.22 for social values, .44 for efficacy, and .12 for civic attitudes). To return to Gary and Porsche, both experienced significant positive gains; Gary’s exit score was .61 higher than his entrance, and Porsche’s increased .67. I feel comfortable saying that the increased awareness noted by these two students and their other classmates, prove that student learning can be prompted through a recursive program and therefore does not need to occur through a community of difference (Bickford and Reynolds), a moment of discomfort (Jay), or a “ruptura,” (Carrick, Hamler, and Himley), that many say is needed.

The Curriculum Could be Better

While I mentioned the curriculum successfully enabled many students to become more aware of civic responsibilities and even express activist tendencies, there were two problematic areas of the curriculum that I want to discuss: readings on critical race theories and limiting students to the OAC site; both of these issues were corrected by the third semester.

When I taught the course during the first semester, I valued the scholarship from those who taught the course before. Therefore, I began the semester with units on understanding social justice and social construction of cultural identity. Based on Monberg, Davi, Dunlap, and Green, my students read articles from Beverly Tatum’s “Racial Identity Development,” and Peggy McIntosh’s “White privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” For each reading, I asked students to provide their initial reactions to the article and then respond to prompts like these:

- Which stage of Tatum’s Racial Identity do you believe best represents you today? What evidence leads you to decide your placement? What is your first race-related memory? What were the feelings resulting from that memory?
- Do you agree or disagree with McIntosh’s theories of white privilege? Think of some everyday situations where you are advantaged/disadvantaged by race or class. Then compare your list with McIntosh's. What were the highlights of this comparison?

When reading student responses to the Tatum article, every minority student revealed negative race-related memories. African Americans described being discriminated against by store clerks, police officers, teachers, and strangers; Samuel, a Chaldean, shared how he was expelled from high school at age 15 for fighting after defending himself from being called “very nasty racial slurs.” However, the most poignant response was probably from Judith; she writes how Latinas faced discrimination living in Texas complete with separate soccer fields for white children and another one for the “Dirty Mexican Beaners.’ Just writing this paper has proved difficult because it forced me to bring up feelings and childhood memories that I would like to never again visit.” For those willing to share, we brought up some of these issues in classroom discussion. However, since the majority of the students in the class were minorities who understand racism as systemic and we were not crossing racial borders, I did not feel this assignment needed to be in the curriculum.

The McIntosh article, however, needs to be in someone’s curriculum; just not mine. I had students write about this issue all three semesters, and I believe I failed all three times. Each time the article was illuminating to the white students but disheartening to the minorities. I do want to share a few of these passages.

Nicole, a white female, writes: Peggy McIntosh's argument on White privilege helped me see traits within myself that I have never noticed before. Although I never thought that the term "ignorant" and my name would ever be brought up in the same sentence, I feel ashamed to have come to the realization and to admit that I have had certain privileges along the years, which have come along simply because of being born a White female. I am conscious that other people in my race group may feel the same way, but it does not in any way diminish my guilt knowing I am not the only one at fault. We go on with our everyday lives, thinking of our lives as "normal," and that just because we don't hurt others of a different race or class intentionally, everything is fine; we are oblivious to how many daily situations we have come across where we are in an advantageous position because of our race

Tyson, a white male, writes: I have an advantage as being a white person, which I do not really particularly like or dislike. I would like to say that I am upset that I have it easier as a white person, but it's hard to fight. It's almost like giving a present back to your mom or dad on Christmas; it's a nice gesture to say that you do not want anything to be given to you, but at the same time it's hard to be that modest when it's tradition. Whether that makes me a bad person in admitting that, I do not know. I feel as though it should, but it's something that I cannot escape.... Ultimately, that is what it comes down to, the white privilege is something that realistically cannot be changed, it just is whether or not we will use this privilege to make things for people of other race have as good of a life, and as many privileges as we do as whites.

