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Rhetorical outcomes: A genre analysis of student service-learning writing

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**RHETORICAL OUTCOMES: A GENRE ANALYSIS OF STUDENT SERVICE-LEARNING
WRITING**

by

THOMAS B. TRIMBLE

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

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Advisor	Date

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my wife Monica McLeod, daughters Mary and Frances Trimble, and my parents, Thomas and Julia Trimble. Their love and support is unsurpassed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to my committee chair Gwen Gorzelsky, and committee members Ellen Barton, Ruth Ray, and Jeff Grabill. Their support and guidance over the course of the project has been invaluable. Special thanks to the WSU members of my committee whose support and counsel throughout my time in the English Department I will always remember with gratitude and respect.

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CHAPTER 1 SERVICE-LEARNING AND COMPOSITION

Proponents of service-learning within composition studies primarily look to two areas of theory for support of the pedagogy: John Dewey's advocacy of experiential learning and his broader philosophical framework of American pragmatism, and Paulo Freire's liberatory pedagogy, committed to re-positioning education in the struggle for radical social change. Since the late 1980s, practitioners within composition studies and across the academy have been theorizing the educational, rhetorical, and social rationale for service-learning, documenting the impact of the pedagogy on students, faculty, community members, and institutions, and arguing for expanded interest and support from academic departments, universities, and the broader culture. Enthusiasm for service-learning is tempered, however, by both institutional challenges and theoretical and ethical concerns emerging from the complex matrix of goals, social relationships, and outcomes associated with service-learning classrooms. The goal of this dissertation is to join the debate within composition over service-learning with a specific focus on a neglected aspect of service-learning research, student writing. To accomplish this, I will present the results of a genre-based analysis of student writing along with a consideration of how such findings might be used to talk about the effects of service-learning in a highly politicized environment shaped by the discourse of outcomes-based assessment and high-stakes testing.

While community-service and community engagement have a long, albeit punctuated history in US education, recent interest in integrating service into students' educational experiences can be traced back to the early 1980s and the creation of organizations such as the National Youth Leadership Council (1982), the Campus Outreach

Opportunity League (1984), the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (1985), and Campus Compact (1985) (“History of Service-learning”). Perhaps the most well known of these groups, Campus Compact, describes its origins in terms of the desire to refute the claim, often heard during the 1980s, that America’s young people were becoming self-absorbed materialists (“Who We Are”). Interest in encouraging citizen participation in community service activities was also evident in the federal legislative agenda during this time, marked by passage of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, which created the Commission on National and Community Service, and the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, which created AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National Service (“History of Service-learning in Higher Education”).

In light of Dewey’s influence on composition, it is perhaps not surprising that interest in service-learning within composition has roots in the progressive era. In his book *Radical Departures: Composition and Progressive Pedagogy*, Chris Gallagher describes the community English movement, popular in some high schools and collegiate first-year writing programs during the 1910s and early 1920s (21). The community English model involved students in the writing of speeches and letters, and organizing public debates and pageants (21). Advocates, including figures such as John D. Cooke, viewed such locally-based action as both a rich learning experience and an exercise in community development (21). Despite its limited popularity in certain parts of the profession, community English was never a serious challenge to the current-traditional paradigm, but in many ways it served as a progenitor of the field’s interest in community-based approaches. Recent interest in service-learning within composition and English Studies can be traced back to the 1980s and 90s. The American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) was an early

proponent of service-learning and sponsored several conferences dedicated to the topic and published a multi-volume series on service-learning in various disciplines (Eyles and Gyler, *Where's the Learning* 7). The series volume, *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-learning in Composition*, published in 1997 and edited by Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters, is the earliest book on service-learning in composition studies. Arguably the earliest service-learning-specific piece in the annotated bibliography that accompanies *Writing the Community*, is Robert Coles's short article from *Liberal Education* entitled, "Community Service Work," which appeared in 1988 and advocates combining service with the study of literary works (184). *Writing the Community's* bibliography lists considerably more work from the early 1990s, including Karis Crawford's "Community Service Writing in an Advanced Composition Class," in 1993, and a number of essays from the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, which was first published in 1994.

The early 1990s also saw organizational support for service-learning within composition. Thomas Deans, in his 2000 book *Writing Partnerships: Service-learning in Composition*, notes that the 1997 CCCC program listed thirty-three presentations dedicated to service-learning, including two special interest group meetings (12). The first essays about service-learning in the field's two flagship journals, *College English* and *College Composition and Communication* (CCC) came in 1994 and 1995. In 1994, Bruce Herzberg published his widely-cited essay, "Community Service and Critical Teaching," in *CCC* and in 1995, Deborah Williams Minter, Anne Ruggles Gere, and Deborah Keller-Cohen published the now well-known article, "Learning Literacies," in *College English*. In 1999, NCTE

convened a committee dedicated to supporting service-learning efforts in composition, chaired by Thomas Deans and including Nora Bacon, Linda Flower, Rosemary Arca, Louise Rodriquez Connal, and Barbara Roswell (Deans, “CCC Institutionalizes Service-learning”).

Theoretical Roots

Early in *Writing Partnerships*, Deans cites the National Community Service Trust Act of 1993, which provides a legal definition of service-learning that is still in effect today (1). The statutory definition is not irrelevant to academics, since it continues to impact decisions about government funding, program assessment, and accreditation. According to the law, service-learning refers to a teaching “method,”

- “(A) under which students or participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that—
- (i) is conducted in and meets the needs of a community;
 - (ii) is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher learning, or community service program, and with the community; and
 - (iii) helps foster civic responsibility; and
- (B) that—
- (i) is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and
 - (ii) provides structured time for students or participants to reflect on the service experience.”

The regulatory definition of service-learning mirrors more prosaic definitions, such as the one offered by Barbara Jacoby in her book *Service-learning in Higher Education: Concept and Practices*, which is representative of much of the service-learning literature (Billig; Furco).

Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning (5).

Along with the general features described by Jacoby, the core arguments for service-learning are now fairly well-known across the academy. I will rehearse them here briefly to provide a basis for exploring extensions of service-learning theory to the practices and politics of composition.

For most practitioners, service-learning is justified by both educational and social rationales. For an educational rationale, various scholars have looked to John Dewey for the philosophical roots of service-learning, and in particular his advocacy of authentic, hands-on experiences designed to help students develop knowledge and skills in the context of engaging social problems and community service (Giles and Eyler, "The Theoretical Roots"; Saltmarsh). Students who see concrete connections between real world situations and classroom learning objectives, the argument goes, are more motivated to learn, learn more effectively, and are better equipped to transfer academic knowledge to other contexts. Dewey's philosophy, perhaps best articulated in his 1916 book *Democracy and Education*, connects students' hands-on experiences with the development of American pragmatism, which Dewey sees as committed to both personal development and civic progress. American pragmatism, and Dewey's particular articulation of its values and aims within educational contexts, continues to be an influence within service-learning, evidenced most recently in the research of Linda Flower, whose work on community-based learning and civic engagement draws heavily on the pragmatic tradition. An important component of Dewey's philosophy that has also been integrated into the educational rationale for service-learning is the critical role of reflection in maximizing the impact of service-learning experiences. For many scholars, participants' reflections on their service experiences are

critical to student learning, both in terms of creating connections between service and course content objectives, but also to students' personal growth and development (Eyler and Giles, "The Importance of Program Quality"; Anson, "On Reflection").

Against the backdrop of Dewey's advocacy of experiences that help students develop as individuals and citizens, perhaps the most important concept in the rationale for service-learning is the idea that service and learning should reinforce each other in a symbiotic relationship between the two activities.¹ In many disciplines where service-learning is popular, sociology, psychology, political science, education, and composition studies, the opportunity to provide real world experiences that support the academic objectives of courses is often a primary motivation for including some type of service experience. That is not to say, however, that the balance between course content objectives and service is always equal. Robert Sigmon has suggested a three category typology of service-learning experiences based on the primacy of each term within a given instructional setting. For Sigmon, SERVICE-learning privileges the service experience over course content; service-LEARNING stresses mastery of content over the service experience, and in the third category, SERVICE-LEARNING, each term is given equal weight in both course design and delivery (quoted in Jacoby 5).

Service-learning pedagogy is also motivated by a social rationale involving the humanistic effects of service on students, community members, and on the relationship between the university and its surrounding publics. For champions of the social rationale,

¹ In *Service-learning in Higher Education*, Jacoby credits S. Migliore with pointing out that the hyphen between *service* and *learning* denotes the symbiotic relationship between the two terms (5).

service-learning helps students to see social problems such as hunger, homelessness, and domestic abuse, not as abstract issues effecting faceless persons, but as real problems that affect real people in contexts that resist simplification and easy solutions. The goal of concretizing social issues is sometimes tied directly to field-specific learning objectives, but for many service-learning practitioners, the social rationale extends to making students better citizens and to breaking down the social barriers between the university and the outside world. For many proponents, the social rationale for service-learning is grounded in the belief that educators have a civic and moral responsibility to leverage the various forms of capital at their disposal for social justice and the amelioration of social problems. Within this framework, service-learning is seen as a form of political action that can have both immediate and long-term social effects as students and community members are motivated to become agents of social change in their own lives and communities.

An important touchstone for the social rationale of service-learning in composition is the liberatory pedagogy of Paulo Freire, best articulated in his 1971 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and subsequent work by critical pedagogues working in the Freirean tradition such as Henry Giroux, Ira Shor, and James Berlin. The central premise of critical pedagogy is that mainstream education has historically served to reproduce the interests of society's ruling class and as such should be reconfigured and repositioned to liberate students from oppression and to advocate for radical social change both within the university and in the larger world. Teachers and researchers working within this framework see their classrooms and research agendas as sites of political resistance and the engagement of issues related to justice, economic inequality, oppression, identity, and the negotiation of difference. Models of critical pedagogy take various forms. Some proponents, most notably

Ira Shor, argue for a radical de-centering of teachers' authority in the classroom, while others such as James Berlin, advocate for a restructuring of curriculum while retaining many structures of traditional instruction and student activity. For service-learning practitioners, critical pedagogy opens the door to a more explicitly politicized engagement with social issues and a fundamental repositioning of the classroom within curricula, academic departments, and the community.

In composition, the impact of critical pedagogy on service-learning has been complemented by two additional theoretical developments, or turns, within the discipline that coincided with the national interest in civic engagement that emerged during the 1980s and 90s. While the concept of the social turn is now widespread within composition, my conceptualization comes from Nora Bacon's description of the shift in composition theory during the 1970s and 80s, away from the cognitive processes of individual writers, the domain of process theory and pedagogy, to a broader view of composing and an interest in the complex relationships between writers' identities and their social contexts (39). For early adopters of service-learning like Bacon, the social turn not only expanded the intellectual gaze of composition to look at social issues but it also repositioned composition to engage social issues as a way of repositioning the relationship between the university, its students, and the publics beyond its walls. In *Writing Partnerships*, Thomas Deans argues that service-learning actually extends many of the central premises of the social turn, in looking outside the university for audiences of student writing, by asking students to write within nonacademic discourse communities, and by connecting literate action with political action (9-10).

In addition to the social turn and the influence of critical pedagogy, the popularity of service-learning within composition studies has also been enhanced by the rhetorical turn of the discipline, described by Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway as the result of the embrace of Kenneth Burke's work and rhetorical theories advanced by sociologists of science Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar (3-4). According to Freedman and Medway, scholarly developments in rhetoric during the 1970s led to the revitalization of classical concepts such as invention, audience, and occasion, providing an additional theoretical foundation for process pedagogy and expanding the topics, purposes, and audiences for the undergraduate writing curriculum (3-4). Like the social turn, James Berlin suggests in *Rhetorics, Poetics and Cultures*, that the rhetorical turn of composition during the 1970s and 80s also opened the door to a re-engagement of politics, economics, and difference, at a time when these issues were becoming increasingly salient within the broader intellectual and national culture (xiv). While Berlin looks to the rhetorical turn to advocate for a reconfigured English Studies curriculum modeled on British cultural studies, composition's renewed interest in rhetoric also helped to open a space for community-based pedagogy, particularly for faculty influenced by Dewey's politically interested advocacy of experiential learning and Freire's commitment to radical political change.

Instructional Approaches

As the brief summary above attempts to show, service-learning pedagogy draws on a diverse range of theoretical sources for justification and support. That diversity has also led to a variety of instructional approaches. Sigmon's taxonomy, which I referenced earlier, attempts to capture that variety in terms of the balance between service and learning. Deans, writing within composition, offers an alternative taxonomy, constructed around the

kinds of service and writing students perform. Dean's taxonomy is particularly productive for compositionists because of the way that it foregrounds rhetorical activity in the interaction, and tension, between service and learning, and in the way that the typology creates theoretical spaces for the consideration of the social and political implications for service-learning practitioners.

In Deans' first paradigm, which he calls the writing *for* model, students volunteer for community organizations or non-profit groups to create brochures, flyers, posters, or other documents related to the organization's mission and consistent with the learning objectives of a particular course. The writing *for* paradigm is popular in professional writing courses, as well as programs like social work and political science. In Deans' second model, the writing *with* paradigm, students work collaboratively with various publics to create documents that serve community needs. Such documents include brochures and flyers, but they can also take the form of hybrid discourses that combine informative and persuasive genres. Finally, Deans' third model, the writing *about* paradigm, describes courses in which students write about community members, often from the perspective of ethnographic observers. In addition to composition, the writing *about* model has been popular in anthropology, sociology, psychology, and education.

Each of Deans' three paradigms for service-learning in composition has its own set of theoretical rationale, champions, and critiques. The strength of the writing *for* paradigm is its potential to provide students with authentic rhetorical situations and audiences beyond the contrived exigencies of the traditional writing classroom while simultaneously offering writing services to groups and organizations who work to improve their communities. Compositionist Nora Bacon was an early champion of this model, and in her

chapter in *Writing the Community*, “Community Service Writing: Problems, Challenges, Questions,” she outlines many of the core arguments made on behalf of this approach: the writing *for* paradigm makes writing more meaningful; it exposes students to new people, environments, and discourses; it encourages students to take pride in their writing; it encourages collaboration; it fosters the development of research skills by giving research an authentic purpose; and it attempts to make genuine contributions to civic life (41). At the same time, Bacon notes some of the practical challenges and theoretical problems inherent to the writing *for* paradigm. Writing *for* models can sometimes encourage students to inappropriately assume positions of expertise in discourses they know little about. Writing *for* models can also raise difficult assessment issues, such as when community organizations’ ideas of effective writing conflict with those of writing instructors. There are also political critiques of the writing *for* paradigm. Deans has noted the instrumentalist orientation of the writing *for* model and acknowledges a Marxist critique which argues such service experiences merely enable a deeply-flawed network of social services (76).

Proponents of Deans’ second model, the writing *with* paradigm, in which students collaborate with community members on various writing tasks, argue that writing *with* experiences avoid the instrumentalist orientation of the writing *for* model towards writing and community participants. Perhaps the most well known proponent of the writing *with* paradigm is Linda Flower, whose co-founding of the Community Literacy Center in Pittsburgh with collaborators Wayne Peck and Lorraine Higgins, stands as an exemplar of the writing *with* model (Peck, Flower, and Higgins). Flower’s approach positions university faculty, students, and community members as collaborators in the exploration of social

problems facing community members (Flower). The theoretical foundations of Flower's approach are inspired by Dewey, but her more recent work, which reflects the need to understand how social change occurs within complex, multi-racial environments, is inspired by Cornel West's "prophetic" pragmatism. Central to Flower's model is situating university and community stakeholders as "partners in inquiry," exploring problems from multiple, competing perspectives, deferring the search for solutions that are true or morally superior in favor of those that work in a given time and place (Flower). Like all service-learning models, students in the writing *with* paradigm get the opportunity to develop and apply their rhetorical skills in real world situations. They get to work with people and publics often very different than their own, but unlike the other paradigms, students are positioned co-equally as learners, rather than the providers of a service or as apprentices to skill sets imparted by experts. For community members, the writing *with* paradigm, particularly as it is envisioned by Flower, gives participants access to the intellectual, political, and technical capital of the university but without being subordinated as the recipients or contractors of service. In so doing, both students and community members are empowered as both creators of knowledge and agents of social change. The end result of such collaborative action is the creation of new and emboldened publics and new rhetorics of civic engagement distinct from the "logic of technical expertise" embedded in many writing *for* models (98-99).

The focus on collaboration and inquiry in the writing *with* paradigm and away from the dispensation of service from an elevated cultural position has shielded it from some of the critiques leveled against other kinds of service-learning. There are still concerns and challenges, however, not the least of which is the practical difficulty involved in building

the relationships and trust required of collaborative activities like those advocated by Flower. Such activities require considerable and sustained commitments of time and resources from both the university and the community. Community relationships are difficult to establish and maintain when students are only present for a semester at a time, and most university schedules make sustained interaction difficult. Students need time to become acquainted with the principles and politics of collaboration and the attributes of the communities they work with, both of which threaten to crowd out the academic objectives of most undergraduate writing courses.

In contrast to the orientation of the writing *for* model towards workplace literacies and the focus on intercultural collaboration in the writing *with* model, advocates of the writing *about* paradigm often look to ethnographic pedagogy for theoretical and methodological support. I will examine the writing *about* model in some depth here because it was the primary mode of writing I used in the courses I taught and is the basis for the student writing at the core of this project. In most writing *about* models, students perform some type of community service and then write about project participants and their experience as participant observers. Service activities are often semester-long efforts connected to course content, as when education students act as reading tutors for elementary school students, but they can also be short-term, stand alone experiences such as when students in a sociology course work in a homeless shelter for a single afternoon.

While written reflection is central to most writing *about* models, there is wide variety in the kinds of writing done by students in such courses. Students are often assigned an end-of-semester essay that describes their sense of how a particular experience affected them or changed their way of thinking. In more intensive settings,

students use features of ethnographic research, including fieldnote journals and thick description of eyewitness observations to create a layered, thematic narrative that both describes their experience and documents their own development over the course of the project.

The writing *about* paradigm is bolstered by the work of Beverly Moss, Wendy Bishop, James Zebroski, Mary Jo Reiff, and David Seitz, who argue that ethnographic writing critically positions students to observe and explore the complex relationships between behavior and language, to see connections between academic research and students' experience in local contexts, and to craft "more internally persuasive social critiques of local cultural groups and their larger contexts" (Seitz 26). Reiff suggests that ethnographic writing has pedagogical value in its social function as both a research narrative, or metagenre, and as a mode of genre analysis (41). Interestingly, Reiff's conceptualization of ethnography explicitly appropriates Carolyn Miller's definition of genre as a form of social action, which I will draw on extensively for the methodological justification for this project. But Reiff, and other proponents of ethnographic writing in composition instruction like Zebroski, use genre to situate ethnographic writing as both "product and process" (Reiff 41). In *Thinking Through Theory: Vygotskian Perspectives on the Teaching of Writing*, Zebroski describes his turn away from the traditional research paper, which he sees as both pedagogically ineffective and uncritical, in favor of student-authored ethnographies. For Zebroski, ethnographic mini-projects that ask students to engage and write about their local communities produce richer, more engaged writing that empowers students to see connections between academic research and their own experience in local contexts in

community-based and service-learning-based settings (32-33). In similar terms, David Seitz, in his book *Who Can Afford Critical Consciousness? Practicing a Pedagogy of Humility*, argues that having students conduct ethnographic research “encourages an affirmation of students’ local situations and understanding, which often motivates students toward a more internally persuasive social critique of local cultural groups and their larger contexts” (26).

I will have more to say about the student-authored ethnographic writing at the heart of the project later in the chapter. But my choice of the writing *about* model and ethnographic writing evolved out of a practical need for a pedagogical approach that would suit my teaching of a service-learning-based intermediate writing course in which undergraduate students worked as mentors with middle school students enrolled in an after school enrichment program. One half of each day’s session was dedicated to the mentoring activity, which was oriented around the construction of a school-based webzine. The other half of the course, alternatively, spent away from the middle school mentees, centered on discussions relating to youth culture, education, and ethnographic methodology. In addition to keeping a daily journal designed to provide a space for students to inscribe their observations and reflections, students wrote three ethnographic essays, the last of which was an end-of-semester final project designed to synthesize their work over the course of the term.

Bruce Herzberg is perhaps the most widely known advocate and critic of the writing *about* paradigm such as the one I used in my course, largely due to his 1994 essay, “Community Service and Critical Teaching.” Herzberg argues that writing *about* models can

help students develop a social conscience when they personally engage issues like poverty and homelessness (58). Herzberg's concern, however, is that students' affective reactions to service-learning experiences can obscure the systematic causes of social problems and promote a flawed conceptualization of social problems as individual in nature (58). The writing *about* paradigm has been critiqued on a variety of other grounds. Aaron Schutz and Anne Ruggles Gere, in their *College English* article "Service Learning and English Studies: Rethinking Public Service," have observed that writing *about* models sometimes encourage students to develop a sense of *noblesse oblige*, in which students see themselves as liberal saviors for the "unfortunate" and "underprivileged" (133). Margaret Himley, in her 2004 *CCC* article, "Facing (Up to) 'The Stranger' in Community Service Learning," argues that the discourses of volunteerism and political change often obscure the power asymmetries that exist in many service-learning experiences. Himley posits the writing *about* paradigm's appropriation of ethnographic methodology, which often includes anthropology's historical interest in the Other, propagates what Himley calls the "figuring" of community members in a way that reduces service participants to sources of data (421). In similar terms, Ann Green, in observing that many service-learning courses involve white suburban university students working with urban students of color, argues that discussion of ethnic difference, and whiteness in particular, is elided in many service-learning classrooms. Neither Himley nor Green advocate abandoning service-learning courses like the ones they critique, but both call for increased interrogation of service-learning theory and practice, particularly in settings where students write about community participants who occupy subordinated social positions.

In her 2002 CCC essay “Sustainable Service-Learning Programs,” Ellen Cushman critiques the writing *about* paradigm for failing to model the kind of “systematic, structured, theory-driven research that scholars do” in a way that undermines the legitimacy of service-learning for both students and stakeholders who are skeptical of the pedagogy (45). She argues that journal writing and the end-of-the-semester reflective essay built into many writing *about* course designs often end up functioning as a kind of “wandering in the dark,” that embodies a poorly articulated epistemology that ultimately fails to serve student needs and program objectives (46). Cushman argues that end-of-the-semester models may be understandable choices for “overworked, transitory, underpaid,” instructors who nevertheless are attracted to the writing *about* paradigm’s combination of service, research, and reflection (50). She maintains, however, that in order for composition programs to build sustainable, theoretically and methodologically sound service-learning initiatives, practitioners need to connect their pedagogy to “rigorous” research agendas that both internal and external stakeholders will recognize as a legitimate intellectual enterprise (50).

Cushman’s central point is that end-of-the-semester course designs based on a writing *about* model can be accused of lacking a sound theoretical and methodological justification that can have instructional and programmatic consequences. Cushman’s programmatic concerns are valid, but in some ways they overlook the perspective, voiced by theorists such as Reiff, Zebroski, Seitz, and myself, that when things go well, students composing in writing *about* models can produce extremely interesting, engaged writing. If that tendency holds across service-learning courses, indeed if it is common to the perceptions of service-learning instructors across the academy, than those observations

are not irrelevant, because they point to potential outcomes and pedagogical warrants that are critical to Cushman's concerns.

State of the Movement

Interest in service-learning remains relatively strong nationwide. Campus Compact, whose mission continues to be oriented around supporting and facilitating both service-learning and stand alone community service opportunities on college campuses, boasts a 2008 membership of approximately one thousand campus partners (up from 679 in 2000) ("Who We Are"). The organization's most recent "5-Year Impact Summary," published in 2005, states that 98% of its campus partners offer service-learning courses, compared to 79% in 2000, and that 86% of its members have an on-campus office dedicated to fostering service-learning activities ("5-Year Impact Summary"). Service-learning also continues to be a subject of interest within composition, demonstrated by the publication of Deans' *Writing Partnerships*, the ongoing publication and popularity of subject-specific journals like *Reflections* and the *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning*, and consistent publication of articles in peer-reviewed journals, including Stenberg and Whealy's "From Outcomes to Inquiry in Service-Learning Pedagogy," and J. Blake Scott's article "Civic Engagement as Risk Management and Public Relations: What the Pharmaceutical Industry Can Teach Us About Service-Learning," both of which appeared in 2009 issues of *CCC*.

There are some indicators, however, that national and academic interest in service-learning may be plateauing. It is important to remember that the popularity of service-learning in the 1990s was supported, and to some extent subsidized, by a federal interest in integrating service and education. During this period, voices such as Ernest Boyer were calling for reconfiguring the structure of American universities to better meet the needs of

both local communities and the broader needs of the nation and community service was frequently cited in the context of such efforts. While calls for reimagining the role and structure of American universities and the related call for integrating community service into students' educational experiences still exist, the educational focus of state and federal governments underwent a significant shift during the Bush Administration to a more outcomes-based, assessment-focused approach marked by passage of No Child Left Behind in 2002 and the publication of *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education* by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings in 2006. On a much different scale, one can look to the number of CCCC presentations dedicated to service-learning for some sense of its current salience within the field. Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters point out in their introduction to *Writing the Community* that the 1991 convention included a single panel on service-learning (1), in contrast to 1997, which included 33 (Deans 12). Over the last five years, however, the number of presentations has hovered between four to ten presentations annually ("Past CCCC Conference Programs").

Service-learning has also encountered institutional and departmental challenges from which composition studies has not been immune. A significant obstacle lays in the fact that tenure and academic reward systems at many institutions do not recognize faculty members' service-learning efforts, which combined with the large commitments of time and energy required to start and sustain service-learning courses, provide a disincentive for many faculty to get involved. In the English Department of my home institution, Wayne State University, service-learning carries little weight in faculty members' tenure files, appearing under the service category subordinated to both scholarship and teaching (Gorzelsky).

In addition to structural disincentives, Edward Zlotkowski argues in his 1998 book, *Successful Service-learning Programs*, that many service-learning practitioners work at the political margins of their departments and as such are either unwilling or find it difficult to leverage the strengths of service-learning for greater departmental and institutional acceptance. Zlotkowski's argument carries a particular charge for composition studies which, as many have noted, continues to occupy a subordinated political position within most English departments. Zlotkowski also suggests that some service-learning practitioners actually prefer to work at the margins of their departments, identifying themselves more strongly with community interests outside the university or with like-minded faculty across disciplinary lines. Such extra-departmental alliances may have positive effects for faculty and their courses, but they often do little to enhance the appeal of service-learning in faculty members' home departments.

Perhaps most importantly, Zlotkowski argues that service-learning practitioners have failed to persuasively document the connection between service-learning experiences and course-specific academic outcomes in an environment increasingly influenced by such concerns. There is now a fairly large body of research documenting the positive impacts of service-learning on students, faculty members, communities, and institutions. Much of that research, however, describes cognitive and affective outcomes relayed by students, teachers, and other stakeholders via survey data. Much less research has focused on the academic outcomes for students. For Zlotkowski, the focus on personal outcomes and the social effects of service-learning has two equally negative institutional effects. First, it contributes to the perception, right or wrong, that service-learning lacks intellectual rigor and as such is a teaching fashion rather than a legitimate area of inquiry. Second, the

interest of many practitioners in political issues can contribute to a sort of hierarchal tiering within the service-learning discourse community, in which courses with more activist agendas occupy esteemed positions over more instrumentally-oriented classes (129). For Zlotkowski, such privileging by intellectual stakeholders within the community, that in essence sees some types of service-experiences as better, or more enlightened, than others, creates false binaries that ultimately undermine the cause of service-learning and threatens its wider institutional acceptance.

Service-Learning Outcomes and Outcomes-Based Assessment

As Zlotkowski and others have noted (Eyler and Giles, *Where's the Learning*), much of what we know about the effects of service-learning comes from self-reported data from students and teachers gathered via surveys and questionnaires. While the results of many such studies are promising, more systematic research is required if proponents of service-learning hope to make a persuasive case for the pedagogy in an environment of shrinking resources and increased emphasis on outcomes-based assessment. Unfortunately, linking service with specific student outcomes is an extremely difficult thing to do, and that difficulty is compounded by significant disciplinary differences in the ways knowledge is created and validated. In "School-Based Community Service: What We Know from Research and Theory," Conrad and Hedin describe some of the methodological challenges that service-learning researchers face. First, the authors note the biased nature of all educational research: proponents of a particular approach can almost always cite research that supports their view, while detractors find it equally easy to discredit approaches they do not like by critiquing research methods or pointing to confounding results from a different study (746). Second, service-learning researchers face the very real challenge of

isolating variables. The independent variable, service, takes a wide variety of forms depending on the nature of the activity and is significantly influenced by a range of factors specific to a particular experience (746). Perhaps even more importantly, the dependent variable in research studying student effects, or outcomes, is even more difficult to define and isolate from the multitude of instructional and personal factors that shape a student's experience (746). The difficulty in isolating variables is obviously the most explicit in experimental studies that seek to quantify the impact of service on outcomes, but the problem is no less relevant to qualitative researchers whose narratives often suggest, albeit implicitly, generalizable correlations and causal relationships between service experiences and subsequent outcomes or behaviors. In composition, these issues are compounded by internal debates over the proper field of inquiry for the discipline, the ways in which knowledge is made, the goals of writing instruction, and the nature of writing assessment.

With the above qualifications in mind, a review of the available literature from both education research and composition studies indicates general consensus that service-learning has a modest but positive impact on student development and academic outcomes. That finding is consistent across both quantitative and qualitative studies from both fields, but Conrad and Hedin note that the qualitative research on service-learning is generally more enthusiastic (746), which is perhaps a sign of what Thomas Newkirk has called "research as advocacy," referring to qualitative researchers' tendency to selectively choose "the most convincing examples of student success" (12).

Before turning to the specific issue of the relationship between service-learning and student writing outcomes, I will offer a brief overview of the broader body of research on service-learning to provide a sense of the range of claims made on behalf of the pedagogy

and its effects on students. *At A Glance: What We Know About the Effects of Service-learning on College Students, Faculty, Institutions, and Communities, 1993-2000*, compiled by Janet Eyler, Dwight Giles, Christine Stenson, and Charlene J. Gray, provides one the most thorough overviews of current research. Many of the studies reviewed in *At a Glance* come from educational research, which often contains theoretical foundations, methodological assumptions, and an empiricist orientation that is more consistent with the social sciences than the humanities, and which sometimes leads to a lack of resonance with the more qualitative-oriented discourse of composition studies and the humanities, a trend noted by Steven North in *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portraits of an Emerging Field*. That said, in the executive summary of *At a Glance*, the authors summarize the findings of over 130 studies, and offer the following conclusions about the effects of service-learning on students:

- Personal Outcomes—surveyed students consistently report that service-learning has a positive effect on their personal development, which variously includes personal efficacy, identity, spiritual growth, moral development, leadership skills, and the ability to work well with others (1).
- Social Outcomes—surveyed students consistently report that service-learning has a positive effect on reducing stereotypes, facilitating cultural and racial understanding, encouraging social responsibility and citizenship skills, and students' commitment to service (1-2).

According to Eyler and Giles, the data on the relationship between service-learning and academic outcomes is less clear. They observe that while students and faculty report that

service-learning has a positive impact on students' academic learning and their ability to apply what they have learned in the real world, the impact of service-learning as measured by course grades or GPA is mixed (*At a Glance 2*). Data also supports the claim that service-learning has a positive impact on students' "complexity of understanding, problem analysis, critical thinking and cognitive development," but the data on the relationship between service-learning and moral development is unclear (*At a Glance 2-5*). In their 1999 book, *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* Eyler and Giles argue that much of the variance in student outcomes can be traced to the quality of service-learning experiences. They maintain that positive outcomes are strongly associated with a number of factors related to course design, including placement quality, which they describe as providing students and community members with productive situations that benefit all involved; application, the degree to which students are able to connect what they experience in their service activities with course content and objectives; reflection, structured, active, and thoughtful consideration about the service-learning experience and its connections to both course content and a student's own identity and place in the world; diversity, the opportunity to work with people from diverse ethnic groups; and community voice, the degree to which service work meets needs identified by members of the community (170-79).

Across the body of educational research on service-learning, however, few studies examine student writing, either as an indicator of cognitive and affective outcomes or in terms of student writing outcomes. Batchelder and Root's 1994 essay in the *Journal of Adolescence*, "Effects of an Undergraduate Program to Integrate Academic Learning and Service: Cognitive, Prosocial Cognitive and Identity Outcomes," used student writing to assess students' moral and cognitive development in service-learning courses. For their

study, the researchers compared two groups of students taking social science courses, one involving service-learning and another enrolled in a related course without a service component, and they then looked for differences in critical thinking, moral thinking, and development of occupational identity (343-45). Both groups of students were asked to write two essays on social problems, one at the beginning of the course and another at the end. Students participating in the service course were asked to write about a problem related to their service experience. Using coding categories adapted from Eisenberg et al.'s work with prosocial reasoning (prosocial refers to behavior performed to benefit others rather than one's self, see Twenge et al.), Batchelder and Root's analysis suggests a statistically weak, but positive relationship between participation in service-learning courses and a range of cognitive and moral outcomes (347-53).

Similarly, Steinke and Fitch, in "Using Written Protocols to Measure Service-learning Outcomes," analyze student writing to gauge two specific academic outcomes: topical expertise and problem solving. For the study, Steinke and Fitch asked 110 students from 12 private colleges to write answers to questions about social problems related to their experience across a variety of service-learning courses (174). To assess the development of cognitive expertise, the researchers modified methods proposed by Graesser and Clark, and Steinke, Long, and Wilkins that attempt to measure expertise by using trained raters to compare student and instructor responses to identical questions (174). As just one example, students were asked to identify "the consequences of people failing to take responsibility for changing the world" (175). Students who responded to the question with something like "things will continue to be more and more of a problem," were "coded as having a shared knowledge statement" if the instructor wrote something akin to "the basic

infrastructure continues to deteriorate” (175). Another coding scheme, adapted from Eyler and Giles (*Where's the Learning*), was used to capture students' problem solving skills (175). For that part of the study, Steinke and Fitch used trained readers to rate students' responses to domain and course specific questions about social problems related to the service experience in terms of their “complexity of consequences, causes, solutions to the problem and the sophistication of personal action strategies” (175). Steinke and Fitch's data analysis produced mixed results across both measures, due in part to methodological issues with both validity and reliability (186). They conclude that while written protocol data has the potential to provide quantitative measures of academic outcomes, their “problem solving measure is only a very modest indicator of intellectual development” (186).

In contrast to much of the service-learning scholarship from education, which contains a quantitative orientation to data gathered via stakeholder surveys and psychometric measures, the contributions of composition researchers to the service-learning literature often reflect distinct theoretical and methodological assumptions about both how scholarly knowledge is made and also about writing and the nature of student learning. Consistent with composition researchers' interest in social issues, a good deal of composition research in service-learning has taken up theoretical interests around the social and political implications of service-learning pedagogy. That body of research has produced generative interrogations of the why's and how's of service-learning, but the relative dearth of research on student outcomes from within composition studies yields a lopsided view of service-learning and its relevance to the field. As such, the next section will focus on

research exploring the specific relationship between service-learning and student learning outcomes, including student writing.

In their 2006 article, "The Impact of Partnership-Centered, Community-Based Learning on First-year Students' Academic Research Papers," Feldman et al. compared the writing of two groups of first-year writers at the University of Illinois-Chicago using a primary trait scoring rubric specifically designed for the course. Using a group of trained readers, the researchers created a corpus of 32 research essays, 16 written by students in a traditional version of the first-year course, and 16 from a similar version of the course, which included a service-learning component as part of the course design (22-23). Early in the analysis, however, raters noticed that certain papers within the corpus contained much more specific topics than other papers in the group and the readers soon concluded that the sample consisted of two separate groups of papers. Methodological problems aside, the raters and the researchers found that the service-learning papers received statistically higher scores on all five dimensions of the scoring rubric, suggesting that the service-learning experience did have a positive impact on readers' perceptions of student writing outcomes compared to students in more traditional versions of first-year writing (23).

Adrian Wurr, in his 2001 dissertation, *The Impact and Effects of Service-Learning on Native and Non-Native English Speaking College Composition Students*, also examines the specific relationship between service-learning and student writing outcomes. Like Feldman et al.'s study, Wurr compared two groups of student essays, one written by students in a composition course with no service-learning component and another written by students participating in a service-learning-based version of the same course. Wurr also used

trained readers to rate students' writing using holistic and primary trait scores, but he additionally used a version of Biber's computer-mediated multi-feature/multi-dimensional method to analyze student writing across two linguistic dimensions (163). The first dimension was designed to capture writers' personal involvement in their topic and the second to measure the level of formality and conceptual abstraction (163). Based on his analysis, Wurr reports statistically significant higher scores in the writing of service-learning students across three categories: logic, coherence, and use of rhetorical appeals, but no statistical difference in the area of grammar and mechanics (167). Students in the service-learning cohort also reported believing their writing had improved more than students in traditional courses (168). In terms of the multi-dimensional linguistic analysis, on the other hand, Wurr reports that students in the traditional courses generally wrote papers that contained both more interactional textual features, such as increased use of the first person pronoun, and demonstrated less distance between the writer and their topics (180). Wurr concludes that such differences point to the significant impact of specific rhetorical situations on writers, and the power of previous writing experiences to shape students' interpretations and reactions to new writing tasks and exigencies (180).

The Changing Environment of Educational Assessment

The work of Batchelder and Root, and Steinke and Fitch, provide modest but encouraging indications of the value of student writing in documenting outcomes for students in service-learning courses. Feldman et al. and Wurr's studies using trained raters, moreover, suggest a positive relationship between service-learning and readers' favorable assessments of student writing that should be of interest to both service-learning practitioners and compositionists. More research examining the role of writing in service-

learning is obviously needed, but it is important to note that the rhetorical situation surrounding such inquiry is increasingly influenced by significant changes in the discourse of US education, specifically in terms of the role of standards and outcomes-based assessment in measuring educational quality. As such, Zlotkowski's call for more systematic examination of service-learning outcomes can be heard as part of a much broader debate throughout the educational establishment, and certainly throughout higher education, about how we think about student learning, its goals, and how it is measured. At a deeper level, the debate reveals significant differences between the ways in which different knowledge domains create knowledge, and perhaps even more importantly, how they translate that knowledge for the broader culture. The problem for service-learning proponents in composition, and indeed composition studies generally, centers on how to capture student success, which we often see as intuitive, personal, and long-term, in a discursive environment that privileges success that is measurable, universal, and discrete. And in terms of the public dissemination of data, composition scholars must figure out a way to negotiate their preference for qualitative, narrative, and inductive data in a policy world dominated by data results that are quantitative, replicable, and deductive.

While the assessment debate takes up longstanding and ongoing conversations about both the goals of education and the ways in which educational quality is measured, the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002 is largely responsible for introducing the terms *outcomes*, *standards*, and *standardized assessment* into the general public's consciousness. No Child Left Behind focused on K-12 education, but the discourse of outcomes-based assessment was extended to higher education with the writing and publication of *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education* by the

Department of Education and Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings in 2006. *A Test of Leadership*, or the Spellings report, as it soon came to be called, signaled the beginnings of a new era in government involvement in higher education, and particularly relevant to this project, the beginnings of a newly politicized approach to the ways in which the goals and outcomes of higher education are justified, assessed, and communicated to stakeholders.

The terms, *outcomes* and *outcomes-based assessment*, which I have used rather freely to this point, are foundational concepts within the current debate over standards and assessment, and refer to a philosophical shift away from the inputs of education (i.e., teachers, instruction, textbooks) towards outputs or results (i.e., student achievement) (Carter, "A Process" 4-5). Outcomes-based education (OBE), grounds the educational experience in the identification and mastery of specific learning objectives, the design of student-centered instructional plans crafted to help each student meet those objectives, and ongoing, systematic assessment of the degree to which students demonstrate mastery of those goals. Outcomes-based education generally rejects measuring student progress in terms of comparisons with other students, and as such opposes practices such as curved grading. Rather, students, and teachers, are assessed to the degree that students master, or fail to master, specific learning objectives. Similarly, OBE proponents reject norm referenced testing that defines mastery in terms of those who score the highest, and alternatively advocate for criterion-based tests that measure mastery in terms of raw performance against pre-determined standards. OBE proponents in the US are also generally interested in standardizing learning objectives and standards of achievement across grade levels and cohort groups (i.e., eighth graders) in ways that allow for

comparison, analysis, and continuous improvement across school districts, states, and institutions.

An important component of outcomes-based education is the development and implementation of reliable and valid forms of assessment that effectively gauge student learning outcomes. One of the major provisions of No Child Left Behind is the requirement that each state develop its own K-12 assessments that can be the basis for intra- and inter-district comparisons of student achievement. Student scores on such exams figure prominently into schools' demonstration of annual yearly progress (AYP), which under NCLB ties student achievement to the dispensation of federal and state funding. Like NCLB, the Spellings report calls on states to develop standardized assessments to measure student outcomes at public colleges and universities. It also instructs states to develop transparent reporting systems that allow consumers and other stakeholders to compare student outcomes across institutions. While draft language in early versions of the Spellings report mandated the development of large-scale standardized assessments at all public colleges and universities, along with legislative triggers that would link institutional assessment efforts to accreditation and funding, such language was ultimately stripped from the report, due in part to disagreement among commission members and strong lobbying from stakeholder organizations such as the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (Field, "Uncertainty Greets Report"). Even without those mandates, publication of the report and its strong outcomes-based orientation signaled commitment at the federal level, and across significant portions of the educational establishment and private sector, to integrate large-scale assessments into the structure of US higher education.

Outcomes-based approaches like those at the core of NCLB and the Spellings report have proponents and critics across the political spectrum, which often results in odd coalitions of groups who strongly oppose each other on most issues. For example, some on the political right like OBE because of the emphasis on standards, accountability, and transparency. Conservative proponents of OBE are often aligned with those on the political left who favor outcomes-based approaches because of the implicit assumption of equality and the belief that all students can and should meet the same learning goals, regardless of their socioeconomic status or subordinated social position. Progressive champions argue that OBE makes it harder for both the state and the general public to ignore the impact of unequal funding on student and school performance, and for schools in poor areas to disguise their lack of effectiveness by simply awarding good grades to those students who do better than their peers, regardless of what they have actually learned. Critiques of outcomes-based approaches, however, can also come from both the right and left. Many conservative critics, such as Phyllis Schlafly of the Eagle Forum, argue that OBE dumbs down the three R's by creating overly vague outcomes or value-laden learning goals shaped by liberal political values rather than educational motives (Manno). Fundamentalist critics arguing from this position often claim that liberal bureaucrats have high-jacked public education intent on inculcating progressive values, such as tolerance, to create a new progressive order (Manno). At the same time, critiques from the political left claim that OBE has an inherently instrumentalist, market-oriented bias intent on making students into employees rather than thinkers. Such a view is common within composition studies, represented most recently by *CCC* articles by J. Blake Scott, Shari Stenberg and Darby Arant Whealy, both of which connect outcomes-based approaches and outcomes-based

assessment with the corporatization of higher education. Stenberg and Whealy's article echoes critiques of OBE from educators who argue that education, and postsecondary education in particular, cannot be reduced to succinct outcomes that can be easily measured on a test. As Mark F. Smith, director of government relations for the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has said, "You can't quantify life transformation" (Field, "Panel Gives Colleges").