While it's not clear if Tyson had been aware of white privilege before reading the article, Nicole clearly learns of the issue in class. However, neither seems to want to work to end privileges they receive because of their race. The minority students, however, were all aware of differences allotted to the white race, and many believe the "white people" have a responsibility to do something to change it:

James, a bi-racial male, writes: I not too surprised to read Peggy's list and see the unfair differences between races in the everyday occurrences that make up life. I have long been aware of most of these inequalities. ... For example when McIntosh pointed out that when a minority does something viewed as negative or impolite, such as talk with food in their mouth, or show up to a meeting late, it is usually put down on their race. If a white person, on the other hand, does something like this, the blame is placed on their personal character. Reading this upset me because I realized that when I see a blacks being loud, or hear them curse, somewhere deep in me I do credit their behavior to them being black, not just to that guy being a jerk,

for example. This proves to me that these ways of thinking can be put into our subconscious mind, without us realizing it, because I do not, or at least I thought I did not, except this unfair tool of racism. An individual's behavior should not be attributed to his race or color, and us accepting this prejudice and unequal way of thinking contradicts the concept of meritocracy, which many Americans believe they are living in today. ... However, I must shamefully admit that even though I fall on the side of the disadvantaged people, just like Peggy, I have seemed to let these differences slip completely out of my mind. I tend to forget about them until I feel some of the real effects of being disadvantaged. Thankfully, after being subjected to this material on the regular basis, due to my English 1520 class, I truly believe I will never again fall back into that naive way of thinking that many live their entire lives with.

Other students were angered like Samuel, the Chaldean expelled for fighting after being called racist names in high school. He writes the article is "ridiculous" and took offense at the way I worded the prompt, when I asked students to "discuss highlights of this comparison." He writes:

While reading Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" article, I was surprised at the privileges that white people think they carry unknowingly. I think the list in Peggy McIntosh's article (2-5) is ridiculous... I did not see any highlights in my comparison with Peggy McIntosh's article. I don't know how someone with my views can have any highlights to compare with the article. I'm scared to have kids because of this issue, I'm Chaldean myself, and with the war in Iraq my kids might be a victim to racism. We shouldn't have to live this way. This issue should be more in the public eye.

Still others were like Pamela who said the article "makes her mad" because white people "think like that." I tried to speak for the white race and discuss the purpose of the article is not to announce the privileges, but that McIntosh had just come to the realization of those privileges, so it's my role to help others understand they might not understand impact of their own race. I even related Nicole's realization in calling herself "stupid." Pamela, a 56-year-old African American woman, asks: "How could they not be aware?" I didn't have an answer beyond she was learning for the first time, so it's an important lesson she might need while at OAC. I never did get through

to Pamela because in her final reflection, she mentioned the McIntosh article “was profound. (I REALLY WANT TO SAY A CUSS WORD).” Many other students probably felt similarly, but didn’t want to discuss the issue with a white female instructor. Just by these brief passages, readers can see the need to more fully help students understand these issues and embark on a healing process; however, with a course that just meets once a week, a curriculum already packed with service-learning and critical theory concepts, and students who work, have families, and now are asked to volunteer within their community, there is not enough time to fully explore racism too. I had to let it go.

Another change I made involved letting students select their own community site. Before I discuss this change, I want to take readers back to Judith. In prior chapters I repeated her description of local student behavior as “not normal” and also the anger she brought into the classroom. What I didn’t mention is this journal written at the mid-terms. During week 8, we were discussing *Savage Inequalities* where Kozol was discussing Camden, New Jersey Principal Joe Clark who believed in kicking out failing students: if they didn’t want to learn, they wouldn’t be welcome in his school. As a result, the school had less discipline issues and higher test scores; however, many of the expelled students ended up in jail. To enhance the discussion, we watched a portion of the movie *Lean on me* with Morgan Freeman in Clark’s role. I then asked students to compare philosophies between Joe Clark and Marcus Booker; which do they think is more effective? The answers were split. Some believed Booker had the best plan because they are tired of hearing about African Americans being incarcerated; others think Booker needs to discipline more, but not to the extent of kicking “bad kids” out of the school like Clark. However, Judith’s response has still resonated with me five years later. She wrote:

You will never change my opinion about OAC. I saw a classroom that ran the classroom the teacher stood in class unable to control anyone. Where are the rules? I agree with Clark. Rules are part of life everywhere. My brother is in prison for 13 years for robbing a bank at gunpoint. He went to a great school in Auburn hills. School doesn't always decide how you will end up. This goes back to students in class calling the behavior at OAC 'normal.' Maybe in a prison setting. It is but in a public school funded by tax payer dollars where the students have been given a second chance? Please you can't expect everyone to jump on board and say a child who is on his cell phone cussing out his teacher calling the kid sitting next to him a faggot is just in need of a desk to sit at without any consequences life is all about consequences. ... I did not like my first visit. I do not look forward to other visits. We should have been allowed to pick where we did our service assignment at or had a variety of choices. This open-ended do as you feel attitude the school has is not appropriate. Why would you think an entire class of strangers from different backgrounds would all want to go to an alternative school in Southfield and attempt to make a difference when the school doesn't welcome you? Let us pick our location; this one is inconvenient and not helping me at all.

Why did I insist on this school? In answering this question I return to the novice service-learning instructor I was in 2010. I kept her at OAC because I thought if I let her serve at a different site, 10 others would also vanish into their community and having such changes mid-semester is more than I thought I could manage. Instead, by this time in the semester, I was already onsite twice a week helping the students create a newspaper. I had encouraged Judith to come be with us; she would have a completely different opinion of the students. She didn't come. Readers may remember that Judith did return to OAC and ended her service on a positive note. She brought in

craft supplies and had the students create Christmas cards for the senior citizens where she works. Within that journal she regretted “not doing something a little nicer for them.”

This story brings a very important issue: Judith’s view of the students at the site completely changed through her interaction with the students. While it’s true Judith was crossing racial borders, her epiphany wasn’t caused through a “ruptura” moment the scholarship believes is needed but when she finally allowed herself to connect to the community members. The same thing happened with Sapphire; she went from criticizing the students at the beginning of the semester to laughing with them at the end of the semester. She was able to understand them just a bit more. There were also the five Recursive Learners who wrote conversion narratives in chapter 3; all entered the site with some level of trepidation but viewed local students in a more positive light after they interacted with them during their visit

So the question is, how can I help other students receive a similar level of connection to the local students and therefore help them change their view of local students? For example Ciara mentioned she wasn’t comfortable at the site because students use profanity and she’s not a “very social person.” Instead of interacting with the students, she wrote a grant to help the art department receive funding. While Ms. McNephew raved about the positive value the art grant will provide for the school, I’m wondering if I could have (should have?) helped her forge a similar connection to the local students so that she would have an improved view of the local students. Is there a way where I could have helped her become more comfortable or is it intrinsic? Is this something we need to do, or is it enough to know she received personal reward for helping the school receive financial support? I don’t really have an answer to that question.

How can we help student enter the community?

Last, I want to discuss the curriculum revision to allow students to serve within their own communities. For 2012 semester, I revised the IRB paperwork and allowed students to self-select a site; five students chose this option, and all self-selected to serve within their own community: Jadyn at her high school, Alicia and Matthew at their churches, Sabina with a church family, and Jacqueline at food pantry. Of these five, I already discussed how Matthew continued the activist work with the homeless community, and he entered and exited the course marking “strongly agree” to all survey questions. As such, naturally one would not expect to see measurable growth. Additionally, I discussed how Jadyn re-entered her home community with what we would “charity” work in mind; she believed she was working toward social change by “donating her time” to the school and that the “children” would be positively impacted because she is now a college student.

Obviously, I have much work to do in order to help students like Jadyn return to their home community with a goal of participating within civic engagement goals instead of one bordering on charity. Bickford and Reynolds suggest in order to move beyond simplistic model of “serving” the community to a more complex model of “becoming an activist,” Jadyn must participate in the community and not just visit it. This participation, according to Schutz and Gere, needs to be as equals. “Students need to begin not as teachers but as learners in a community setting, where the goals and purposes of a ‘service’ effort are not established beforehand” (146). Jadyn clearly entered with the “volunteer ethos” that is criticized within the field; however, I’m pretty sure nothing I could do would have changed her mindset. (Remember all three drafts of her final research paper should have explored a social problem at her site; instead she turned in an 8-page narrative of various education programs she’s witnessed without research.)