The debate over outcomes-based education is mirrored in the related debate over standardized testing and its prominence in NCLB and the Spellings report. Proponents of testing at the K-12 level believe standards and rigorous assessment are critical to measuring student outcomes and to making educators and institutions accountable to stakeholders at the local, state, and national level. Critics, however, argue that high-stakes assessments encourage educators to spend more time teaching students to take tests than on building knowledge and that standardized assessments are culturally biased in favor of white middle class students, fail to take into account regional and local differences, and that test results are easily manipulated to satisfy political agendas far removed from the classroom. Critics also claim that tying student performance on standardized tests to the receipt of educational funding unfairly punishes schools and school districts already disadvantaged in terms of economic resources, facilities, and the socioeconomic status of their students.

Proponents of standardized assessment for colleges and universities make similar appeals to accountability, transparency, and employability, but their arguments are often shaped by an awareness that many college students occupy a transitional space between adolescence and adulthood, and that higher education occupies a similarly contingent

position between the realms of education, citizenship, and work. In the words of Spellings Commission member Robert M. Zemsky, interviewed after publication of the report, "For years higher education has said that we do something very special that only we can understand. We can't do that anymore. An increasing number of people are becoming concerned that it's all smoke and mirrors" (Field, "Panel Gives Colleges"). The outcomes debate in higher education is also strongly influenced by corporate interests who see their futures closely intertwined with the human capital produced by American colleges and universities. Spellings Commission member, Richard Stephens, senior vice president for human resources and administration for Boeing, articulated his company's interest in assessing student and institutional performance. "We receive two million job applications each year," Stephens said. "I want to translate where they went to school into value in the marketplace" (Field, "Panel to Give Colleges").

A number of compositionists have offered critiques of outcomes-based assessment, particularly in terms of its application to writing instruction. Nancy Sommers, citing research by Marilyn Sternglass, Anne Herrington, and Marcia Curtis, argues that the application of outcomes-based approaches to writing contradicts researchers' accumulated knowledge about student writing development. In her essay, "The Call of Research: A Longitudinal View of Writing Development," Sommers points to findings from six longitudinal studies of college writing and argues that "writing development is neither linear nor sequential, nor entirely predictable" (154). In Sommers' words, "(t)he problem with measuring writing development by any set of outcomes is that 'outcomes' reduce education to an endpoint, transferring the focus of instruction from students to written products and leaving both students and teachers behind in the process" (162). She goes on

to argue that undergraduate writing development is extremely difficult to judge because of its variation, and like child development, its lack of discrete endpoints (154).

In “Closed Systems and Standardized Writing Tests,” Chris Anson argues that outcomes-based approaches often incorrectly assume that writing proficiency involves “mapping a discrete set of learned skills onto new tasks in unfamiliar contexts” when in fact writing takes place in open systems that are “contextually mediated, contextually determined,” and “influenced by social and institutional histories, conventions, and expectations” (114). Anson maintains that most large-scale standardized writing assessments, such as the SAT writing test, that instruct students to compose a single-draft, timed response to an excerpted writing sample, conceptualize writing as a closed system and as such, promote a deeply flawed way of thinking about writing proficiency (114). As an alternative, Anson advocates for a view of writing proficiency that foregrounds “adaptive expertise” and the development of rhetorical awareness around issues of genre, voice, and audience (123).

Brian Huot, writing in the May 2007 issue of *College English*, offers a compositionist’s critique of outcomes-based assessment within the specific context of the Spellings report. Huot points out the inherent contradiction between the report authors’ call for standardized, outcomes-based assessment measures, while at the same time claiming that, in the words of the report, “[f]aculty must be at the forefront of defining educational objectives for students and developing meaningful, evidenced-based measures of their progress towards these goals” (quoted in Huot, “Opinion” 519). Citing Bracey and Madaus, Huot goes on to argue that the high-stakes testing systems advocated by the commission have been consistently shown to narrow both curriculum and “the band of

learning experiences that students receive, as educators and policymakers scramble to meet the challenge of raising test scores” (520).

Stenberg and Whealy’s June 2009 *CCC* essay “Chaos Is the Poetry: From Outcomes to Inquiry in Service-learning Pedagogy,” examines the implications of outcomes-based approaches for service-learning. Stenberg and Whealy argue that focusing on quantifying and measuring student performance contradicts the poststructuralist emphasis on “the importance of context, the partiality of knowledge,” and the complex power dynamics present in every classroom (684). Moreover, they express concern that the pressure to justify service-learning in terms of discrete, quantitative assessment measures threatens to flatten out and repress the rich potential of service-learning courses to bring about other kinds of personal and intellectual change that elude clear description. They advocate for pedagogical flexibility that allows for and invites the emergence of new course outcomes, such as the exploration of racial privilege, that are situationally specific and can rarely be identified before a class begins. In such terms, Stenberg and Whealy argue for seeing course outcomes, regardless of their origins, as “ends-in-view” that guide instruction rather than “limit pedagogical possibilities” (683).

The critique of outcomes-based approaches articulated by composition scholars like Sommers, Huot, and Anson, is not universal. In 1999, the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) published the “WPA Outcomes Statement for First-year Composition,” which describes 22 specific outcomes for first-year composition across five categories: rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking-reading-writing, writing processes, knowledge of conventions, and composing in electronic environments (“WPA Outcomes Statement for First-year Composition”). Nancy Sommers has critiqued the outcomes

statement, describing it as sounding “more like the common dream of writing program administrators, an idealized view of writing development, rather than developmental pathways based upon decades of composition research” (153). In 2005, a collection called *The Outcomes Book*, gathered responses on the WPA statement across a range of perspectives from scholars such as Edward White, Kathleen Black Yancey, Cynthia Selfe, Linda Adler-Kassner, Peter Elbow, and Marilyn Sternglass.

While the approach of the “WPA Outcomes Statement” seems consistent with the outcomes-based education movement, compositionists such as Kathleen Black Yancey (*Portfolios, Assessing Writing*), Brian Huot, and Bob Broad have advocated for alternative approaches to assessment that feature, in Chris Anson’s words, “localized contextually sensitive assessments that measure something more than the minimal skills required for reflexive transfer and encourage pedagogies as rich, varied, engaging, purposeful, and interactive as in the world of written discourse” (“Closed Systems” 124). Yancey is well known for her advocacy of writing portfolios and their value in assessing both individual students and writing programs. Brian Huot, author of *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment for Teaching and Learning*, argues for greater interdisciplinary cooperation between assessment scholars in education and composition, and advocates for what he calls instructive assessment that focuses on the value of assessment to improving student learning rather than summative assessment, which focuses on measuring student learning at the conclusion of instruction. Bob Broad, alternatively, in his book *What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing*, examines the disconnects between what writing instructors actually value in student writing versus what is articulated and measured in both holistic rubrics and high-stakes tests. As an alternative, Broad lays out an

intricate assessment framework that he calls Dynamic Criteria Mapping (DCM) that he claims has the potential to more accurately assess the kinds of rhetorical development that writing teachers actually value.

Portfolio approaches and the kinds of contextualized, qualitative frameworks advocated by Huot and Broad reflect a social constructionist conceptualization of writing and a general wariness of the politicized subtexts of outcomes-based assessment. Many of the assumptions built into more localized and contextualized writing assessment frameworks are integrated into the 2008 “NCTE-WPA White Paper on Writing Assessment in Colleges and Universities,” which identifies eleven principles for effective writing assessment (“NCTE-WPA White Paper on Writing Assessment in Colleges and Universities”). The principles emphasize using assessment to improve teaching and learning and to ensure that assessment methods are consistent with the latest writing research.

Compositionists argue that document-based writing tests and other high-stakes writing assessments enact a deeply flawed conceptualization of how people actually write, and as such do little to accurately represent test takers’ rhetorical competencies. As such, compositionists like Yancey, Huot, and Broad, have worked to develop more contextualized, qualitative assessment frameworks consistent with contemporary composition theory. Such efforts, however, still face a significant rhetorical challenge: how to present assessment data generated by such approaches in ways that are persuasive to powerful stakeholder constituencies who want and often demand simple, quantitative judgments about student achievement. Service-learning researchers face a similar philosophical and rhetorical problem. The service-learning literature has generated a good

deal of data on the positive effects of service-learning, but as I have noted, much of that data is based on student self-reporting, and much of it has focused on personal rather than academic outcomes. Service-learning researchers such as Jacoby readily acknowledge the difficulty producing reliable data that goes beyond reports of individual success stories, and as Stenberg and Whealy argue, there continues to be considerable disagreement about whether service-learning can, or even should, produce predictable, quantifiable student outcomes to justify its educational and social value.

From my own perspective as a service-learning practitioner and researcher, I believe that identifying and describing student learning outcomes makes for both good practice and good politics. Like Zlotkowski, I believe that if the service-learning community fails to document student academic outcomes in ways that resonate with our various stakeholders, service-learning will simply go away. At the same time, while I am leery of the political agendas behind many reform movements, I am equally suspicious of any teacher, or discipline, that maintains that what it does is too magical, or unpredictable, to both describe what it is supposed to accomplish, and to discern if those goals are being achieved by students and teachers. And so the question becomes, if service-learning does in fact produce accounts of student learning worth telling and worth doing, how can we as practitioners and researchers share such data in ways that will have rhetorical power not only in our own departments, but in the wider worlds of public policy and civic discourse?

Theoretical Foundations

Genre Theory

In an attempt to document and describe student writing outcomes in service-learning courses, I have chosen genre theory and genre analysis as my primary theoretical

frame and mode of inquiry. I have chosen genre for three reasons. First, recent work in genre theory has provided scholars with powerful ways to think about the social function of texts in considering rhetorical features and their interaction in complex social contexts. As such, genre theorists' interest in social function and rhetorical outcomes looks to what texts do rather than what they indicate about the internal subjectivities of individual writers in a way that circumvents many of the methodological difficulties found in social science studies such as Steinke and Fitch's work that attempt to isolate and measure changes in internal cognitive processes. Moreover, genre theorists' interest in the relationship between text and context, while relevant to the analysis of all writing, is particularly applicable to writing done in service-learning courses where students write for, with, and about different kinds of purposes and audiences that often depart from the traditional academic audience and purpose. My second reason for choosing genre is that, like other forms of discourse analysis, genre analysis encourages the exploration of patterns across related texts, but genre theorists' keen interest in the relationship between textual features and social function and their combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques provide an approach to describing and presenting data that can have persuasive power for constituencies outside of disciplinary circles. That is, genre analysts' descriptions of the rhetorical achievements of both individual writers and groups of writers in the broader context of textual function avoid the tendency of social science research to isolate findings beyond general significance and the tendency in the humanities to generalize from individual cases. Finally, I believe genre theory and genre analysts' capacity to produce knowledge about groups of texts in context will contribute to the search in composition for

theoretically sound, cost effective, and rhetorically powerful ways of assessing student writing and service-learning programs where student writing plays a major role.

In the introductory chapter to the 1994 anthology *Genre and the New Rhetoric*, Freedman and Medway observe that traditional definitions of genre articulated via literary theory emphasize textual regularities in attempts to properly classify particular kinds of works (1). For more recent conceptualizations of genre, however, Freedman and Medway trace several lines of scholarly inquiry that coalesce around the notion of genres as socially constructed, typified forms of rhetorical action. Freedman and Medway's intellectual mapping of contemporary genre theory begins with Kenneth Burke and the resurgence of rhetorical theory in the 1950s (3-4). Specifically, Burke and sociologists of science like Kuhn, Latour, and Woolgar, are credited with elucidating the primacy of the symbolic function of language in the creation of all knowledge claims (Freedman and Medway 3). Next, Freedman and Medway look to social constructionism, as articulated in the work of figures such as Richard Rorty and compositionist Kenneth Bruffee, for providing insights into the ways in which knowledge and discourse are socially determined to meet "communal needs, goals, and contexts" (4-5). Freedman and Medway also note Toulmin's work on the social nature of argument, John Austin's scholarship in speech act theory, and linguist John Swales' discussion of discourse communities that organize and manage communicative activity around distinct social ends as important theoretical strands (5-6). Lastly, Bakhtin's writing on speech genres, which explores the tension between the typification and flexibility of generic forms, is cited for its continuing relevance to genre theory and its application across a range of communicative contexts (6-7).

Carolyn Miller's 1984 essay "Genre as Social Action," continues to be perhaps the most significant touchstone for the development of contemporary genre theory in composition and rhetoric, particularly for the way it synthesizes previous work on genre to provide a cogent, interdisciplinary framework for approaching the interplay between textual forms and their social function. Miller's self-described impetus for the essay centers on reconciling discrepant definitions of genre originating from literary theory, rhetorical criticism, and rhetorical theory, which variously defined genre in terms of similarities in textual forms, audience, strategy, and modes of thinking (23). Extending the work of rhetoricians Campbell and Jamieson, Miller offers a definition of genre based on the action a particular form of discourse is designed to achieve (24). Miller argues that rather than focusing on the utility of genre as a form of classification, which can entail a stifling reductivism, the value of genre study comes from the "social and historical aspects" of rhetorical action that other theoretical perspectives elide or ignore (24). The framework she advocates is designed to avoid the tendency for deductive theory to create closed sets and alternatively attempts to embrace rhetorical practice as it actually lives in the world (26). Key for Miller is the notion that recurrence, in terms of the typification of rhetorical situations and communicative action, is socially rather than materially defined (29). This opens a space for the role of interpretation in the ways in which rhetors react to situations and make use of the communicative resources "on hand" to formulate responses (29). Situations that are interpreted as recurrent, taken together with past responses, lead to typified responses that bend or break depending on the knowledge and familiarity of particular rhetors.

Charles Bazerman is perhaps the compositionist best known for extending and applying Miller's re-conceived notion of genre. Bazerman has defined genres as "frames for social action," ("The Life of Genre" 19) and across a number of chapters, essays, and his 1988 book *Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science*, in which he articulates a conceptualization of genre as typified textual responses that both condition human action as they themselves continually evolve in response to changing rhetorical exigencies and social contexts. Like Miller, Bazerman advocates for looking beyond identifying textual features and patterns of features to the relationships between features and their social context.

Two of Bazerman's most significant contributions to genre theory are oriented around the concept of intertextuality, and his formulation of genre systems and sets. In "Intertextuality: How Texts Rely on Other Texts," Bazerman defines intertextuality as "the explicit and implicit relations that a text or utterance has to prior, contemporary and potential future texts" (86). Studying intertextuality, Bazerman argues, allows analysts to examine how writers position themselves in relation to the texts around them and conversely, how texts represent and locate writers within broader systems of social representation and meaning (84). Bazerman identifies six levels of intertextuality, including instances in which writers draw on texts for specific information, as in academic citation, and situations in which a writer appropriates another text's style, tone, or phrasing (87). Bazerman also identifies various techniques of intertextual representation, including quotations, direct references, commentary, and evocation of specific language forms and patterns of expression (88-89). The concept of intertextuality enables analysts to

take stock of the texts and genres available to writers during the composing process and to locate the discourses that bear on rhetors' communicative action.

In related terms, Bazerman's notion of genre systems and sets have contributed to genre theorists' capacity to provide ways of thinking about how individual texts are related to larger arrays and hierarchies of textual forms and social contexts. Bazerman defines a genre set as a "collection of types of texts someone in a particular role is likely to produce," and by example he cites proposals, progress reports, and safety evaluations that a civil engineer is likely to produce (318). At a higher level of organization is the genre system, comprised of the "genre sets of people working together in an organized way, plus the patterned relations in the production, flow, and use of these documents" (318). As an example, Bazerman points to the documents a professor produces for a particular course: the syllabus, assignments, course notes, and the larger genre system of the entire course which includes not only the instructor's texts, but those of the students in the course, and those of the university, such as the code of conduct or class evaluations that play some role in the course (318). The course example also illustrates Bazerman's next level of organization, the activity system, that describes the orienting framework behind genre sets and systems and is designed to broaden that analytical horizon of exploring the relationships between texts and social phenomena (319). Bazerman identifies factory production as one example of a system of activity that includes smaller genre systems and sets, all of which constitute a hierarchical network of rhetorical relations between individuals, genres, and their regulating systems (319).

Bazerman's conceptual framework is representative of North American genre theorists working out of Miller's definition. In slight contrast to this research, theorists

associated with what is called the Sydney School of genre have developed their own lines of inquiry influenced by Australian linguist M.K. Halliday and his work in systemic functional linguistics. Halliday's central concept, register, connotes a level of a text's context involving three components: field, which refers to "what a text is about;" tenor, which describes the "interpersonal relations in a text;" and mode, which involves ways of understanding how a "text interacts with the world" (Cope and Kalantzis 14). Halliday's work influenced a number of theorists, including J.R. Martin and Gunther Kress, who in terms similar to Miller conceived of genre as a social process that both shapes and is shaped by human communicative action. Perhaps most importantly, the Sydney School has become associated with the advocacy of using the principles of genre theory in the design of pedagogical programs committed to helping socially subordinated students to develop a functional awareness and facility with dominant discourses (*The Powers of Literacy*). The approach of the Sydney School to teach students to use genres has been criticized by North American theorists as being reductionist, overly prescriptive, and ineffective (Freedman, "Do As I Say"; Luke, "Genres of Power?").

Writing outside of the Sydney School but equally influenced by Halliday, genre theorist Vijay Bhatia has made significant contributions to genre theory via a series of articles and two widely cited monographs, *Analysing Genre: Language in Professional Settings* (1993) and *Worlds of Written Discourse: A Genre-Based View* (2004). In *Worlds of Written Discourse*, Bhatia argues for a sociocognitive view of genre that pays particular attention to the complex interaction between rhetorical context, performance, and generic integrity, a concept he uses to describe the degree to which the form and function of texts stray from their original genres (*Analysing Genre* 146). As an example of the concept of

generic integrity, Bhatia compares the differences between a scientific research article published in a scholarly journal with a modified account of the same data in a popular magazine or trade journal (*Analysing Genre* 146). Bhatia's theoretical framework is grounded in what he calls "a multi-perspective four-space model" that examines discourse across four interactive dimensions: textual, tactical, social, and professional (*Worlds of Discourse* 19). Bhatia's framework enables analysts to explore discourse and generic performance across a range of vantage points, from experts to novice users, and from producers as well as users. It also allows for a full consideration of the power of genres to both constrain and empower rhetorical agency across a variety of social positions.

The epistemological foundation of genre analysis reflects Steven North's description of his own approach in *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, which he describes as "rational arguments founded on textual evidence" (5). The nature of genre analysts' approach to the production of knowledge can also be situated in research taxonomies such as the one suggested by John Creswell in his book *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Creswell's framework describes research as falling across four categories, defined by the nature of the knowledge claims researchers make. Creswell's four categories include postpositivism, rooted in the scientific method, constructivism, which emphasizes the socially constructed nature of all knowledge, pragmatism, which is problem-centered, pluralistic, and practice-oriented, and finally advocacy/participatory approaches that are issue-oriented and focused on political change (6). Genre analysis is a mixed methods approach that depending on its user and object of inquiry, combines empirical observation with theoretical induction in different ways. As such, it can be seen as a kind of epistemological hybrid of constructivist and pragmatic

approaches. Genre analysis is constructivist in the way it relies on rational inductive arguments to argue for a certain way of seeing and reading texts and textual practices. But it can also be highly pragmatic, particularly in the way it has been used by applied linguists such as Swales and Bhatia in the search for more effective ways of teaching English in EAP and ESL settings (Swales, *Genre Analysis*; Bhatia, *Analyzing Genre*).

In their chapter, "Form, Text Organization, Genre, Coherence, and Cohesion," in the *Handbook of Research on Writing* edited by Charles Bazerman, John Swales and Christine Tardy provide an overview of the different strands of genre analysis that have emerged since the publication of Miller's work. Work by applied linguists like Swales, Bhatia, and Ken Hyland have looked at the dynamism and durability of genres, with a particular focus on professional and academic genres such as the research article (569). Another strand led by applied linguists has explored generic structure and the relationship between substance, form, and context. Research in this area has explored organizational differences between different kinds of texts (Hyland), analysis of the rhetorical moves in texts (Swales, *Aspects, Genre Analysis*), and analysis of specific parts of texts, such as introductions and methods sections (Swales, *Aspects*). More recently, Bhatia's work has explored non-academic texts, such as brochures and fundraising letters, and texts with high degrees of hybridity that display an even greater reliance on social context for the construction of meaning (569).

In slight contrast to genre theorists' interest in durability and structure, which has by and large been led by applied linguists, additional lines of inquiry have emerged led by compositionists. Bazerman and Amy Devitt have been key figures in research exploring intertextuality and the ways in which related genres can be seen as systems or sets. In a related area, David Russell has attempted to merge activity theory, which looks at the goal-

directed, socially mediated nature of human interaction, with genre theory to examine the impact of social and developmental dimensions of discourse (Bazerman, *Handbook* 571). Research examining the role of social interaction in genre theory has also led to work exploring the relationship between genre, identity, and subjectivity. Bazerman, who is frequently interested in the ways genres function as mediating forces between individuals and discourse communities, engages in this line of inquiry, and relates it to scholarship by critical discourse theorists such as Norman Fairclough.

Recent genre analysis research also provides a productive framework for thinking about student writing. In "Situating 'Genre' and Situated Genres: Understanding Student Writing from a Genre Perspective," Aviva Freedman argues for the value of genre theory in exploring both what students can accomplish via writing and how they do it (179). Drawing on Miller's conceptualization of genres as typified social actions, Freedman maintains that action connotes both situation and motive, and she uses that approach to look at the ways students learn and employ classroom genres (180). In studying differences between student writers in different courses, Freedman argues that classroom genres connote an epistemic motive that enables students to apprehend and interpret reality in new ways (182). In hypothesizing how students learn new genres, and consistent with other North American genre scholars, Freedman maintains that the students she studied did not imitate genre models; rather they learned through co-participation with other students and other texts embedded in the educational context (186). Freedman concludes her chapter by arguing that genres allow students to experiment with new subject positions and new identities and that the study of genre provides a methodology for

examining the interplay between student writers and the social context of the classroom (189).

In another essay from the *Genre and Writing* collection, Ruth M. Mirtz considers the argument that student writing is an “inferior genre of non-generic novice writing” (193). Rather than reading student writing as the product of the uninitiated and inexperienced, Mirtz proposes seeing student writing as a metagenre, a kind of “experimental, knowledge-building writing which contains many other kinds of writing (194). Like Freedman, Mirtz foregrounds the epistemic function of student writing. For Mirtz, recognizing student writing as a legitimate genre opens the door to developing genre-oriented pedagogies that sidestep the historical conflation of genre with the teaching of the modes while also opening new areas of inquiry exploring knowledge-making genres (195). As the editors of *Genre and Writing* argue, genre study provides teachers and students a rich way of “thinking about thinking” (178).

Bazerman’s work with genre provides a particularly productive theoretical and methodological frame for thinking about student writing. For Bazerman, “The study of classroom genres is not about defining the minimal requirements of any old statement, but about releasing the full power of the well-chosen statement that speaks to the full psychological, social, and educational dynamics of the setting” (“The Life of Genre” 24). By extension, Bazerman’s work with questions of intertextuality and the relationship between genre and identity are particularly generative for thinking about student writing (Tardy and Swales 570-571). The concepts of genre system and genre sets, which Bazerman uses to describe the collection of “interrelated genres that interact with each other in specific settings,” provide a lens for examining intertextuality in the ways student texts are

constituted and situated within other genres, such as when students combine features of personal narrative with those of the research essay (97).

Freedman, Mirtz, and Bazerman's scholarship demonstrates the relevance and potential of genre analysis for the study of student writing. Their work also suggests a number of generative frames from genre theory that are directly applicable to student writing in service-learning settings. Bazerman's interest in intertextuality and hybridity opens the door to questions about how student writers in service settings appropriate textual and rhetorical features from other kinds of writing and modify what they know about different genres to negotiate the complex rhetorical tasks of the service-learning classroom. In similar terms, Freedman's interest in how students learn to use and exploit new genres for their own communicative ends goes to the core of educational objectives which focus on introducing students to new audiences and novel rhetorical tasks designed to foster both competency and awareness. Finally, Mirtz' desire to see student writing as a meaning-making genre distinct from the traditional research report or persuasive essay, creates a vantage point for thinking about the kinds of knowledge-making activities students engage in when they write, a perspective which can have special meaning in exploring student writing in service courses where students are encouraged to engage in both the creation of knowledge and critical reflection about their own subject positions.

Recently, genre theory and analysis have also been employed in attempts at rearticulating the ends and means of assessment activities, particularly in light of the outcomes-based education movement. In his 2007 *CCC* essay, "Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines," Michael Carter describes an institution-wide assessment initiative at his university which included efforts to help faculty identify student outcomes,

including field-specific writing outcomes, for their courses. As a writing in the disciplines (WID) practitioner, Carter was particularly interested in using assessment activities to help faculty to see student writing outcomes not as a generalizable set of skills sitting outside disciplinary knowledge, but as epistemologically embedded “ways of doing” (385). Building on the work of Miller, Bazerman, and Russell, Carter uses genre theory to examine the different kinds of outcomes faculty describe in terms of their respective functions within disciplines. He suggests that course outcomes can be understood as representing different metagenres, or “genres of genres,” that highlight disciplinary ways of making knowledge via problem solving, empirical inquiry, research from sources, and performance (393). While the structure of the modern research university tends to segregate the production of knowledge via disciplinary boundaries, Carter argues that a genre perspective presents an alternative view of knowledge making in the academy, oriented around metadisicplines, or constellations of fields that share ways of doing and knowing (410).

Project Overview-Research Questions

This project uses genre theory and analysis to study student writing as a way of describing the rhetorical outcomes of student writing in service-learning courses. The questions that motivate the study come from three related areas of concern. The first relates to evaluating claims about service-learning and its impact on student learning. As my earlier literature review suggests, there is now a considerable body of literature on service-learning that showcases research narratives in which students, or student texts, communicate increased awareness of complex social issues or personal development in their tolerance of difference or facility with a particular kind of skill. Many of these studies, however, suffer from what Thomas Newkirk has called “research as advocacy,” in which

individual success stories are held up as representative of general trends (12). As a service-learning practitioner, my belief is that service-learning really is capable of producing the kinds of outcomes claimed for the pedagogy both within composition and across the academy. In using genre analysis to examine patterns of outcomes across groups of student texts, I hope to evaluate some of these claims with an eye towards improving disciplinary understanding of the effects of service-learning and developing more educationally and ethically sound service-learning pedagogies.

The second area of concern motivating this study comes from Edward Zlotkowski's call for more rigorous examination of the relationship between service-learning and academic outcomes. As a composition instructor, my particular interest is in the relationship between service-learning and student writing. Like Zlotkowski, I believe that the social agenda for service-learning has frequently overshadowed its academic value. That tendency goes against my own conceptualization of the mission of writing instruction, and perhaps more importantly, I believe it also poses a practical threat to the future of service-learning. Genre analysis, in its combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative, interpretive description, provides a lens for describing student outcomes in ways that will have rhetorical power for the field as well as interested stakeholders within and outside the university.

Finally, using genre analysis to think about student outcomes in service-learning courses is an attempt to contribute to the conversation, already well underway in composition, to articulate theoretically and methodologically sound frameworks for writing assessment in an increasingly politicized educational environment oriented around outcomes and outcomes-based assessment. While sympathetic to arguments about the role

of outcomes in achieving greater accountability across the educational spectrum, I believe that the rhetorically and contextually situated nature of writing warps efforts to reduce writing competence to a set of discrete skills that can be easily measured (Anson, "Closed Systems"; Carter, "The Idea of Expertise"). As such, this study will use genre theory to build on the work of compositionists like Michael Carter who have attempted to use genre approaches in designing sound assessment practices ("A Process").

Motivated by the theoretical concerns described above, this study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What are the key elements that shape the pedagogical context of service-learning courses and their genre sets?
 - What are the key elements from composition and the service-learning the literature?
 - What are the key elements from the institutional context?
 - What are the key elements from the local, community-based context?
2. What can genre analysis tell us about student writing in service-learning courses?
 - What are the predominant rhetorical features of service-learning writing?
 - What roles do intertextuality and generic hybridity play in student service-learning writing?
 - What are the major rhetorical outcomes for students in service-learning courses?

- Can instructional objectives like critical consciousness and civic engagement be rhetorically and linguistically defined? If so, how?
3. Can genre theory and the genre analysis of service-learning writing be used to improve the assessment of service-learning courses and our understanding of service-learning pedagogy? If so, how?
 4. What does a genre analysis of student writing say about the future of service-learning courses?

Methods and Methodology

The student writing at the core of this project comes from four sections of a service-learning–based intermediate writing course I taught between September 2000 and April 2002. As I discuss earlier in the chapter, these courses involved undergraduates working as mentors with middle school students enrolled in an after school enrichment program. Per the course syllabus (Appendix A), which I describe in more detail in the next chapter, students in the course used ethnographic observation and writing techniques to inscribe their service experience, to connect their observations with course readings, and to reflect on the impact of their own subject positions on their relationships with their middle school mentees and their writing. In addition to keeping a fieldnote journal, I asked students to produce three ethnographic essays: two four to five page papers that asked students to describe and reflect on their mentoring experience, and a ten to twelve page end-of-the-semester final project that asked students to develop a thematic argument about their experience (Appendix B). These final projects took on a variety of issues related to youth

culture and the service experience, including the challenges to building mentoring relationships, hip-hop culture, racism and education, and computers and literacy.

My primary analytical framework comes from genre theory and analysis work by Bazerman and Anthony Paré and Graham Smart. The most concise description of Bazerman's method of analysis comes from his 1988 book *Shaping Written Knowledge*, in which he analyzes the ways in which knowledge is produced in texts across a variety of academic disciplines. He argues that genre analysis, while unable to provide clear evidence on either the actual intentions of writers or the understandings of readers, does uncover "the intentions and meanings available" in texts (24). As such, Bazerman's method of inquiry focuses on four specific contexts of academic writing: the object under study in the text, intertextuality with other genres, audience, and expressions of authorial identity (24).

Building on Bazerman, Anthony Paré and Graham Smart, in "Observing Genres in Action: Towards a Research Methodology," construct an approach to genre analysis that combines interest in textual features and relationship to context. Intended for workplace genres, their approach is also well-suited for studying a variety of genres, like those found in classrooms, where genres are learned and appropriated by novice users. Paré and Smart argue their approach makes it possible to answer a range of questions about genres, their users, and their social function (153). Central to their framework is a focus on studying regularities across texts, regularities in textual features, social roles, composing processes, and reading practices (147-52). Implicated in their method, however, are two cautions. First, they reiterate the claim made by many genre theorists that while genres imply stability, both socially and rhetorically, genres and the situations they inhabit are inherently complex and dynamic (153). In related terms, Paré and Smart caution that the

rhetorical complexity of genres requires a persistent awareness of the ongoing interplay between context and genre and of the ways each influence the other over the course of changing rhetorical conditions (153).

The research design for this project raises a number of methodological issues that warrant discussion and some degree of justification. The first has to do with the fact that I will be studying student work produced in courses that I taught. The majority of discourse and genre analysis studies deal with writing corpuses disconnected from the researcher in such a direct way. Bazerman's study of experimental articles in science, *Shaping Written Knowledge*, and Bhatia's analysis of legal argument in *Analysing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings*, are just two examples of topical, historical genre studies, focusing on corpuses with which the authors have only intellectual concern. In contrast, I have chosen to study writing that I have taught and have had at least some role in shaping. The theoretical justification for studying student writing from my own courses combines a self-interested and methodological rationale. The self-interested rationale is perhaps obvious: as a composition instructor, I am personally and professionally interested in the writing of my students. I was not familiar with genre theory when I taught these courses, so there is something both intellectually satisfying and intriguing about approaching student work with a new theoretical frame, leaving behind the practical pressures of grading, scheduling, and course preparation. The methodological justification for the choice of my corpus comes primarily from the scholarship on teacher research. In *The Practice of Theory: Teacher Research in Composition*, Ruth Ray argues that teacher research, which includes both the study of other teachers and one's own teaching practice, represents an attempt to re-theorize the traditional split between theory and practice by repositioning teaching, and

the analysis of teaching practice, as a valid form of inquiry and discourse (77). For Ray, seeing one's own teaching practice as a site of intellectual inquiry is both an epistemological and political move that challenges the subordination of teaching to research and of theory to practice. As Ray points out, perhaps the most powerful argument against studying work based in one's own practice is the obvious specter of bias, the notion that one's own investment in data can distort a researcher's perspective and professional objectivity (64). Beyond the obvious response that the social construction of knowledge undermines almost all claims of pure objectivity, I argue that my role as the primary audience of my students' writing, together with my interest in improving the teaching and assessment of service-learning courses, justifies both the object and method of inquiry.

It is important to note that this project is not a comparative study. I do not compare student writing produced in my courses to writing done in courses without a service-learning component, nor do I compare writing produced in my course to writing composed in other service-learning courses, either within my department's composition program or across similar classes at other institutions. In the earliest days of this project, I asked myself if service-learning made students better writers. The question itself is not, on its face, unreasonable. Indeed, the genus of that question, which asks if one pedagogy is better than another at achieving a certain outcome, is basic to the educational enterprise. Conrad and Hedin have articulated the inherent difficulties in establishing a causal connection between service-learning and specific student outcomes, yet my literature view describes the research of those who believe that service-learning generally produces superior written work. Adrian Wurr's dissertation, which I described earlier, argues that trained readers consistently rate service-learning essays higher than similar essays from non-

service-learning courses. Similar studies, using other theoretical frameworks, such as Feldman et al.'s study, have yielded more mixed results. Wurr's findings withstanding, my working hypothesis is that there is no reason to believe that the student writing produced in service-learning courses is better, in terms of the linguistic measures of writing development often identified in the development literature, than writing produced in other courses. Yet there is some reason to believe, given the results of Feldman's et al.'s research and to a lesser extent, the findings of Steinke and Fitch, that trained raters do find service-learning papers more interesting, more complex, and adding my own hunch to the list, more rhetorically engaged. Rooted in genre theory, my interest is much more grounded in the social function of student writing and its relationship to the context of service-learning classrooms. That is, I am more interested in describing what students accomplish rhetorically in their service-learning writing and the degree to which student writing exhibits rhetorical features that match those qualities desired by service-learning practitioners. As such, my intent is to describe the rhetorical outcomes of a particular group of students in a particular service-learning setting. While I am interested in documenting individual cases, I also identify patterns of outcomes across the entire corpus that will suggest themes for application and inquiry for both other service-learning settings and writing classrooms generally.

I also want to acknowledge the absence of observational and student interview data in the project. The role of writer data is a topic of some ambivalence in genre analysis, primarily because of the way in which the object of inquiry in genre analysis differs from that of much composition research done in the wake of the field's interest in process and subjectivity. Genre theory, alternatively, and its revitalization following the publication of

Miller's essay, invites new attention to student writing as cultural products worthy of inquiry. Faigley, in discussing what he calls "the most vexed question in composition studies," (22) notes that subjectivity cannot be "read off" of texts (110). Atkinson, alternatively, in describing the interpretive nature of discourse analysis, argues for the importance of studying texts and suggests that researchers can "read off" (in an echo of Faigley's phrase) important clues about the social contexts that lead to rhetorical action (xx). Recently, researchers such as John Swales have begun to incorporate the voices of writers, gathered through interviews, observations, and text commentaries, into explorations of the lives of discourse communities. Swales' 1998 book *Other Floors, Other Voices: A Textography of a Small University Building*, examines written communication in a building housing offices from a variety of departments and service functions. As the title suggests, Swales' method combines both genre analysis and ethnographic observation to describe the social role of writing in the discourse communities represented by those who work in the building. The absence of ethnographic and interview data in the current study is methodologically consistent with the focus of my inquiry on rhetorical outcomes rather than student subjectivities, but I acknowledge that the lack of such data is a potential source of tension for readers who prefer more naturalistic approaches to data and study participants.

Chapter Overviews

Chapter Two: The Generic Context of the Service-Learning Classroom

In the next chapter, I present a descriptive analysis of the context and genre set at the heart of the project. I begin by exploring Charles Bazerman and Amy Devitt's conceptualization of the relationship between context and genre along with their notions of

genre sets and systems. I then turn to mapping the key contextual elements of the service-learning course at the center of the project. I begin with a description of influences from composition and the service-learning literature and then move to a consideration of the institutional and local setting. I conclude the chapter by identifying and describing the pedagogical context and the various texts making up the genre set and their relationship to the course's instructional objectives.

Chapter Three: A Genre Analysis of Service-Learning Writing

In this chapter, I present findings from the genre analysis of student texts. Drawing on work by Bazerman, Devitt, and Paré and Smart, I describe my method of analysis and then describe the textual and sociocognitive dimensions of students' service-learning writing. I begin by exploring the claims made on behalf of writing in service-learning courses, with a particular focus on settings in which students write about community participants in connection with ethnographic pedagogy. With those claims in mind, I present a contextual representation of rhetorical outcomes that does not ignore individual student outcomes but seeks patterns of outcomes across texts with a consideration of the significance of those patterns for service-learning pedagogy, course design, and assessment.

Chapter Four: Service-Learning Writing and Assessment

In this chapter, I make an argument for the use of genre theory in developing writing assessment tools that are consistent with knowledge about the socially and rhetorically situated nature of what Bhatia calls "generic competence" (*Worlds of Written Discourse* 142). I begin by reviewing recent developments in outcomes-based assessment along with attempts in composition studies to develop more theoretically sound methods

of writing assessment and writing program assessment, including work by Brian Huot, Bob Broad, and Michael Carter. I then re-approach findings from chapters two and three to suggest ways in which genre theory can be used to construct assessment tools that produce meaningful data for a range of educational and political stakeholders.

Chapter Five: Implications for the Future of Service-Learning in Composition

In this concluding chapter, I review my findings, consider the limitations of the project, and suggest avenues for further inquiry. I begin with a discussion of the utility, limitations, and potential of genre analysis projects that combine discourse analysis and assessment. The balance of the chapter offers implications for service-learning, and my thoughts about the future of service-learning within composition and its role within English Studies and the 21st century university.

CHAPTER TWO: THE GENERIC CONTEXT OF THE SERVICE-LEARNING CLASSROOM

In this chapter, I examine the generic context of the service-learning course at the center of this project using methods adapted from genre theorists Amy Devitt and Charles Bazerman. I begin by reviewing the service-learning literature for claims made by practitioners about the role of student writing in community-based courses. Next, I provide an overview of the pedagogical context for service-learning at Wayne State University, in WSU's Composition and Rhetoric Program, and in the intermediate writing course I taught. I then explore Devitt's conceptualizations of genre sets and genre systems as a way of providing a theoretical frame for my description of the genres active in my course and their relationship to instructional outcomes. Through that frame, I present my findings and conclude the chapter with a discussion about the relationship between context and student writing as a way of leading into the analysis of student writing that I present in chapter three.

In chapter one, I provided an overview of Deans' typology of service-learning writing which is oriented around the relationship between student writing and community participants. I begin this chapter by revisiting Deans' typology as a way of mapping service-learning practitioners' goals for student writing. I argue that what unites all three models is the assumption, consistent with contemporary genre theory, that writing in service-learning courses is a kind of rhetorical action that, when paired with written reflection, can be a powerful learning experience for student writers.

The writing produced in service-learning courses is designed to have benefits for all involved, although as I have said before, the distribution of outcomes between students and community members can vary widely depending on the design of a given course and its

delivery. In Deans' writing *for* paradigm, students produce texts designed to accomplish community goals either in consultation with or with direction from community stakeholders, as when students design an informational brochure for a domestic abuse center or a membership appeal for a non-profit organization. In such settings, students get experience writing for real audiences in authentic writing situations involving issues that community members deem important. Community participants, alternatively, receive texts or assistance writing texts that accomplish the goals of their group. The writing *for* model is focused on orienting students to workplace literacies and to developing in-depth knowledge in specific domains related to their projects and coursework (*Writing Partnerships* 55). According to instructor Laurie Gullion, whose course Deans profiles in *Writing Partnerships*, "The biggest goal...is that students have an exposure to a real client relationship where they're tailoring their writing to an exceedingly clear audience" (quoted in Deans 59).

Students participating in writing *with* models, alternatively, collaborate with community members to produce texts that engage local problems, such as the project Peck, Flower, and Higgins describe in which students worked with teenagers to develop a dialogue-based protocol to foster communication between teens and adults dealing with the problem of school suspensions ("Community Literacy"). For Peck, Flower, and Higgins, the writing *with* model they describe is centered on the development of community literacy, which they define as "action and reflection...that yoke community action with intercultural education, strategic thinking and problem-solving with observation-based research and theory building" (573). The goal of such instruction is to foster a process "in which writers construct a negotiated meaning, rising to greater reflective awareness of the

multiple voices and sometimes conflicting forces their meanings need to entertain” (582). Deans describes Flower’s goals for student and community participant writing as encouraging the production of texts “that do not simply critique or express, but also problem-solve, instigate social action, and intervene in the world (*Writing Partnerships* 120). Reflecting the collaborative, intercultural nature of the service experience, Flower insists that students include in their texts “multiple voices (personal/expressive voice, teens’ voices, academic voices) and cultural perspectives” (*Writing Partnerships* 133).

Deans’ third paradigm encompasses service-learning settings in which students write *about* their service-learning experiences, often as participant observers using ethnographic techniques, sometimes using other qualitative methods such as reflective journals, participant interviews, or case studies. As I did in the first chapter, I will spend more time discussing the writing *about* model because it was the primary form of writing students engaged in for the course on which this project is based.

In their co-authored chapter in *Writing the Community*, “Service-Learning: Bridging the Gap Between the Real World and the Composition Classroom,” Wade Dorman and Susann Fox Dorman describe a course they taught in which students wrote about their time volunteering in a community agency. Students in the course had their choice of different kinds of writing assignments, including an evaluation essay and a more typical end-of-the-semester research paper (125). Consistent with much of the service-learning literature, Dorman and Dorman report that students credited the course with having a positive impact on life skills such as leadership, self-confidence, and civic responsibility, which they define as interest in effecting social change (124). But the authors also report positive writing outcomes for students, including enhanced investment in their written arguments,

“greater awareness of audience,” increased “awareness of the realities of the situation they were writing about,” more thorough research, and a greater sense of personal satisfaction with their writing (126).