This brings me back to the Monberg's passage that I used at the beginning of the dissertation. She writes one of the goals for Recursive Service learning program is help the students enter the community *with* a difference (emphasis hers, 27), to teach students how "to move and dwell differently in a community they may already know" (41). For future "Jadyns" this would mean working with the students and listening to their stories instead of telling her own. Perhaps, then Jadyn would have been better equipped to answer the questions about social issues related to the site instead of describing the "wild children" running everywhere.

Perhaps.

APPENDIX A: THE RECURSIVE LEARNERS

28 Recursive Learners					
	Gender	Race	age	High school	MEAP
Alicia	F	White	18	Alt education	
Anjali	F	Black	19	Detroit	8
Anthony	M	Black	19	Detroit	8
Axel	M	Black	19	Alt education	
Ayaan	M	Black	24	Alt education	
Corrine	F	Black	41	GED	
Demetria	F	Black	57	Detroit	8
Elizabeth	F	Black	21	Inkster	3
Esme	F	Black	22	Detroit	8
Gary	M	Black	25	Nigerian	
Izabella	F	Black	19	Southfield	14
Jacinda	F	Black	18	Southfield	14
Jacqueline	F	Black	26	Detroit	8
Jadyn	F	Black	19	Detroit	8
James	M	Black	20	Oak Park	1
Jenessa	F	Black	19	Oak Park	1
Kathryn	F	White	20	Alt education	
Kiara	F	Black	26	Detroit	8
Marcus	M	Black	20	Detroit	8
Matthew	M	Black	50	Detroit	8
Nigel	M	Black	40	Detroit	8
Pamela	F	Black	56	Detroit	8
Pandora	F	Black	21	Detroit	8
Sabina	F	Black	19	Detroit	8
Salvadore	M	Chaldean	20	Southfield	14
Samuel	M	Chaldean	27	GED	
Saphire	F	Black	19	Alt education	
Sebastianne	F	Black	32	Detroit	8
13 Outsiders					
	Gender	Race	age	Graduated	MEAP
Anderson	M	White	24	Waterford	31
Ciara	F	Black	19	Oak Park	1
Crystal	F	White	21	Alt education	
Jazlyn	F	Black	21	Detroit	8
Judith	F	Latina	34	Lincoln Park	9
Karissa	F	Black	34	Detroit	8
Mackenzie	F	White	24	Alt education	
Mikhaela	F	Black	19	Detroit	8
Nicole	F	White	22	Farmington	45
Rochelle	F	Asian	21	Troy	54
Roger	M	Pac. Is	26	Philippines	
Ronald	M	White	31	Birmingham	56
Tyson	M	White	19	Ferndale	15

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Comparison of Pre-Course to Post-Course Survey Results									
	column 1			column 2			column 3		
numbers to the right represent the average scores	All Students			Recursive Learners			Outsiders		
1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3= neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree	pre-course	post course	Change	pre-course	post course	Change	pre-course	post course	Change
1) I am concerned about local community issues	3.90	4.35	0.45	3.91	4.36	0.45	3.89	4.33	0.44
2) I am concerned with the rights and welfare of others	4.13	4.29	0.16	4.18	4.45	0.27	4.00	3.89	-0.11
3) I feel that social problems directly affect the quality of life in my own community	4.28	4.16	-0.12	4.19	4.36	0.17	4.50	3.67	-0.83
4) It is important to work with people from other cultures.	4.17	4.42	0.25	4.23	4.55	0.32	4.00	4.11	0.11
5) It is important to promote racial understanding	4.23	4.57	0.34	4.18	4.55	0.37	4.33	4.63	0.30
Social Values	4.14	4.36	0.22	4.14	4.45	0.32	4.14	4.13	-0.02
6) I feel that I can make a difference in my local community	3.81	4.20	0.39	3.95	4.43	0.48	3.44	3.67	0.23
7) I feel that I can have a positive impact on local social problems	3.67	4.16	0.49	3.90	4.32	0.42	3.11	3.78	0.67
Efficacy	3.74	4.18	0.44	3.93	4.38	0.45	3.28	3.73	0.45
8) It is important to be involved in a program to improve my community	3.90	4.03	0.13	4.00	4.29	0.29	3.63	3.44	-0.19
9) It is important to volunteer my time to help people in need.	4.10	4.19	0.09	4.14	4.32	0.18	4.00	3.89	-0.11
10) It is important to give some of my income to help those in need	3.61	3.67	0.06	3.64	3.71	0.07	3.56	3.56	0.00
11) It is important to work toward equal opportunity (e.g. social, political, vocational) for all people.	4.29	4.48	0.19	4.36	4.59	0.23	4.11	4.22	0.11
12) It is important to work towards changing social systems.	4.17	4.29	0.12	4.35	4.50	0.15	3.78	3.78	0.00
Civic Attitudes	4.01	4.13	0.12	4.10	4.28	0.18	3.82	3.78	-0.04
Averaged value	3.97	4.22	0.25	4.05	4.37	0.32	3.75	3.88	0.13
	31 participating students			of 31 part students, 22 rls, 9 outsiders					