Elsewhere in *Writing the Community*, in a chapter entitled “Combining the Classroom and the Community: Service-Learning in Composition at Arizona State University,” Gay Brack and Leanna Hall describe a writing *about* course in which students worked as reading tutors for elementary school students and then wrote research papers linking their service experiences with issues of literacy and social justice. Like Dorman and Dorman, Brack and Hall note the social benefits of the service experience, which they define as the “opportunity to interact with culturally diverse populations” (151). In contrast to Dorman and Dorman, however, Brack and Hall’s claims about student writing outcomes are more ambiguous. “Service-learning students,” Brack and Hall write, “are more motivated to write because they are writing with a purpose,” and “they not only engage in more research activities but eagerly share this research with classmates” (151). They conclude by arguing that “while writing in such a real-world context will not guarantee more engaged writing from every student, such a context is for many students a necessary condition for engagement” (151).

Bruce Herzberg’s widely cited essay “Community Service and Critical Teaching,” also identifies some specific features of student writing that he associates with the writing *about* paradigm. Herzberg’s particular take on service-learning pedagogy is rooted in the goals of critical pedagogy, which Herzberg, citing Knoblauch, defines as helping students to “see and analyze” their assumptions about social issues (65). As such, students in the course Herzberg describes do not focus their writing exclusively on the service experience,

but rather cite their experiences in writing that takes on issues such as poverty, homelessness, and addiction. In terms of student writing outcomes, Herzberg notes that the final papers in his course demonstrated a “growing sophistication about the social forces at work,” “a sense of life as a communal project, an understanding of the way that social institutions affect our lives, and a sense that our responsibility for social justice includes but also carries beyond personal acts of charity” (65-66).

Many service-learning practitioners who use writing *about* models in their classes are influenced by ethnographic pedagogy, which appropriates ethnographic techniques such as participant observation, the composition and coding of observation-based fieldnotes, reflection, and narrative inscription as an instructional frame for student activities outside the service experience. Proponents, including Faigley, Moss, Bishop, Reiff, and Zebroski, argue that ethnographic research positions students to critically observe and explore the relationships between rhetoric and behavior (Reiff 42). Faigley, without mentioning service-learning specifically, argues that student-authored mini-ethnographies invite writers to explore how culture is produced, circulated, and consumed in local contexts (218-19). In similar terms, Seitz argues that what he calls “an ethnographic habit of mind,” which emphasizes inductive theory building and engagement in local contexts, enacts a critical literacy in student thinking that is much more effectively transferred beyond the classroom than the traditional kinds of text-based readings favored by many critical teachers (26).

Reflection

Most service-learning practitioners, teaching across all three of Deans’ paradigms, identify reflection as a key component of successful service-learning experiences and

service-learning writing (Conrad and Hedin; Eyler and Giles, *A Practitioner's Guide*; Anson, "On Reflection"). Eyler, in particular, writing within education, has consistently argued that ongoing, structured reflective activities are a key factor in ensuring quality outcomes for service-learning participants ("The Importance of Program Quality"). Writing within composition, Anson cites the longstanding popularity of written reflection in writing courses, which he traces to scientific observation logs, the process model's emphasis on prewriting, and the expressivist tradition (170). Anson argues that reflective writing is justified theoretically by compositionists and service-learning practitioners alike by its potential to help students develop connections between "academic coursework and the immediate social, political, and interpersonal experiences of community-based activities," "observation and intellectual analysis," and "to apply abstract concepts (such as citizenship, public ethics, or social justice) to contexts beyond the classroom" (167).

In "Sustainable Service Learning Programs," Cushman argues that classrooms that only use reflective journals enact a "quasi methodology" that undermines service-learning as a valid form of scholarly inquiry (47). In similar terms, Anson maintains that without structured "frames of reflection," tasks that challenge students to do specific things with their observations such as applying them to a similar situation in a different context, students' reflective writing can often take on a flat, unquestioning tone and logical fallacies that work against student learning (168). To deal with these concerns, Anson advocates the adoption of specific reflective strategies, articulated by higher education theorists including Schön, Brookfield, and Scribner, along with consistent, substantive feedback from instructors.

Even as service-learning scholars like Eyler and Anson maintain the strong connection between reflection and positive instructional outcomes, Anson acknowledges that there continues to be an ongoing lack of consensus among practitioners about both the “general properties” and “specific discursive features” of quality reflection that complicates the use of reflective activities in service-learning classrooms (171). Providing well thought out and challenging reflective activities for students is defeated if practitioners cannot agree what specific writing outcomes such assignments should produce.

In the table below, I summarize the specific claims about student writing outcomes from the service-learning literature reviewed above. As the table shows, there is a range in the specificity of goals and a general ambiguity in terms of the *locus* of goals. That is, many theorists describe their goals in terms of inputs, articulated in terms like *experience* or *exposure*, while others are more interested in specific kinds of personal outcomes or kinds of writing. What seems common to these claims is that service-learning courses provide a context for good things to happen to students and student writing in ways that are unique among other kinds of writing instruction.

Table 1
Benefits of Service-Learning for Student Writing

S-L Paradigm	Student Writing Goals
Writing for models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experience writing for real audiences in authentic writing situations • develop workplace literacies and domain-specific knowledge (Deans) • receive exposure to a authentic client relationships (Gullion quoted in Deans)
Writing with models	<p>Peck, Flower, and Higgins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • construct negotiated meanings with community participants • develop reflective awareness of diverse voices • develop awareness of the relationship between politics and rhetoric • develop strategic thinking and problem solving skills • conduct observation-based research • conduct theory building • instigate social action • intervene in the world
Writing about models	<p>Dorman and Dorman</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate enhanced investment in written arguments • demonstrate greater awareness of audience • demonstrate increased awareness of rhetorical situation and the realities of the situation being written about • conduct more thorough research • report greater sense of personal satisfaction in writing <p>Brack and Hall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate greater motivation to write <p>Herzberg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate growing sophistication about the impact of social forces • demonstrate a sense of life as a communal project • demonstrate an understanding that social justice includes but also carries beyond personal acts of charity <p><i>Via ethnography</i></p> <p>Reiff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • position students to critically observe and explore the relationships between rhetoric and behavior <p>Faigley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • invite writers to explore how culture is produced, circulated, and consumed in local contexts <p>Seitz</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enact a critical literacy in students' thinking

Genre Theory and Service-Learning

Aviva Freedman is one of several scholars who have argued for the value of genre theory in exploring student writing (“Situating ‘Genre’ and Situation Genres”; “Do as I Say”; Bazerman, “The Life of Genre”; Mirtz; Bawarshi). Freedman notes how contemporary genre theorists see rhetoric as action in ways that reorient the approach to what students accomplish with writing and how they do it (“Situating ‘Genre’” 179). Amy Devitt makes the argument, however, that understanding the forms of writing, and thus the forms of action that take place in instructional contexts like service-learning classrooms cannot be undertaken without exploring the rhetorical situations that surround such activity. Examining the rhetorical context of writing enables scholars to make connections between genres and their purposes, participants, and what Bazerman refers to as the “meanings available in a text” (*Shaping Written Knowledge* 24).

Devitt observes that much of the thinking of genre theorists about rhetorical situation can be traced back to the late 1960s work of Lloyd Bitzer and the scholarship of Kenneth Burke. Bitzer looked to recurring situations and exigencies such as those found in courtrooms for an explanation of the emergence of “rhetorical forms,” such as accusatory speeches, that over time become normalized and reified as those same situations arise and recur (quoted in Devitt 14). In similar terms, Burke noted how writers develop common strategies for recurring situations and the ways in which those responses, and the forms of those responses, begin to take on the status of expectations (Devitt 15). Devitt observes that critics of Bitzer and Burke’s definition, such as Consigny and Vatz, argue that such a conceptualization of rhetorical situation is ultimately deterministic in nature, and ignores

the fluidity of writing situations and the flexibility that writers can exert when faced with a given exigency. It can also become difficult to determine what factors should be considered to be part of a given rhetorical situation. Linguist and genre theorist M.A.K. Halliday, credited with founding the Sydney School of genre, has used the phrase “context of situation,” to circumscribe the sphere of production of a particular text’s *field* (the purpose of a text), *tenor* (who is involved), and *mode* (what role language is playing), but Devitt argues that this definition incorrectly limits the breadth and complexity of the contexts that impact writers and the production of texts (quoted in Devitt 17).

Devitt’s conceptualization of context locates genre at the intersection of three connected “spheres of activity”: cultural context, situational context, and generic context (27). She defines cultural context in terms of the “ideological and material baggage” surrounding all action (27). Situational context, alternatively, is articulated in terms of “the people, languages, and purposes involved in every action” (27). Finally, Devitt describes generic context as including the existing genres that writers have read, written, or are expected to be familiar with when they act rhetorically (28).

Devitt’s notion of generic context is articulated through her conceptualization of genre sets and the related terms *genre repertoires* and *genre systems*. The broadest category in Devitt’s framework is what she calls the *context of genres*, which she uses to describe “the set of all existing genres in a society or culture” (54). Genre sets refer to arrays of genres related by their function and association within the groups that use them. Devitt argues that there are different kinds of genre sets, distinguished by their function and the level of intertextuality between the different genres within a set and their relationship to other generic forms. Building on work by Bakhtin and Yates and Orlikowski,

Devitt uses the term *genre repertoire* to describe genre sets that exist within a community to achieve its broader purpose, beyond a particular activity or task (57). In the context of the contemporary university, for example, genre repertoire can be used to describe all of the genres available to instructors, students, administrators, and staff, and might include everything from lab reports, research essays, and exams, to journals, email, memos, purchase requisitions, and letters of recommendation. Devitt uses the term *genre system* to refer to genre sets linked to a common purpose and as such implies a more specific focus and function than genre repertoires (56). Examples of genre systems include genre sets associated with job searches (job postings, resumes, applications, cover letters), grant processes (call for proposals, proposals, award letters) and assignments in a writing class which might include assignment descriptions, student drafts, instructor comments, and rubrics (56).

Another important dimension of Devitt's theory is her conceptualization of the different kinds of groups and social entities that use genres. John Swales is often credited with offering one of earliest and most detailed explorations of the social dimensions of genre (Devitt 36). In his 1990 book *Genre Analysis: English in Academic Settings*, Swales argues for the relationship between genre formation and discourse communities, which he defines as "sociorhetorical networks that form in order to work towards sets of common goals" (9). As Devitt and others have noted, Swales himself has acknowledged that his definition of discourse community faces a number of definitional problems (Devitt 38). The first challenge is related to the notion of scope. As Swales asks, "is a university a discourse community, or rather a college, or only a department, or even a specialization within a department?" (*Other Floors, Other Voices* 21). Second, Swales, along with applied linguist

Dwight Atkinson, has pointed out that Swales' initial definition of discourse community contains an implied circularity in which membership in a community is defined by membership (21). Swales' revised definition of the concept, which he offers in *Other Floors, Other Voices*, identifies discourse communities as "communalities that describe what people do, rather than who they are" (21).

Given the definitional problems of the term discourse community, Devitt advocates a more delineated framework for describing the kinds of communities that use genres. Devitt uses the terms *communities*, *networks*, and *collectives* to describe the social groups that use genres, distinguished by the degree of self-identification and cohesion between group members. Communities denote "groups of people who share substantial amounts of time together in common endeavors," such as academic departments, businesses, and social groups like sororities (Devitt 42). At the opposite end of the spectrum are networks, which refer to relatively loose affiliations of persons connected by a task, goal, or social relationship (Devitt 44). Examples of genres that come from networks include wedding invitations, catalogs, or text message-based traffic updates from news outlets (Devitt 44). Finally, in between networks and communities are groups that Devitt calls collectives, marked by "a single repeated interest," but without "the frequency or intensity or contact" of communities, including entities like hobby groups or a particular section of a writing class (44). According to Devitt, collectives often have a greater level of "clarity of focus and purpose" than either communities or networks although she is careful to point out that none of the groups represent mutually exclusive categories (44). Rather, the inherent intertextuality of genres and the flexible subject positions people bring to social groups implies a continuum of relations rather than a hierarchical taxonomy.

The reciprocal and intertextual nature of genres as they function within sets and the social formation in which they are used is another core concept of contemporary genre theory. Devitt argues that there are two basic forms of intertextuality. The first can be seen as a kind of call and response between genres, such as when a student applies for a scholarship and then sometime later receives a written response back from the administrators who review the application. In this case, both genres, the application letter and the response, which together can be seen as a genre system, reference the other. Effective applications reference and address criteria listed in the initial description of the award, a genre in its own right, and conversely response letters, be they positive or negative, almost always reference the applicant's application in some way. Similarly, assignment descriptions and the documents that students create in response to those descriptions enact intertextuality when students appropriate specific language or textual features from instructor write-ups and course readings.

Neither genres, genre sets, nor genre systems are rigid forms but rather are typified responses that vary widely depending on the particular interactions between cultural, situational, and generic contexts. At the same time, genre theorists argue that genres play an active role in reflecting, shaping, and reinforcing ideology, which Devitt defines in terms of values, epistemology, and relationships of power (60). For Devitt, genres do not determine how users view the world, but they do privilege particular ways of viewing the world (61). Devitt suggests, moreover, that genres in different types of social groups may reproduce ideology with varying degrees of effectiveness and power. Tightly bound discourse communities such as law firms may feature "deeply entrenched ideologies" that are easily and efficiently passed on to new members of the firm (63). The ideology of

genres may be much more difficult to transmit, however, in more loosely organized collectives, such as those found in an undergraduate writing classroom, which consist of a fairly random and diverse collection of rhetors who come to the setting with widely variant motivations and individual subjectivities. Equally important to keep in mind, is the potential for certain kinds of groups and writers to be more vulnerable to the ideological influence of genres than others. New employees, for example, thankful for employment and eager to please their employers, may be particularly willing to embrace the ideologies reflected in the genre systems of an organization.

Analyzing Context: Service-Learning at Wayne State University

Devitt's conceptualization of context locates genre at the intersection of three overlapping spheres of activity: cultural context, situational context, and generic context. The cultural context of this study is best understood by examining the mission of Wayne State University and its relationship and role within metropolitan Detroit. Wayne State is located in Detroit, Michigan and, next to the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, is the state's third largest public university. It is among the 30 largest public universities in the US, and as a research institution, ranks among the top 50 US public universities for research with annual expenditures exceeding \$239 million ("Wayne State University, Key Facts"). WSU has earned the Carnegie Foundation's esteemed RU/VH classification, reserved for research universities at the high end of funded projects, and along with the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, is a partner in the University Research Corridor, a strategic alliance between the three institutions designed to facilitate cooperation, collaboration, and the transformation of Michigan's economy ("Wayne State University, Key Facts").

Wayne State draws the vast majority of its students from the Detroit metropolitan area and what is commonly referred to as the tri-county area, which includes Wayne County, where Detroit is located, along with Macomb County and Oakland County, which in contrast to Wayne County, is often regarded as one of the wealthiest counties in the nation. WSU has a student body of over 30,000 students with approximately two-thirds enrolled as undergraduates and 61% enrolled full-time ("National Center for Education Statistics-Wayne State University"). Fifty-eight percent of undergraduates are women, 42% are male, and its undergraduate population is ethnically diverse with undergraduate concentrations of 49% white, 31% African American, 7% Asian Pacific Islander, and 3% Hispanic ("National Center for Education Statistics-Wayne State University"). Although Arab Americans are technically considered white by most governmental taxonomies, WSU also has a large number of Arabic students due to the high numbers of persons of Middle Eastern descent living across the Detroit metropolitan area and in the nearby suburb of Dearborn which is home to the largest concentration of Arabs outside of the Middle East.

WSU plays a major role in the city of Detroit and the state of Michigan. The university estimates that it is the tenth largest employer in Detroit and that 75% of Wayne State's 235,000 alumni continue to live and work in Michigan ("Wayne State University, Key Facts"). Along with having the country's largest single-campus medical school, WSU claims that 30% of all physicians practicing in Michigan are Wayne State alum and that 75% of all law school grads live and work in the area ("Wayne State University, Key Facts").

In addition to having a large impact on the city's workscape, Wayne State's urban mission is also reflected in a tradition of being actively engaged in the life of Detroit, a city whose problems often make their way into the national headlines. An internal report from

WSU's Office for the Vice President of Research shows that between 1999 and 2010, over \$27 million of externally funded research targeted issues directly relevant to Detroit, with many projects focusing on Detroit Public Schools, but also including projects related to health, social services, and infrastructure development (Wayne State University, Office for the Vice President of Research). As just one example of the breadth of projects undertaken by the university, WSU has recently been involved in collaborative efforts to expand internet access in Detroit, leveraging foundation capital with Wayne's own technological resources to build wireless networks across the city beginning with two low income neighborhoods (Wayne State University, "Wayne State University and Community Partners").

Consistent with its urban mission, Wayne State also has a history of directly engaging Detroit's institutions, particularly those involving education. In 1993, under President David Adamany, WSU became the first university in Michigan to charter a school, establishing University Public School (UPS), a sixth through eighth grade middle school located in Detroit's core city. According to documents presented to the WSU Board of Governors, the mission of UPS was to prepare students "academically, emotionally, physically, perceptually, and socially to become productive adults in a culturally diverse, rapidly changing and highly technological society" (Wayne State University, "University Public School"). University Public School also became a research site for scholars in WSU's College of Education, School of Business Administration, and academic departments including my home department of English. Academic achievement indicators at UPS were mixed, however, and in 2002, Wayne State and new president Irvin Reid negotiated an agreement with Detroit Public Schools to hand over all administrative responsibilities of

the school back to DPS (Wayne State University, “Wayne State University and Detroit Public Schools”).

Perhaps WSU’s most recent high profile engagement with education in Detroit is the university’s Math Corps program, associated with WSU’s mathematics department and administered through the recently established Center for Equity and Excellence in Mathematics (CEEM). Math Corps began in 1992 as a summer day camp designed to provide high-level math instruction and personal development activities for Detroit Public School students in grades seven through twelve. Students are admitted to the program based on interest rather than achievement and today over 400 students participate in the program every summer. Math Corps’s own data claims that 90% of the program’s students graduate from high school, and over 80% go on to college (Wayne State University, “Center for Equity and Excellence in Mathematics”). As a result, Math Corps has received widespread national attention from regional and national media and is frequently cited by the university’s administration as an exemplar of WSU’s commitment and engagement in the city of Detroit.

Wayne State also has a growing portfolio of service-learning initiatives, many of which are based in Detroit and community-based institutions. In 2008, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching designated Wayne State as one of 111 institutions in the nation to receive the Curricular Engagement and Outreach and Partnerships designation (Wayne State University, “Wayne State University Earns National Recognition”). According to WSU, approximately 5,000 students participated in some form of community service as part of their coursework in 2008, involving over 300 courses

across 55 departments, taught by close to 400 university faculty (Wayne State University, “Wayne State University Earns National Recognition”).

Wayne State’s service-learning efforts are supported by CommunityEngagement@Wayne, an office and program created in 2005 and affiliated with the WSU Honors College (Wayne State University, CommunityEngagement@Wayne “History”). The office supports faculty interested in developing service-learning courses with \$2000 course development grants and access to a range of resources, including sample syllabi and consultations with faculty peers and office personnel (Wayne State University, CommunityEngagement@Wayne “Planning a Course”). The program’s website defines service-learning as “a teaching and learning strategy that incorporates service in order to enhance learning,” but also includes a bulleted list that attempts to circumscribe the definition around notions of service. “Service-learning is not,” the list details:

- An episodic volunteer program
- An add-on to an existing school or college curriculum
- Completing minimum service hours in order to graduate
- Service assigned as a form of punishment
- Only for high school or college students
- One-sided: benefiting only students or only the community (Wayne State University, CommunityEngagement@Wayne “What is Service-Learning?”)

A listing of service-learning courses on the CommunityEngagement@Wayne website describes offerings from a range of WSU departments including Africana Studies, Anthropology, English, Communications, Social Work, Sociology, and Urban Planning. The

twenty-two descriptions of recent offerings reflect a wide variety of interpretations of service and the appropriate balance of service and learning in a particular course. The description of an undergraduate course in sociology, for example, representative of many writing *about* course designs, states that students will volunteer at a social service agency and then write “stories and profiles” about employees or other volunteers at the agency (Wayne State University, CommunityEngagement@Wayne “Service-Learning Courses”). On the other end of the spectrum, a travel abroad course offered through the WSU Honors College promises students the chance to experience the arts and architecture of Paris while “engaging area secondary students in conversations about the people and places of Paris” (“Service-Learning Courses”). Many of the course descriptions on the site make explicit connections between the service experience and course objectives. For example, the description of an urban planning course focusing on the topic of cities and food and featuring a service project at local community farming initiatives states that the “course will offer opportunities to engage with cutting edge ideas and experiences in community and regional food planning” (“Service-Learning Courses”). Several descriptions, however, are more ambiguous about the connection between service experiences and course outcomes. The description of a communications course featuring an outdoor wilderness experience designed to explore leadership and team communication says the course includes “an additional short service learning component to be completed afterward (that)...will allow students time and space to be reflective about their experiences (“Service-Learning Courses”).

Only six of the 22 course descriptions listed on the CommunityEngagement@Wayne website make specific mention of the kinds of writing students will complete either as part

of their service experience or the course. Three of these six courses appear firmly rooted in the writing *for* paradigm: in one, students write for a new online newspaper in a Detroit suburb; in another, students administer a PR campaign for an unnamed entity; and in the third, marketing students manage a Google AdWords campaign for a non-profit organization (“Service-Learning Courses”). Based on their short descriptions, the other three courses listed on the site seem to combine writing *with* and writing *about* approaches. In one course, students interview African American senior citizens from Detroit as part of an oral history project. In another, students who volunteer in a core-city health clinic write reflections about their experience; and in the third, students studying conflict resolution keep a reflective journal and write an end-of-the-semester research paper (“Service-Learning Courses”).

The variety of instructional approaches represented in the course descriptions that appear on the *CommunityEngagement@Wayne* website is a reminder of the diversity of interpretations that practitioners bring to service-learning and illustrate the inherent tensions between both service and learning, and between the design of course inputs, which include service settings, experiences, and instructional objectives, with course outcomes, which variously include student learning, cultural and textual products, and community outcomes. That complexity also backgrounds the context of my own involvement with service-learning at Wayne State, which began in 1999 as part of a service-learning initiative that began the previous year within the Department of English’s Composition and Rhetoric Program led by professors Gwen Gorzelsky and Ruth Ray. Gorzelsky and Ray’s initial efforts, which took place approximately five years before the establishment of the *CommunityEngagement@Wayne* office at WSU, were supported by an

Institutional Development Grant from Indiana Campus Compact (Wayne State University, “Community-based Writing at Wayne State University”). Ray’s efforts involved facilitating personal writing projects at a Detroit-based senior center near the WSU campus. Gorzelsky’s interests centered on partnering with University Public School in the design of an after-school enrichment program in which WSU graduate and undergraduate students worked as mentors with middle school students enrolled at UPS. Later in 1999, Ray and Gorzelsky received an Educational Development Grant from WSU to develop graduate seminars to train graduate students in service-learning pedagogy, from which I directly benefitted (“Community-based Writing at Wayne State University”). Since those initial efforts in the late 90s, the department’s Community Writing Program has offered one to two course sections every semester containing some community-based component and the program has trained approximately nine graduate students in the philosophy and pedagogy of service-learning and community-based writing (Gorzelsky).

The Situational Context: Intermediate Writing at University Public School

Inspired by a conversation with former academic advisor and current Dean of the WSU Honors College, Jerry Herron, in the fall of 1999 I enrolled in a service-learning course taught by my advisor and dissertation chair Gwen Gorzelsky. Like the course at the center of this project, this graduate-level course in English Studies was held at University Public School, and it was there that I first experienced the potential of combining rhetorical education and community service. As a white male who had attended suburban schools before coming to Wayne State as an undergraduate, my service-learning course at UPS provided my first personal observations of the differences between suburban and urban schools that I had only read and heard about through my wife Monica McLeod, who is both

a teacher and alumna of Detroit Public Schools. Around this time, I also became interested in the theoretical tensions between proponents of students' right to their own language, articulated in NCTE's controversial 1974 position statement, and the perspective of scholars like Lisa Delpit who were arguing that teachers of students of color have an ethical and political obligation to help students develop facility with the discourses of power ("The Silenced Dialogue").

As a member of the first group of graduate teaching assistants to be trained in the English department's service-learning initiative, my personal interest in the relationship between service-learning and student writing emerged out of a practical need for a pedagogical approach for the service-learning-based intermediate writing course (ENG 3010) I was assigned to teach at University Public School. The specific course I taught was oriented around an after-school enrichment program at UPS in which undergraduates mentored middle school students working on a school website and then used participant observation techniques to observe, reflect upon, and inscribe their experiences with a focus on youth culture and education. I developed the syllabus for the course during a summer course development workshop with Gorzelsky and Ray and fellow graduate students assigned to teach similar courses. The syllabus I developed can be found in Appendix A. I discuss the syllabus in further detail later in the chapter when I take up the generic context of the project.

The site of the course, University Public School, differed significantly from most university settings and for that matter, the vast majority of public schools. The school was located on the third floor of the S.S. Kresge Building, home to the Metropolitan Center for

High Technology, an incubator for high tech start-ups, along with a collection of small businesses and non-profit organizations. The 250,000 square foot building, which occupies a city block approximately one mile south of WSU, was built in 1928 by dime store magnate Sebastian S. Kresge and features an award-winning Art Deco design by Albert Kahn (“S. S. Kresge World Headquarters Building”). The Kresge Corporation, the controlling entity of K-Mart retail stores, moved out of the building in 1972 for new headquarters in the suburb of Troy, Michigan, a year that coincides with a period of outward migration of corporations and white residents in the years following the social uprisings of 1967 and 1968 (“S. S. Kresge World Headquarters Building”). In 1993, the State of Michigan awarded Wayne State \$1.2 million to renovate the building, in addition to \$150,000 in start-up funds for the school itself (Hornbeck). Today, the building is still home to the Metropolitan Center for High Technology. A recent email sent to Wayne State employees advertising an open house at the center described the building as containing “wet labs...a dark room, cold room, an animal care facility...and fifteen laboratories ranging from 300 to 2,000 square feet...available immediately for \$10 per square foot” (WSU email). As a side note, when I visited the building in 2009, a person who worked in the building showed me a conference room that still contained Sebastian Kresge’s huge oval conference table which has been in the building since its opening in 1928.

The Kresge Building is located between Detroit’s downtown and an area known as Midtown, which includes Wayne State and many of the city’s major cultural institutions such as the Detroit Public Library, the Detroit Institute of Arts, and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. The building is located in what is often called the Cass Corridor, a traditionally pejorative term that denotes the level of poverty, crime, and

blight that marks much of the area. The Kresge Building sits directly across from a small, neglected green space called Cass Park, which is often occupied by homeless persons, sex workers, and participants in the area's underground economy. During my time at University Public School, the park also functioned as the location for physical education class and outdoor recess, as there was no formal gymnasium in the building.

I first taught ENG 3010 in the fall semester of 2000 and then again over the next three semesters. The course was a service-learning-based section of ENG 3010, which is Wayne State's intermediate writing course and the second of three writing courses required of all WSU undergraduates, which includes first year writing and a writing intensive course taught in students' majors. As an alternative to 3010, engineering students are required to take a two course sequence in technical and professional writing. Although my course was labeled as ENG 3010 in the university's schedule of classes, it, along with another service-learning section of 3010, appeared with a sentence-long description of the course indicating that it included a tutoring component at University Public School. As the service-learning initiative in WSU's composition and rhetoric program developed, faculty and instructors developed more formal course descriptions that we circulated via campus bulletin boards and to students via first-year writing instructors. At the outset, however, it was not uncommon to have a number students show up to the first day of class unaware of the community-based component of the course. When this happened, some students immediately dropped but many, after seeing the course syllabus and hearing the description of the mentoring activity, decided to stay in the course.

Per Devitt's theoretical framework, each of the four sections of the course I taught should be understood as a distinct collective, marked by participants' temporary association via their enrollment in the course and their participation in the mentoring program. Various features of the course, however, were common across the four sections. Class sessions met for 90 minutes each, two days per week. For the first four weeks of class, the undergraduates and I met by ourselves in a conference room on another floor of the building during which time I introduced and modeled ethnographic techniques; we discussed course readings, and prepared for the mentoring activity by discussing and role-playing mentoring approaches. The mentoring program began four weeks into the semester and lasted eight weeks. The program my course was connected with, called TREE (Tutoring, Recreation, Enrichment, Experience), was part of a broader after-school program offered by the school that gave students the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities such as yearbook, cheerleading, academic games, karate, and math tutoring. Our particular activity was begun by Gwen Gorzelsky in 1999 in partnership with University Public School's TREE coordinator. When I taught the course, the activity was oriented around the creation of a school-based webzine that was divided into "departments" such as school news, fashion, sports, and cars. The first hour of the enrichment class, which began 30 minutes after the end of the school day, was spent in the computer classroom of the school. The undergraduate student mentors worked with small groups of three to four middle school mentees who together came up with the name of their particular department within the webzine (i.e., sports, school news), brainstormed story ideas, and then wrote the text, took photos, and prepared the webzine for publication on the school's website. During mentoring time, I roved the classroom troubleshooting

computer issues, asking groups questions about their work, making sure the mentees were not spending class time playing computer-based video games, and taking care of disciplinary issues as they came up. The class was also supported by the work of a computer support technician, a fellow graduate student from WSU's Computer Science Department, who worked in the lab during the school day and supported the enrichment class by troubleshooting problems and showing students how to perform specific tasks, such as inserting photographs into web pages. After I dismissed the enrichment class each day, the undergraduates would spend ten to fifteen minutes writing in fieldnote journals. With the fifteen to twenty minutes that remained each day, the class and I would debrief that day's time in the lab. The enrichment ran for eight weeks, culminating with a pizza party in the school cafeteria on the last day of the program. For the four remaining weeks of each semester, the undergraduates and I workshopped final projects and discussed topics and readings related to the mentoring experience. I provide a detailed description and analysis of students' final projects in the next chapter.

The student data at the core of this project was gathered as part of a larger research effort undertaken by Wayne State University's College of Education and Department of English to study the impact of service-learning on student learning at University Public School. Research was conducted with IRB approval and the informed consent of the students involved. Out of a total enrollment of 59 students across the four different sections of the course, 44 students (75%) agreed to participate in the study. Out of those 44 participants, I have final essays from 34 (77%) as a number of participants did not complete the course or turn in a final project, while a few asked that their final projects not

be included in the corpus. Table 2 below describes the ethnic and gender make-up of the students who consented to participate in the project.

Table 2
Study Participants by Gender and Ethnicity

	White/Non-Hispanic	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Total
Male	16	3	0	19 (43%)
Female	17	6	2	25 (57%)
Total	33 (75%)	9 (20%)	2 (5%)	44

The gender distribution of study participants across the four sections mirrors that of the undergraduate population at WSU. I did not ask participants to identify their ethnic background but my review of the class roster shows that in comparison to the undergraduate population, whites were over represented by about 25%, with African American participants underrepresented by approximately 10%. Per my review of the class rosters, two African American males, or 40% of the total number of African American males who registered for the class, declined to participate in the study, along with one African American female and two white females. Participation of the three African American students who declined to participate in the study would have made the distribution of African Americans equal to that of WSU's undergraduate population. This information should be noted, but I believe that given the relatively small number of study participants and the object of the study, these numbers do not significantly limit the representativeness of the project design.

In "The Ethics of Cultural Invisibility," Jane Zeni, Myrtho Prophete, Nancy Cason, and Minnie Phillips offer an ethical imperative for teacher-researchers to locate themselves and

their cultures in their research (113). Failure to do so, they argue, opens the door to a dangerous lack of reflexivity in research that can unknowingly reproduce and reify stereotypes and hegemonic discourses (113). In related terms, Anne Herrington and Marcia Curtis, in their ethnographic study of student writing development, include autobiographical and intellectual profiles of themselves in an effort to help readers understand each writer's particular investments and motivations toward their inquiry (19). In that spirit, I hope readers will find it helpful to know a bit about myself and the various subject positions that I bring to this project. I am a white male of Irish and Italian heritage. I was born and raised in a middle-class suburb of Detroit that is part of a larger collection of communities commonly referred to as "Downriver," a word that connotes the area's physical orientation to Detroit proper and the post-industrial, working class ethos of its residents. I attended a Lutheran elementary school affiliated with the Missouri Synod, perhaps the most politically conservative and fundamentalist of all Lutheran denominations, but attended public high school and after several years of predictable religious inactivity, now attend a theologically and politically progressive Episcopal parish in the suburb where I live with my wife and two daughters. I am the second of three persons in my immediate family to earn a bachelor's degree and the first to earn a Master's degree and attempt a Ph.D.

My interest in the relationship between discourse, education, and power is what led me to my current interest in genre theory, which began with readings of members of the Sydney School, collected in Cope and Kalantzis' edited anthology *The Power of Literacy: A Genre Approach to Teaching Writing*, which as I described earlier, is keenly interested in the use of genre theory to empower students in socially subordinated subject positions. The

explicit political inflection of the Sydney School's articulation of genre theory and its interest in using rhetorical education to facilitate social agency has also shaped my perspective of the role of writing in the undergraduate composition curriculum. Like Zlotkowski, I fear that composition's social turn, which has weighted its intellectual focus on the interaction between race, class, gender, and student subjectivity, has often overshadowed student writing and the development of rhetorical efficacy. As such, my interest in using genre theory to think about the role of student writing in service-learning courses should be seen as an attempt to reposition students' rhetorical performances in the appraisal of service-learning outcomes. In broader terms, this project should also be seen as an attempt to use genre theory to contribute to the conversation within composition, about the role of composition instruction in helping students to negotiate dominant discourses and their own rhetorical agency.

My instructional style in ENG 3010 was split between two personas. In the context of the mentoring activity, I tried to project energy, enthusiasm, and professionalism. I would start every mentoring session at the front of the computer classroom where I would announce the agenda and expectations for the day, although I distinctly remember walking up the center aisle of the classroom when I spoke so that those students who were hidden behind their monitors could see me. Once I was done and the mentoring work began, I would spend most of the mentoring sessions moving from team to team, answering questions or helping to troubleshoot computer issues. Although the enrichment program coordinator was ultimately responsible for student discipline issues, I, along with the graduate student computer tech, were the point persons for management issues in the

classroom. I wore dress pants, a dress shirt, and a tie everyday to project professionalism, respect, and continuity with what I perceived was the ethos of the school staff.

The classroom portion of the course with undergraduates, alternatively, was very different. The students and I sat around a square configuration of rectangular tables and unless I had to get up to write on the one easel pad in the room, I would stay seated and conducted the class in what I came to see as a seminar-style format. Much of class time was taken up by students discussing their experiences from that day's session or ongoing issues relevant to the mentoring experience. With the remaining time each day, I would introduce an idea or concept from the week's reading assignment and we would discuss those ideas as a group. Unlike many introductory courses I have taught, there was rarely any need to provide anything more than the most basic conversation starters for a class session. On most days, students were eager to talk about the mentoring experience and things that happened that day. It was sometimes difficult to make the transition from the granularity of the day's events to the more theoretical orientation of our course readings, so in these moments I often found myself adopting more of an active role, introducing an idea from a reading or directing the class to a particular passage that I hoped would be generative for class discussion. At least twice during the semester, I cancelled class to conference with students individually about their papers, but in contrast to most first-year courses in which students often have very little investment in their peers' writing, I found that students in ENG 3010 were in general deeply invested in peer review activities, precisely because they were all writing out of a common experience that was unfolding right before our eyes. Finding textual evidence of that investment and engagement in students' writing, which is a

common claim in the service-learning literature, is one of the tasks I take on in the next chapter.

The Generic Context

Similar to the way in which Devitt uses the term *context of genres* to describe the wide variety of genres available to a society, the term *generic context* can be used to describe the cumulative set of genres associated with the class, including all instructor-designed materials, course readings, student writing, the university's course evaluation, and the various work products of the mentoring program. Thinking about the generic context in terms of sets, and in the case of instructor-designed materials and the final project, as genre systems, yields a generative frame for considering the interrelated and intertextual nature of genres, their function in support of instructional objectives, and the implications genre theory presents for the study of writing in classroom settings more generally.

Composition instructors work to design writing assignments that both build and challenge students to develop their rhetorical skills. As such, writing assignments across a writing curriculum and within individual courses ideally function as a kind of scaffold that lead students to greater levels of rhetorical efficacy. From the perspective of genre theory, one of the reasons that this scaffolding works is because of the intertextual nature of genres. Effective assignment descriptions build on the generic vocabulary students bring to a course (i.e., thesis, evidence, personal experience, etc.) and anticipate the variety of ways students might respond to assignments, often taking into account previous experiences with assignments in other courses. Similarly, students enact intertextuality in their texts when they incorporate textual features of assignment descriptions, sometimes explicitly,

like when a student makes direct reference to the thesis of his or her paper (i.e., “In this essay I will argue...”) or implicitly in the organizational structure of their writing or in the specific kinds of evidence used to support major points within the text.

A primary genre set of the course, made a system through its role in articulating and supporting the instructional design of the class, is the set of teacher-designed documents, including the syllabus, assignment descriptions, short assignment write-ups, and miscellaneous hand-outs distributed throughout the term. At the center of this system is the syllabus, which similar to its function in most courses at the collegiate level, is largely responsible for setting the tone and scope of students’ experience.

An important subset of the genre system of instructor-authored texts is the assignments themselves, which in the case of my course varied somewhat from semester to semester but included several different kinds of writing:

- Personal Narrative This short, two to three page essay was assigned at the very beginning of the semester and asked students to describe a formative experience that changed their way of thinking about school. This assignment functioned in the syllabus much like a diagnostic essay in many first-year courses. I used it to get a sense of where individual students were with their writing development and to get them to think about the formative significance of school experiences in preparation for their roles as mentors. Students received credit for the assignment but narratives were not given a letter grade. Generally speaking, students recognized this assignment as a

relatively familiar genre, with close associations to the personal experience narratives that were common in many of their high school writing courses.

- Parent Letter This was a one-page letter written to the families of middle school student mentees early in the mentoring program. The purpose of the letter was to introduce mentors to the families of mentees, to describe the goals and expectations of the after-school program, and to invite family members to the end-of-the-semester pizza party. I provided feedback on drafts of the letter and students did not send letters to mentees' homes until I approved their final draft. Students received credit for the final draft but the letter was not given a letter grade.
- Protocols These one-page, single-spaced assignments asked students to respond to questions that I designed regarding course readings and the mentoring experience. I also drew a number of these short assignments from Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater's *Fieldworking* text. Protocols received written feedback from me but did not receive a letter grade.
- Reflexivity Essays One and Two In Reflexive Essay One, I asked students to reflect on their initial responses to the mentoring experience (Appendix B). In particular, I asked them to reflect on how their own subject positions, a concept which we discussed in class, might be shaping their ethnographic stance, and to connect their observations to one of our course readings. In Reflexive Essay Two, I asked students to build on their reflections from the first paper with descriptions of new mentoring experiences, and where

appropriate, reflections on their initial responses with a revised theory of what they were seeing and feeling in the classroom. These two papers were the first of the semester to receive letter grades.

- Fieldnote Journals Students wrote in their journals for ten to fifteen minutes after each mentoring session. On most days, I provided students with a prompt; on others, students were encouraged to write on any aspect of the day's experience. In the prompts, I often asked students to reflect on the impact of their own subject positions on their observations, to explore the role of language in their relationships with their middle school mentees, or to consider how a broader social structure or value, like discipline, might be shaping their observations and the youth subculture they were studying.
- Final Project In this end-of-the-semester project, I asked students to produce an eight to ten page essay with a fully-developed descriptive argument about their mentoring experience (Appendix B). Student projects took on a variety of issues related to their service experience with their middle school mentees: youth culture, challenges to building mentoring relationships, racism, education, and computers and literacy. The first phase of the project was a one page proposal and the essay itself went through two drafts. The project received a letter grade and was the largest portion of a student's mark in the course, counting for 35% of the final grade.

Course readings can be considered another important genre set within the generic context of the class. Over the four semesters that I taught the course, I alternated between

two main texts: Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* and Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater's textbook *Fieldworking: Reading and Writing Research*. I was first exposed to Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's text in a graduate level service-learning-based course on writing theory and as a student I found the balance of method and theory to be a productive introduction to ethnographic techniques. Students in the first two offerings of the course, however, complained that Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's text was difficult to read, too academic, and generally unhelpful to their own ethnographic projects. Subsequently, I assigned Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater's *Fieldworking*, which is specifically written for undergraduates doing ethnographic fieldwork. While not explicitly designed for service-learning settings, I found and continue to find *Fieldworking* a practical and accessible text for undergraduates who are unfamiliar with qualitative descriptive research. It is cited by a number of instructors who use ethnographic pedagogy in their classroom including Seitz and Gaillet. *Fieldworking* is not explicitly theoretical but does bring up theoretical issues such as the impact of subject positions on observation and the representation of others in ways that undergraduates can understand and use in their own writing.

Over the four offerings of the course, I also assigned readings from Jabari Mahiri's *Shooting for Excellence: African American and Youth Culture in New Century Schools* and bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* to explore issues of literacy, youth culture, and urban education. Both Mahiri and hooks are African American educators who speak to the cultural disconnects between many students of color and working class students and traditional education. Mahiri's text, published in 1998, offers a rival hypothesis to Ogbu's widely cited argument that black students' cultural attitudes, such as their fear of being

accused of “acting white,” help explain the gap in achievement between white and black students. As an alternative, Mahiri argues that the monologic, relatively passive style of many classrooms led by white instructors, is culturally mismatched with the learning styles of African American students, particularly males. Mahiri advocates a highly dialogic, interactive classroom including such discursive features as call and response, and whenever possible, activities that incorporate physical movement and hands-on activities. hooks’ book, *Teaching to Transgress*, originally published in 1994, is a collection of essays, inspired by the work of Freire and hooks’ own experiences as a student and teacher. hooks advocates for an engaged pedagogy that is sensitive to the social and personal costs of education for students of color and working class students. I chose both Mahiri and hooks’ books for their accessibility and combination of the personal and political. Neither book is heavy on academic jargon or overly reliant on deep theoretical knowledge, and both feature concrete explications of their main ideas in ways that undergraduates can understand and use in their own writing. hooks’ work is also notable for its deeply personal tone, which has connections to narrative writing that is familiar to many students.