REFERENCES

- Adler-Kassner, Linda, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters, eds. *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition*. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education, 1997. Print.
- Adler-Kassner, Linda. "Digging a Groundwork for Writing: Underprepared Students and Community Service Courses." *College Composition and Communication*. 46.4 (Dec. 1995): 552-55. Web. 15 Aug. 2014.
- Arca, Rosemary. "Systems Thinking, Symbiosis, and Service: The Road to Authority for Basic Writers." Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters. 133-142. Print.
- Bazerman, Charles. "Speech Acts, Genres, and Activity Systems: How Texts Organize Activity and People." *What Writing Does and How It Does It: An Introduction to Analyzing Texts and Textual Practices*. Eds. Charles Bazerman and Paul Prior. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2004. 309-39.
- Bickford, Donna and Nedra Reynolds. "Activism and Service-Learning: Reframing Volunteerism and Acts of Dissent." *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture* 2.2 (2002): 229-252. Web. 15 Aug. 2014.
- Bishop, Wendy. *Ethnographic Writing Research: Writing It Down, Writing It Up, and Reading It*. Plymouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1999. Print.
- Blakeslee, Ann and Cathy Fleischer. *Becoming a Writing Researcher*. New York: Routledge. 2010. Print.

- Boyle-Baise, Marilynne and Christine Sleeter. "Community Service Learning for Multicultural Teacher Education: An Exploratory Study with Preservice Teachers." *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 31.2 (1998): 52-60. Web. 15 Aug. 2014.
- Brown, Stephen Gilbert, and Sidney Dobrin. eds. *Ethnography Unbound: From Theory Shock to Critical Praxis*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2004. Print.
- Carrick, Tracy Hamler, Margaret Himley, and Toni Jacobi. "Ruptura: Acknowledging the Lost Subjects of the Service Learning Story." *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines*. 56-75. Web. 15 Aug. 2014.
- Cooper, David, and Laura Julier. "Democratic Conversations: Civic Literacy and Service-Learning in the American Grains." Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters. 79-94. Print.
- Cresswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002. Print.
- Cushman, Ellen. "The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change." Deans, Roswell, and Wurr. 235-253. Print.
- "Sustainable Service Learning Programs." *College Composition and Communication*. 54.1 (2002): 40-65. Print.
- Davi, Angelique, Michelle Dunlap, and Ann E. Green. "Exploring Differences in the Service-Learning Classroom: Three Teachers Write about Anger, Sexuality, and Social Justice." *Reflections*. 6.1 (2007): 41-66. Print.
- Davi, Angelique. "In the Service of Writing and Race" *Journal of Basic Writing*. 25.1 (2006) 73-95. Web. 15 Aug. 2014.
- Deans, Thomas, Barbara Roswell, and Adrian Wurr. *Writing and Community Engagement: A Critical Sourcebook*. New York: Bedford/St. Martins. 2010. Print.