At various times during the two years I taught the course, students also read a number of book chapters and essays that related to the mentoring experience and our class discussions. These included Joyce King’s essay “Dysconscious Racism,” a chapter from Tom Romano’s *Clearing the Way*, a chapter from Smitherman’s *Talkin’ and Testifyin’*, Ogbu’s “Literacy and Schooling in Subordinate Cultures,” Lisa Delpit’s “The Silenced Dialogue,” and Mary Louise-Pratt’s “Arts of the Contact Zone.” In the next chapter, I will explore the study corpus for patterns in the ways students appropriated these texts in their own writing. For now, however, I will say that I used all of these texts to introduce new theoretical frames

and generative ways of seeing the service-learning experience. In particular, I used the readings from Mahiri, hooks, King, Smitherman, Ogbu, and Delpit to provide students with generative perspectives on race that could inform and inspire class discussions about the mentoring experience and the interplay between race and education that was a recurring thread of conversation throughout the course. In broader terms, Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater's text, as well as Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's book, and Pratt's essay, all provided a lens to talk about and complicate the ways in which participant observers read and write subcultures, and the way in which our own subject positions color our perspective and alter our research stances. This emphasis on reflexivity is particularly important in writing *about* settings like the one I have described, where college students who often come from privileged subject positions are tasked with representing community members who occupy very different, and often denigrated, racial and socioeconomic positions within dominant discourse.

Discussion

Like all genres, the generic context of a classroom reflects values, epistemologies, power relationships, and particular ways in which participants see the world (Devitt 60). Examining these relationships is complicated, however, by what genre theorist Anthony Paré describes as the "camouflaging effect" of genre, in which the ideological functions of genres are masked by a sense of their durability and normative permanence (60). Paré maintains, however, that genres' "illusion of normalcy" can be exposed at particular moments: when an event takes place that challenges the effectiveness or appropriateness of a genre, when power relations shift within situations or cultures in ways that disrupt the

values on which genres are based, or when novice users attempt to learn a genre and find that it conflicts with the genres they know (61).

Perhaps the best place to begin to explore the ideologies and epistemologies embedded in the generic context of the course is the syllabus. The syllabus I designed, included in Appendix A, claims that “Students will learn to think and write critically about their own observations, opinions, positions and ways of seeing the world by mentoring students at the Wayne State University Public School and reflecting on their experiences.” I do not define the word *critically* in the syllabus but it appears once more in the course objectives, which read as follows:

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. View community learning as an important way of learning about the world and society.
2. Think critically about one’s own opinions, positions, and ways of seeing the world.
3. Understand the basics of ethnographic research.
4. Utilize ethnographic research methods as a way of understanding the perspectives of others.
5. View writing as a socially constructed means of representing oneself, the world, and those around us.
6. Write more effectively in a variety of modes with a broader understanding of audience, authenticity, and writing as a form of representation (Appendix A).

Readers will notice that objectives one, two, three, and five explicitly reference what might be described as cognitive processes operationalized by the verbs *think*, *understand*, and *view*. Objective number one, which articulates a desire to have students think about “community learning” as something that has positive value, might be described by educational theorists as an affective objective in the way that it privileges a certain perspective or way of thinking (Morrison, Ross, and Kemp 111). Objectives four and six, alternatively, specifically reference student writing and feature both cognitive and behavioral/rhetorical objectives, implicitly in objective number four’s verb *utilize* and explicitly in objective six’s verb *write*. Both objectives position these verbs as a means of developing understanding: understanding the perspectives of others (in objective 4) and rhetorical understanding of the concepts of audience, authenticity, and representation (objective six).

The syllabus also contains a definition of “community learning” taken from the National Public Service Act of 1990, which offers a complimentary set of outcomes to my own course objectives. Here is the definition from the NPSA:

Community Learning, or service-learning as it is sometimes called, is an instructional method:

- Under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community

- That is integrated into the student's academic curriculum to provide structured time for a student to think, talk and write about what the student did and saw during the actual service activity
- That provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities, and
- That enhances what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community and helps foster the development of a sense of caring for others. *National and Community Service Act of 1990* (Appendix A)

The verbs in the definition explain that students in service-learning courses should *learn, develop, think, talk, write, and use* (“*newly developed skills*”). Similar to my own course objectives, the first three verbs are cognitive in nature (*learn, develop, think*), while the last cluster, *talk, write, and use*, connote more concrete actions. The verb *develop* is used twice in the definition, in the first bullet without an object (“learn and develop through active participation”), and then again in the last bullet where the object is one of affect (“development of a sense of caring for others”).

As the primary focus of this project, the final project and its generic significance merits special consideration. The ethnographic essay at the core of the final project draws on two problematic academic genres: ethnography and the research essay, both of which enact distinct intellectual values and approaches to the creation of knowledge. In his essay “Just What Are We Talking About?” from the 2004 anthology *Ethnography Unbound: From*

Theory Shock to Critical Praxis, Lance Massey argues that ethnography is a kind of disciplinary 'contact zone' (quoting Pratt) where humanist and social scientific discourses engage each other in an interdisciplinary discursive space (261). Massey argues that in the same way that composition can be thought of as a hybrid discipline, characterized by traits from both the humanities and the social sciences, ethnography also exhibits a mix of humanistic and social scientific features "that are so finely interwoven that distinguishing them can be difficult" (262). Specifically, he cites Susan Peck MacDonald's work with academic discourse and maintains that writing in the social sciences tends to operate within a fairly well-defined "universe of disciplinary problems," and attends to matters of terminology and research methods in significant detail (262). Writing in the humanities, alternatively, is more focused on texts, rather than concepts or circumscribed research questions, and as such is both more interpretive and reflexive in its approach and scope. As examples, Massey compares Barbara Walvoord and Lucille McCarthy's book *Thinking and Writing in College: A Naturalistic Study of Students in Four Disciplines* and David Schaafsma's narrative study *Eating on the Street: Teaching Literacy in a Multicultural Society*, for the ways in which both books employ ethnographic narratives along with a combination of discourse features from both the humanities and the social sciences (264-65).

Within composition, ethnography has faced many of the same challenges as those in its home discipline of anthropology where postmodernist and poststructural critiques of representation argue that ethnography is limited to creating highly mediated accounts of personal observations and non-generalizable experiences (North 277). Critics of ethnography have also interrogated the ethics of representing the experiences of others, particularly in the presence of structural power inequalities between researchers and

subjects (Sullivan). North has challenged the methodological value of ethnography on grounds that the spatial and temporal insularity of ethnographic research negates attempts to generalize findings, thus preventing ethnographic knowledge from accumulating as in other forms of “researcher knowledge” (278). As North’s critique implies, ethnography is still considered by many to be an alternative discourse, at least in the way in which it is distinguished from many academic genres associated with the social and physical sciences. In particular, ethnography continues to connote a more prosaic, belletristic style modeled on the work of anthropologists like Mead and Pritchard, who wrote for both academic and nonacademic audiences (Thaiss and Zawacki 70-71). And even as the postmodern critique of ethnography, which has interrogated the notion of representation as a politically situated fiction, postmodern ethnographers like Tyler have used verbs such as *evoke*, to describe the nature of inscription in ethnographic writing that contrasts with the logos and ethos of social scientific research (129).

While my working assumption is that many, if not most of the students in ENG 3010 came to the course with varying degrees of experience with the research essay, I think it is safe to assume that few students, with the exception of those who had taken courses in anthropology, had any experience with ethnography. In fact, at the beginning of every semester, I would ask if any students were familiar with the term and I can only remember a single case (from a student also taking an introductory anthropology course) in which a student raised his or her hand. That said, just about everything that students came to know about ethnography during the course came from our discussions in class and their readings of our course texts. As I said earlier, I used Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw’s *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* for the first two semesters that I taught the course and Sunstein

and Chiseri-Strater's *Fieldworking* text for the following two terms. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's book was published in 1995, and is written as a theoretically informed how-to-guide for graduate students and academics. Fretz is a folklorist while both Emerson and Shaw are professors of sociology. A central premise of the authors is that the writing of fieldnotes, even more so than the crafting of "polished ethnographies," "lies at the core of constructing ethnographic texts" (viii). Another core premise of the authors is that the intellectual enterprise of ethnography is not to accurately inscribe what one sees, but rather to capture the multiplicity of views and perspectives of study participants as they see them:

In contrast to styles of research which focus on others' behavior without systematic regard for what such behavior means to those engaged in it, we see ethnography as committed to uncovering and depicting indigenous meanings. The object of participation is ultimately to get close to those studied as a way of understanding what their experience and activities *mean to them* (12).

Finally, the authors take a particular stance on the issue of coding, and in particular, they argue that ethnographers should "not use preestablished categories to read fieldnotes; rather he should read with an eye toward identifying events described in the notes that could themselves become the basis of categorization" (152). They make a clear distinction between quantitative coding, which proceeds deductively with coding categories derived from theory, and qualitative coding which builds theory inductively working up from data (151).

Even while Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw spend the majority of their book, six of eight chapters, on the crafting of fieldnotes, they do offer a perspective on the writing of ethnographic texts. Central to their approach is the development of a thematic narrative, which they define as a “coherent ‘story’ about life and events in the setting studied” (170). This perspective has distinct implications for the structure of texts:

Writing a thematic narrative differs fundamentally from writing an analytic argument, both in the process of putting the text together and in the structure of the final text. Structurally, in a text which presents a logical argument, the author sets forth a formal thesis or proposition in the introduction as a stance to be argued, then develops each analytic point with evidence logically flowing from and clearly supporting the propositional thesis. In contrast, an ethnographic story proceeds through an intellectual examination of evidence to eventually reach its contributing idea. While a thematic narrative begins by stating a main idea or thesis, it progresses toward fuller elaboration of this idea throughout the paper. Indeed, the more precise, fuller statement of the thesis is often most effectively presented at the end of the story, in a conclusion to the paper (169-70).

Given the differences the authors identify between ethnography and traditional academic research genres, many of their recommendations about the textual structure of ethnographic texts are familiar to most academic writers. In a section about introductions, they suggest writers consider an “attention-getting” opening (198). They then suggest a literature review, sections dedicated to describing the setting of the study and the research

methods used in data analysis, and a conclusion that attempts to “connect the ethnography’s thesis to issues raised in a relevant disciplinary literature” (207).

Like *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater’s text *Fieldworking*, is also a kind of how-to guide for writing cultural ethnography. Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater’s book, however, is specifically directed at undergraduates. The cover of the book, brightly colored and featuring an abstract painting of a cityscape, is the first clue that *Fieldworking* is a textbook and this is reinforced in the structure and style of the book. Much of the book is written in an informal, semi-conversational tone using the second person [“You’ve probably spent many hours noticing behavior patterns...” (2)], and each chapter features section headings, short assignments called “boxes”, key terms, end-of-chapter summaries, and examples of student work. Early in chapter one of the book, the authors, both of whom are compositionists, state that their approach to field research draws heavily on the work of anthropologists and folklorists “Hortense Powdermaker, Henry Glassie, Barbara Myerhoff, Zora Neale Hurston, Paul Stoller, and Renato Rosaldo” (4). Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater then define ethnography as “a researched study that synthesizes information about the life of a people or group” (4). Like Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw’s text, the majority of *Fieldworking* focuses on the methods of field research, with chapters dedicated to reading cultural texts, artifacts, places, and conducting interviews. Like *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, the last chapter of *Fieldworking* focuses on ethnographic writing, and the writers do that by breaking down their advice into three different kinds of representational strategies: experiential, dealing with the selection and presentation of data; rhetorical strategies, such as voice, point of view, and textual arrangement; and aesthetic strategies, involving the development and use of metaphors,

analogies, and images (447). Also similar to Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's text, Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater illustrate many of their points via examples and commentary from actual texts, although *Fieldworking* features many more examples from student writers.

Both Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, and Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater utilize a definition of ethnography and a conceptualization of the ethnographic intellectual project oriented around traditional definitions of ethnography as the narrative inscription of the life of a subculture. Both texts encourage researchers to reflect on how their own subject positions impact their practice and ethnographic stance, yet neither text advocates for critical ethnography, which is used to interrogate the ethics and politics of representation and to directly intervene in the amelioration of injustice.

Similar to ethnography, the research paper occupies a position of some ambivalence within composition and rhetoric. Scholars have traced the roots of the research paper to the German research model in the late nineteenth century (Moulton 366). At its core, the undergraduate research paper is based on the doctoral dissertation, which for most of its history has centered on advancing an original thesis supported by research. The dissertation might be understood as a supergenre, which Devitt describes as a genre "that serves as the basis and reference point for other genres" (74). As a generic descendant of the dissertation, the underlying pedagogical rationale of the research paper is grounded in two foundational intellectual activities: one, the development of a unique, arguable claim of a breadth and scope appropriate to a given discipline; and two, the development of the research skills necessary to find quality information that supports the writer's claims and engages the scholarly conversation (Strickland 25). The arguments against the research paper are now familiar to most college instructors, however, the assignment itself

continues to be a fixture in countless classrooms across the academy. One major critique of the research paper is that it exists as a genre that very few researchers outside of the academy actually use and as such has limited value either as a research exercise or a productive orientation to disciplinary inquiry (Strickland 25). In his 2004 *English Journal* essay, "Just the FAQs: An Alternative to Teaching the Research Paper," Strickland argues that while many professionals engage in research and produce reports, there are few similarities between most workplace research genres and the traditional undergraduate research paper (25). Strickland maintains that much of the difficulty in teaching and writing the research paper is rooted in the conflation of inquiry-based research and thesis-based persuasion that is a cornerstone of the assignment that he claims pressures students to close down their natural curiosity about topics in favor of finding an easily defensible and researchable thesis that will yield a satisfactory grade (23). Strickland advocates de-linking inquiry from persuasion, at least in terms of how the two activities are conceptualized in many traditional research assignments, and suggests experimentation with new genres, such as the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), as a way of extending student inquiry before students are asked to articulate their own persuasive claims about a topic. Strickland's approach echoes earlier suggestions by compositionists like Ken Macrorie who in the 1970s experimented with the "I-search paper" which encouraged students to incorporate meta-narratives of their research questions and activities into their papers (cited in Moulton 368). More recently, Romano has advocated multigenre research that combines traditional features of the research paper with elements of narrative writing, qualitative research, and visual argument (*Writing with Passion*).

As the culmination of students' service-learning experience, the end-of-semester final project that is the core of this study is primarily positioned in the genre of ethnography, although it contains a number of elements that draw on the research paper. The assignment description enacts an orientation towards ethnography that is largely consistent with Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw and Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater. Here is the introductory paragraph from the final project description I handed out to students approximately half-way through the semester:

The goal of this project is develop a specific idea related to your experience this semester that attempts to increase our understanding of mentoring and the student/mentor relationship. As opposed to the Reflexivity Paper, which asked you to represent your own experience, the goal of this project is to represent the experience, attitudes and motivations of mentees from *their* perspective. Primary data for this project will consist of ethnographic fieldnote data acquired during the mentoring experience and where applicable, our seminar discussions. Secondary sources, including course readings, outside research, and fieldnote data generated outside the mentoring experience are also welcome (Appendix B).

Readers will note that representation of the experiences of others, which is increasingly problematic in the context of the postmodern critique of ethnography, retains a central position in the assignment, although the description emphasizes that it is the writer's responsibility to represent the "experience, attitudes, and motivations of mentees from *their* perspective." A list of possible research questions included in the assignment,

however, is a bit more ambiguous about the role of writers in the context of their inquiry.

Here are the questions as they appear in the assignment:

Your project may also attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Why is the topic you've chosen to focus on of interest, to you personally and intellectually?
2. What might be some alternative explanations for the behavior you are studying and how does your theory account for them?
3. How might your findings be used to change or modify the mentoring experience and/or our society's approach to educating adolescents?
4. What are the implications of your findings for *community learning* as a teaching approach, both for participant observers (you) and community members (the mentees)?
5. What are the implications of your findings for *ethnography* as a mode of social research, both for participant observers and community members? (Appendix B)

Question one is fairly straightforward and deals with writers' personal connection to their topic. Questions two through five, however, invite students to take on particular kinds of roles as ethnographers that go beyond representation. Question two invites writers to take a more theoretical stance towards their data. Question three introduces the idea that ethnographers can be agents of change, and this role is implicitly extended in questions four and five that ask students to consider the implications of their research for teaching, and in question five, for ethnographic practice generally. This last question, in particular,

opens the door for students to critique ethnography as an intellectual practice and its use in service-learning settings with community participants.

So what do the genres that make up the context of ENG 3010 say about the ideology of the course? The first observation I will make is that both the assignments and the methodological texts strongly favor a constructivist stance towards knowledge and truth. This is certainly the case with Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's text, which emphasizes the existence of multiple truths, but the reading of multiple participant meanings and the role of participants' subject positions is also a recurring thread throughout Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater's textbook. This approach towards knowledge is also articulated in the assignment descriptions for the final project and the two reflexivity essays; in the emphasis in the final project on the representation of participant meanings and in the focus on subject positions and stance in the reflexivity essays.

The second observation I will make is that there is a subtle but distinct disconnect between the approaches to the creation of knowledge articulated in the ethnographic course texts and the class assignments. The adoption of inductive approaches are explicitly endorsed by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, in their concept of open coding, and is an implicit feature of Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater's articulation of the concept of reading, which they broadly apply to culture, place, text, artifacts, and experience. The course's assignment descriptions and rubrics (Appendix B), however, clearly require students to formulate thesis statements and to present them early in their texts. These directions endorse deductive approaches to knowledge-making and encourage students to position data within general theoretical frameworks. I believe this epistemological disconnect between

course readings and assignment descriptions had a discernible impact on student writing and I will take up the rhetorical nature of that disconnect in the next chapter.

In similar terms, the approach to knowledge reflected in the syllabus and course assignments articulates an academic, intellectual role for writers that privileges academic discourse as the primary mode of student writing. Chapter seven in Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* is clear about the expectations that readers of academic ethnography will have for texts, as is the last chapter of *Fieldworking*, which also contains an appendix with style guides for both MLA and APA formatting. Similarly, the course syllabus contains a section describing the requirements for written work and a link to an online MLA style guide which many students would have recognized from their first-year course. Expectations for the citation of sources, effective organization and transitions, and proofreading, are also elements of the rubrics provided with each assignment (Appendix B).

Other course readings provide additional insight into the ideological stance of the class. These texts have ideologies and epistemologies of their own, but together they contribute to the ideological profile of the cultural context surrounding student writing. Without providing an analysis of each text, I maintain that almost all of the texts articulate what might be called a structural, or systemic, approach to racism that locates issues of race, and the intersection of race, class, and education, in a larger sociopolitical framework that is different from both racist discourses and the more benign, but no less ideologically invested, discourses of American individualism. The different authors represented in the readings listed on the ENG 3010 syllabus approach issues of race and education in different ways, but with the exception of Ogbu's essay "Literacy and Schooling in Subordinate

Cultures,” racism is almost always articulated as a phenomenon that originates outside of individuals in the fabric of dominant culture. Ogbu’s thesis is similarly tied to the devastating effects of racism, but his work is distinct from the other writings in its particular, and controversial, perspective on the relationship between race and academic achievement. My main point is that aside from Ogbu, there is a general shared perspective on race, and to a lesser extent class, in the course readings that was invisible to me when I taught the course that I now see as a revealing feature of the ideology of the course and my approach to it. As I demonstrate in the next chapter, I believe the ideological weighting of course readings did have an impact on student writing, both in the nature of paper topics and students’ intellectual and affective stance towards their work.

In “The Life of Genre, the Life in the Classroom,” Bazerman argues that understanding the genres available to us at any one time can help us understand the roles and relationships open to us when we write. If Bazerman is correct, this means that what students produce in the classroom is tied to the genres they come with and are exposed to while they are there. As such, the writing of the students in ENG 3010 cannot be fully understood as a genre without some awareness of the broader context from which it comes, a genre shaped by the course’s cultural, situational, and generic contexts. These contexts are also critical to describing and evaluating what Bazerman calls the “available meanings” in texts and groups of texts, a phrase Bazerman uses to describe the range of rhetorical possibilities for both writers and readers. For the course at the center of this project, this means that student writing is located in a complex and interconnected web of ideas and available meanings, shaped by the institutional approach to service-learning, my particular stance to service-learning and writing instruction, the perspectives on topics

voiced in course readings, and the wealth of individual experiences and subject positions that students brought to the class and developed while they were participants in the mentoring experience. The goal of this chapter has been to provide an overview of the context of the course at the center of project and the genre system surrounding student writing. In the next chapter, I present the findings of an in-depth analysis of student writing with an eye toward identifying the connection between “available meanings” and my concept of rhetorical outcomes.

CHAPTER THREE: A GENRE ANALYSIS OF SERVICE-LEARNING WRITING

The process movement utilized work in cognitive development research to shift the focus in composition away from the artifacts of student writers to the processes through which rhetors use writing to make meaning and construct knowledge. But as I argued in the last chapter, work by researchers associated with the new rhetoric movement and a re-energized interest in the concept of genre in the 1980s and 90s, specifically the notion of genre as social action, enabled compositionists to approach textual study from a range of new theoretical perspectives. The majority of this research, however, focused on professional and academic genres, with relatively little work done on what many would argue is the core of composition studies, student writing.

In “The Territorial Demands of Form and Process: The Case for Student Writing as a Genre,” Ruth Mirtz cites two challenges to using genre theory to study student writing. The first comes from the persistence of an older conceptualization of genre as a means of textual classification, a definition which Mirtz argues is still popular in literary studies, and is associated with teacher-centered pedagogies and formula-oriented instruction that focus on the teaching of the modes, in stark contrast to process approaches which are more student-centered and emphasize personal development (190). The second challenge, Mirtz maintains, comes from negative attitudes toward student writing, which she traces to current-traditional and critical literary theory, which makes it difficult for instructors to see student writing as a legitimate form of discourse. Embedded in this view is the belief that student writing is a kind of pseudo genre (see Scholes, quoted in Mirtz 193), produced by writers who are inexperienced, uninformed, and “uninitiated” (193). Alternatively, Mirtz argues for seeing student writing as a “metagenre,” which she defines as “a kind of

experimental, knowledge-building writing which contains many other kinds of writing” (194). Mirtz’s use of the term *metagenre* echoes Mary Jo Reiff’s use of the word when she refers to student-authored ethnography as a form of *metageneric* learning. Reiff sees ethnography, and student-authored ethnography in particular, as both an academic research genre, and a mode of genre analysis that positions writers to explore both the “materiality and discursivity” of communicative action (36).