- Deans, Thomas. "Writing Across the Curriculum and Community Service Learning: Correspondences, Cautions, and Futures." Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Waters. 29-38. Print.
- Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning in Composition. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2000. Print.
- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995. Print.
- Feigenbaum, Paul. "Traps, Tricksters, and the Long haul: Negotiating the Progressive Teacher's Challenge in Literacy Education." *Reflections*. 11.2 (Spring 2012): 5-38. Print.
- Flower, Linda. "Partners in Inquiry: A Logic for Community Outreach." Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters. 95-117. Print.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum, 2011. Print.
- Grant-Davie, Keith. "Coding Data: Issues of Validity, Reliability, and Interpretation." Kirsch and Sullivan. 270-286. Print.
- Green, Ann. "But You Aren't White." *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*. (Fall 2001): 18-26. Web. 15 Aug. 2014.
- "Difficult Stories: Service Learning, Race, Class, and Whiteness." *College Composition and Communication*. 55.2 (2003): 276-301. Web. 15 Aug. 2014.
- Heilker, Paul. "Rhetoric Made Real: Civic Discourse and Writing Beyond the Curriculum." Adler-Kassner, Crooks and Watters. 71-78. Print.
- Herzberg, Bruce. "Community Service and Critical Teaching," *College Composition and Communication*. 45.3 (Oct. 1994): 307-19. Web. 15 Aug. 2014.

- "Response." *College Composition and Communication*. 46.4 (Dec. 1995): 555-6. Web. 15 Aug. 2014.
- Himley, Margaret. "Facing (Up to) 'The Stranger' in Community Service Learning." *College Composition and Communication*. 55.3 (2004): 416-38. Print.
- Kirsch, Gesa, and Patricia A. Sullivan, eds. *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992. Print.
- Mathieu, Paula. *Tactics of Hope: Street Life and the Public Turn in English Studies*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2005.
- Merriam, Sharan B. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons (Jossey-Bass), 2009. Print.
- Mitchell, Tania. "Traditional vs. Critical Service-learning: Engaging the Literature to Differentiate Two Models." *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*. (Spring 2008): 50-65. Web. 15. Aug. 2014.
- Monberg, Teresa Guinsatao. "Writing Home or Writing As the Community: Toward a Theory of Recursive Spatial Movement for Students of Color in Service-Learning Courses." *Reflections*. 8.3 (2009) 21-51. Print.
- Moss, Beverly J. "Ethnography and Composition." Kirsch and Sullivan. 153-171. Print.
- Parks, Stephen. *Gravyland: Writing Beyond the Curriculum in the City of Brotherly Love*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010. Print
- Schutz, Aaron and Anne Ruggles Gere. "Service Learning and English Studies: Rethinking 'Public Service.'" *College English* 60.2 (February 1998): 129-49. Print.
- Shor, Ira. *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Stenberg, Shari and Darby Arant Whealy. "Chaos Is the Poetry: From Outcomes to Inquiry in Service Learning Pedagogy." *College Composition and Communication*. 60:4 (June 2009): 683-706. Print.

Welch, Nancy. "'And Now That I Know Them': Composing Mutuality in a Service Learning Course." *College Composition and Communication*. 54:2 (Dec. 2002): 243-263. Web. 15 Aug. 2014.

ABSTRACT**A RECURSIVE SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAM: EMPOWERING STUDENTS OF COLOR TRAVELING WITHIN COMMUNITY BORDERS**

by

CINDY MOOTY-HOFFMANN**December 2015****Advisors:** Dr. Jeff Pruchnic, Dr. Gwendolen Gorzelsky**Major:** English (Rhetoric and Composition)**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

This dissertation analyzes three semesters of a Recursive Service Learning Program, service-learning within freshmen composition classes where students of color served within their own community of color. Data analysis revealed several important conclusions. The first one is that establishment of a Recursive Service Learning Community cannot be artificially created through identifying students of similar location, race, or background; connection to a one's own community is a personal choice. Second, while students of color describe the community site more positively in comparison to traditional white students, many still express anxiety through this border-crossing paradigm. Lastly, while there is still work to be done in determining the best ways to help student engage their own communities within this context, the course positively impacted students' sense of social responsibility, efficacy, and civic attitudes.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

I am currently working as a Special Lecturer at Oakland University, Rochester Hills, where I teach freshmen writing. My research interests include progressive pedagogy and service learning/civic engagement presenting research at CCCC, NCTE, and several local conferences.

In addition to earning this PhD degree from Wayne State University, I have earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism and Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Oakland University, a Master of Arts Degree in Journalism from Michigan State University, and a Master of Science degree from Wayne State.