Compositionist and genre theorist Aviva Freedman, while cautious in her support of genre as a pedagogical strategy, advocates for the use of genre theory in exploring student writing.² Freedman argues that genre theorists’ interest in the dialogic and intertextual dynamics of texts is well-suited to exploring the relationship between writing and learning in academic contexts (“Situating ‘Genre’” 180). Bazerman argues in a similar vein, maintaining that one of teachers’ primary roles, and not just for writing instructors, is to introduce and shape students’ engagement with genres (“The Life of Genre” 19). Bazerman recommends that teachers not only become more aware and explicit about their use of genres in their classrooms but that they also think more carefully about the role of genre in student learning and writing (“The Life of Genre” 25).

A core premise of this project is that genre theory can be helpful in exploring student writing in service-learning settings. It is a premise built upon the notion of genre as a frame for social action and foregrounded by the social, interactional dimension of student

² One of the identifying characteristics of the North American school of genre theory, with which Freedman is often associated, is skepticism about the pedagogical value of genre. Specifically, researchers such as Freedman (“Do As I Say,”) and Luke (1994), have argued that the use of genre models in the classroom can lead to formulaic, reductivist writing that undermines rhetorical agency.

writing done in community-based settings that reflects students' participatory activity in the lives of communities and collectives that exist beyond the university. Genre theory also has relevance for writing *about* community-based settings that utilize ethnography for the same reasons alluded to by Reiff in her conceptualization of ethnography as a form of multigeneric learning, both in its form and across its field of inquiry.

So what exactly might a genre analysis of student writing reveal? Bazerman cautions that genre analysis cannot establish either the "actual intentions" of authors or the particular understandings of readers (*Shaping Written Knowledge* 24). What genre analysis can do, however, is identify and describe the "available meanings" and probable intentions of both individual texts and groups of related texts across particular rhetorical situations and contexts (*Shaping Written Knowledge* 24). For Bazerman, meanings and intentions are constructed in the relationship between texts and their social and rhetorical contexts. In classroom genres, this relationship between text and context is particularly important because student writing not only points to student learning but gives instructors valuable insight into the instructional context: the ways students relate to course concepts, objectives, readings, class discussions, teacher presentations, and other students. One of the goals of this chapter is to operationalize a key term of the project, and one that to this point I have used rather casually: *rhetorical outcomes*. I propose that rhetorical outcomes are *rhetorical features or patterns of rhetorical features that demonstrate learning, proficiency, or mastery of a particular course objective*. Some of these objectives may be explicitly articulated in the course syllabus, while others may be more implicitly embedded in the rhetorical context of the course. Using genre analysis, I will operationalize this term

by exploring student writing for signs of student learning and for evidence of the outcomes of service-learning courses and their impact on student writers.

The clearest articulation of Bazerman's approach to genre analysis can be found in his 1988 book *Shaping Written Knowledge*. In it, Bazerman compares research essays written across a number of disciplines for differences in the ways scholars position themselves and their methods in the creation of knowledge. Bazerman's method of genre analysis is oriented around studying four specific dimensions, or contexts, of a piece of writing and its surrounding sphere of activity. The first context concerns the lexicon of a text, by which Bazerman means "the types of information conveyed about the objects under discussion" (*Shaping Written Knowledge* 25). Lexicon refers to "the nature of symbolization, the frameworks in which the objects are identified, the precision of identification," and the "fit" between the object of study, the text, and the world (*Shaping Written Knowledge* 25). Bazerman's second context involves citation. Citation practices point to a text's, or a genre's, relationship to previous texts and previous knowledge (*Shaping Written Knowledge* 25). Citation also locates the claims of a text in relation to other knowledge domains and helps map the intellectual, epistemological, and ideological terrain of a text. The third context refers to the way in which a text attends to audience. For Bazerman, this includes attitudes expressed in a text, the knowledge the text assumes readers will have, the method of persuasion and the argumentative structure embedded in the text, and any charges, or instructions, given to readers (*Shaping Written Knowledge* 25). Finally, Bazerman's fourth context explores the ways authors are represented in a text. These are captured in "statements that reflect the thoughts, purposes, observations, and quirks" of writers (*Shaping Written Knowledge* 25-26). Authorial persona can also be

expressed in the nature of writers' claims, personal reflections, and expressions of value or morality (*Shaping Written Knowledge* 26).

Analyzing student texts using the concepts of genre theory and Bazerman's methodological framework represents a deductive approach to data analysis. In much the same way as the concept of genre functions as a frame for the social action of rhetors, genre theory and the concepts that come out of it frame the analysis of data in a way that helps researchers explore how genres function in specific contexts. Perhaps the strongest argument against using a deductive approach relates to the concern that theoretical concepts can overdetermine data analysis (Lewins and Silver 84). In the case of projects like this one, however, that have specific research questions inspired by a particular theoretical frame, a deductive approach leverages the methodological power of theory while also keeping an eye open for patterns or features that fall outside the frame but are nonetheless relevant and interesting. Bazerman speaks to this point when he argues that none of the four contexts at the core of his model of genre analysis are mutually exclusive, rather they should be seen as porous categories that guide research and create openings for new lines of genre-based inquiry (*Shaping Written Knowledge* 26). These openings make room for other theoretical perspectives that can help broaden the analysis, and as I explain later in the chapter, to inductively theorize what writers do with genres in particular writing contexts.

Research Questions

Grounded in Bazerman's approach to genre analysis, the research questions at the core of this chapter are oriented around the concept of rhetorical outcomes and the premise that student writing is an important indicator of student learning and of the

relationship between student learning and the context of service-learning experiences. As such, my analysis seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the predominant rhetorical features of service-learning writing?
2. What roles do intertextuality play in student service-learning writing?
3. What are the major rhetorical outcomes for students in service-learning courses?
4. Can evidence of progress toward course learning objectives be inferred from text level features? What can analysis of such markers reveal about progress towards these objectives?

Data Collection

As I stated in the last chapter, the research corpus for this project is a collection of 34 end-of-the-semester final projects written across the four sections ENG 3010 taught between September 2000 and May of 2002. Even though 44 students out of 59 agreed to participate in the project, some participants dropped the course, did not turn in final projects, or requested that their final papers not be included in the study corpus.

Data Preparation

Before I began my analysis of student papers, it was necessary to scan hard copies of students' essays and to save each file in rich text file format (RTF). Scanning was done with the optical character recognition (OCR) program SimpleOCR. I then uploaded all 34 files into the qualitative textual analysis program MaxQDA, which is a software package similar to analysis packages such as Nvivo and Atlas.ti. MaxQDA allows researchers to generate and manage coding categories and code qualitative data using a simple but powerful computer interface. MaxQDA also allows researchers to annotate data, to write and

organize coding memos, and to create spreadsheets that capture and analyze data attributes around static categories such as gender or ethnicity, or attributes tied to coding categories.

Coding and Analysis

My coding process utilized a three phase approach inspired by Miles and Huberman's framework of deductive data coding which is summarized in Lewins and Silver's *Using Software in Qualitative Research* (86). Miles and Huberman's framework recursively combines the generation of coding categories and the coding of data. Before coding, however, I read the entire corpus of student essays, using MaxQDA's memo function to annotate and reflect on interesting passages of text and to write memos to myself suggesting additional research questions and lines of inquiry. Next, I generated what Miles and Huberman call descriptive codes to capture and describe what a particular segment of text is about. For my purposes, a segment of text included everything from an individual word to a phrase, sentence, paragraph, or section. These descriptive codes were grounded in Bazerman's contextual model of genre analysis so my first set of codes included the terms *lexicon*, *citation*, *attention to audience*, and *authorial persona*. Per Miles and Huberman's second coding phase, I then read the corpus for a third time, generating what they call interpretive codes which were intended to add a layer of fine grained detail to Bazerman's four main contexts. A number of interpretive codes were taken from Paré and Smart's essay "Observing Genres in Action: Towards a Research Methodology," in which the authors build on Bazerman's model to suggest how specific rhetorical attributes, such as authorial voice or tensing, function in analysis. In the third coding phase, I used MaxQDA's retrieve function to gather coded segments from across the corpus to look for

patterns across texts, clusters of features that might be tied to a particular attribute such as the semester in which the paper was written, or features that seemed to be unique to the corpus.

As Lewins and Silver point out, often during the coding process, the line between deductive and inductive approaches became difficult to discern (86). The process that I describe as deductive was also recursive and iterative, and at its base, required inductive thinking that allowed me to move from a particular segment of a text to a new code or coding subcategory. In working through this tension, which I alternatively found to be both generative and at times confusing, I frequently turned to Ellen Barton's concept of rich features to negotiate the methodological tension between coding categories and the inherently indeterminate nature of text. Barton defines rich features as "linguistic features that point to the relation between a text and its context" (23). As opposed to providing a sense of "absolute reality," about the function of a particular feature, however, the goal of analyzing rich features is to provide researchers, and ultimately readers, with enough information to make reasonable inferences about the impact of features and patterns on meaning (22). In my own coding practice, this approach to analyzing text provided a way to operationalize theoretical categories, while also leaving room for the discovery of new coding terms that were relevant to my research questions.

Another generative source for coding categories came from Clifford Geertz and Mary Louise Pratt's arguments that the introductions of ethnographies are particularly relevant for discovering the epistemological and rhetorical stances of ethnographic texts. Geertz argues that ethnography has historically presented writers with unique rhetorical challenges and that the best places to observe these tensions in ethnographic texts are in

"the scene-setting, task-describing, self-presenting opening pages" of introductions (11). Like Geertz, Mary Louise Pratt, in her essay "Fieldwork in Common Places," describes the specific role that introductions play in understanding how ethnographers attempt to create authorial ethos in their texts. Pratt argues:

They (introductions) play the crucial role of anchoring that description in the intense and authority-giving personal experience of fieldwork. Symbolically and ideologically rich, they often turn out to be the most memorable segments of an ethnographic work... Always they are responsible for setting up the initial positionings of the subject of the ethnographic text: the ethnographer, the native, and the reader (32).

Geertz and Pratt's interest in ethnographic introductions helped me to create a number of coding categories that were easily subsumed under the four foundational categories suggested by Bazerman. "Task-describing," and "scene-setting," are two examples of subcodes that I located within the general category of lexicon, which I used to describe text segments that spoke to specific topics like the location of the classroom, or particular social roles associated with the service-learning experience, like mentoring.

A number of other theoretical perspectives also had an impact on my coding and analysis of data. These include Fahnestock and Secor's work with the stases in academic writing and Susan Peck MacDonald's research on the rhetorical differences across academic disciplines. I will say more about these perspectives as they come up in the discussion of findings. In the meantime, I invite readers to take a look at my full list of codes in Appendix E. My hope is that the list of codes and the discussion of the theoretical concepts behind them can help readers to better understand my methodological and

epistemological stance towards my data and suggest approaches for their own inquiries using genre-based approaches.

Findings

I have structured the findings section of this chapter around Bazerman's four contexts: lexicon, citation, audience, and authorial representation. I have done this for two main reasons. First, this approach provides a specific framework for seeing genre analysis in action. Second, it provides what I hope is an accessible way of organizing findings both for myself and my readers. As such, it represents a provisional attempt to deal with a rhetorical problem that I have mentioned before regarding how educators working within specialized disciplines such as composition studies can effectively communicate with a range of stakeholders inside and outside our field.

Against this backdrop, I first present some baseline data on the student essays that make up the study corpus. The majority of the 34 essays included in the corpus are traditional-looking typed and double-spaced texts between five and eight pages in length. The median length of the papers is 2170 words, with the shortest essay 1120 words in length (approximately four and a half pages) and the longest 6670 words, 4500 words more than the median and almost 2200 words longer than the next longest paper in the collection. Although none was required, eleven of the 34 papers include a cover page. Two essays contain an appendix with student-designed questionnaires used in research, and two essays contain visual elements: one features a series of photos taken at the service site, and another includes a set of statistical tables dealing with minority graduation rates that was re-created from a source. I required that all essays have a title, which I list below, but I

point out that two essays have general titles: “Ethnography Final Project,” and “Final Project,” and one is untitled.

Table 3
Student Papers by Title

1. The Power of Choice
2. Intimidation Among Adolescents
3. Work, Play, or Work Disguised as Play?
4. The Importance of Encouragement
5. My Mentoring Experience, A Roller Coaster of Both Up's and Down's
6. Music and Its Influence on Youth Identity
7. Final Project
8. Different Time, Different Perspective; Looking Through Another's Eyes
9. What's Beneath the Surface
10. The Impact of Computer Use on Children's Activities
11. Middle School Itch
12. Ethnography Final Project
13. The Unwritten Paper
14. Searching for Acceptance
15. Losing Yourself: The Search to be Cool
16. Differences do not have to be a problem
17. An Ethnography to Represent Youth Culture in Reference to Space
18. Why the Mentoring Process is a Great Experience for the Mentee & For The Mentor
19. Untitled
20. Black and White
21. The Mentoring Process at University Public School
22. Piece of Mind
23. The Role of Self-Confidence in the Lives of Teenage Girls
24. Equality Equals Empowerment
25. What Your Body Can Tell You in the Mentoring Experience: Somatic Mind as a Tool for Self-Knowledge
26. Tips on Mentoring
27. The Effects of After School Activities on Middle School Students
28. Earning Respect
29. Computer Games and Social Skills
30. A Cry for Help
31. Disappointed, Wanting Change and Changed
32. Stepping on New Ground
33. When the School Bell Rings, Does the learning stop?
34. Give a Child an Inch of Praise and See How Far He Will Run

Lexicon

As I mentioned earlier, Bazerman’s use of the term *lexicon* is fairly broad but I understand and use the term to refer to the relationship between objects (people, places, things, activities), ideas, and rhetoric. The term connotes the “fit” between the material world, experience, and the representation of that experience and its constructed meaning, through language (Bazerman, *Shaping Written Language* 25). Below is a list of some of the major categories I used while coding and analyzing data.

- Introductory Framework—segments of text that articulate the relative specificity of a student text in relation to the service-learning experience and the course
- Task Describing—segments of text that identify and describe the task of the service-learning experience
- Scene Setting—segments of text that refer to the physical setting of the service experience
- Participants—segments of text that refer to community participants, other mentors, the instructor, or other school personnel
- Thesis—segments of text that articulate that main argument or theme of the essay
- Argument—segments of text that attempt to advance the main argument or theme of the essay
- Metaphors/Analogies—segments of text that articulate metaphors and analogies

- Rival Explanations—segments of text that offer or consider alternative explanations for the significance of a piece of data or one of the writer’s conclusions or arguments

Midway through the coding of the corpus, I came across Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede’s *A Practitioner’s Guide to Reflection in Service-Learning Courses: Student Voices and Reflections*, which is cited by Anson in his chapter on reflection in *Writing the Community*. In their chapter on writing, Eyler et al. describe six major types of service-learning essays, and their typology parallels a coding scheme I had been experimenting with to describe the kinds of student essays in the study corpus. Due to the nature of my class, two of Eyler et al.’s categories, book reviews and agency analyses were not relevant; but the other four provide a useful framework for describing and thinking about the rhetorical purposes of students’ essays. The topics and foci of these major groups also help operationalize Bazerman’s notion of lexicon, which is intended to provide a vocabulary for thinking about the relationship between texts and their social contexts.

Nineteen of the 34 essays, or 56%, are what Eyler et al. call case study essays. Per their definition, these essays “focus on individuals,” the service project, or some specific element of the service experience (89). These papers are predominantly descriptive, even when they use a theoretical or source-based concept to frame the writer’s interpretation of the significance of their findings.³ Below is an excerpt from the introduction of a paper

³ Within Eyler et al.’s typology, problem-solving essays are papers that focus on a specific problem within a particular service-learning setting. Several essays in the project corpus that I coded as case studies contain a narrative that in some way or other deals with a specific issue or problem in the mentoring experience. Only two essays, however, foreground a specific problem in the paper introduction, and in both these cases the papers contain many of the same features as the case

called “Differences do not have to be a problem” that is representative of the case study paper:⁴

This semester, I had the opportunity of participating in a middle school class as a mentor. At University Public School (UPS), I worked with an eighth grade student named Sydney⁵ on a web page for the Tutorial, Recreation, and Enrichment Experiences (TREE) program. The program takes place after school hours and is designed to teach kids in a fun way. My job as a mentor was to play the big sister role for Sydney. This was not as easy as it sounds because she and I are completely different, from age to religion. Instead of building a big sister/little sister relationship, we built a working-relationship. A working-relationship is a relationship that people can develop by working together towards a common goal. Mentors and mentees can build a strong working-relationship by utilizing their differences to compliment one another and get the job done.

One common feature of the vast majority of the papers in the corpus, including the paper excerpted above, is the foregrounding⁵ of students’ mentoring role. One of the defining features of the papers I have classified as case studies is their tight focus on the mentoring experience, and in particular, on mentees and the success of the mentoring activity. In the paper above, for example, the main topic is a narrative of how individual

studies. As a result, I ended up conflating the case study and problem-solving categories in a later stage of interpretive coding.

⁴ All excerpts appear as written.

⁵ All the names that appear in essay excerpts are pseudonyms.

differences between the mentor and the mentee were minimized and resulted in their cooperative ability to “get the job done.”

The argumentative structure of most case study papers utilizes a narrative approach that provides a detailed retelling of the semester that explicates the theme of the essay towards some culminating event usually associated with the end of the semester. Most often, these essays feature common narrative structures: an opening scene or foundational event, a subsequent crisis, conflict, or setback, and then some kind of resolution or achievement. The following excerpt features a typical conclusion from a case study essay like the kind I have described:

Culturally I felt no separation between the mentees and I not once did I struggle to relate we never were on different levels and once we broke through the language barrier we were able to communicate wonderfully. The entire experience was great with the mentees and I. The reason I feel we got to such a tranquil level with each other was because of basic interests. It eliminated all of the issues about language, race, class, and culture. All of those factors became irrelevant because we had good conversation about the things we enjoyed; we built up friendships. With that came trust and respect, which in return helped me to be a good guide for them on their webzine project. They wanted to ask me questions and I wanted to answer them because we had built up a friendship which impart allowed them to be successful in building their webzine (“Black and White”).

Not all narratives feature happy endings, however, such as this conclusion from a case study essay called “What’s Beneath the Surface” that explores possible disconnects between the goals of the mentoring program and mentee needs.

The after school program TREE, is a valuable asset for the school and the children that participate. Unfortunately, there may be some cracks in the systems that do not afford the correct support and motivation for a student like Ashley. She, like many other students may need more one on one attention to replace the shrinking family time at home. The TREE program specifically the mentoring I participated in, may want to focus more on the student and less on academic skills like, building a website. A more powerful long-term goal for teachers and parents would be enriching a child's motivation and self-esteem. Knowing the influences of divorce, peer pressure and television and recognizing the factors just like the one's that affect Ashley and her academic achievement will allow the schools to adapt teaching styles to achieve this goal.

Out of the four major categories of student papers, the case study essays make the most frequent and detailed references to persons, places, and things and feature a relatively high degree of what Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw would call thick description, concrete first-hand descriptions along with verbatim excerpts taken from writers’ fieldnote journals. Many also feature either direct or paraphrased quotes from mentees and mentors, as in this passage from a paper called “The Effects of After School Activities on Middle School Students”:

Similarly, Nate represented these literacy skills in the classroom in the small speech he wrote. I had asked Nate if he would like to speak on behalf of

the mentees about the class and their projects on parents' day. Nate said, "sure, can I start writing what I am going to say?" I said, "sure." Nate then asked, "can you type out what I say as I am talking, so I have something to look off of?" I agreed. His dialogue stated:

My name is Nate Nichols, and I am in the building a web page class.

I have enjoyed being a part of this class, and learning more about computers. My mentor Carrie has helped me along the way, as well as others. Our web sites can be viewed by anyone as it is posted on the UPS web site.

Case study essays, which as I have said represent more than half of the papers in the corpus, contain the highest degree of specificity in the articulated relationship between students' topics, evidence, and descriptions of the mentoring experience. In many ways, these essays most closely follow the formal description of the assignment in which I asked students to present a thematic ethnographic narrative using data from observations recorded in their fieldnote journals.

This issue of specificity, or fit, between the mentoring experience and the lexicon of student writing is important when considering the next largest group of student essays, which are what Eyler et al. call theory application essays, and which account for ten of the 34 essays, or 29% of the corpus. These essays are deductive in nature; they use a particular concept or idea, such as Jabari Mahiri's analogy of teaching as coaching, and then use examples from the service experience to test or validate the theory. Perhaps the most interesting thing about this group of essays is the specificity of concepts cited by writers.

The majority of theory essays, six out of ten, make use of very general theoretical concepts, such as power, intimidation, or conformity, that have no explicit tie to a course text, a research text, or course discussion. The following introduction, taken from a paper called “The Role of Self-Confidence in the Lives of Teenage Girls,” is representative of this general approach.

Adults often look back on their youth with a wistful yearning. They remember what it was like not to have a care in the world. However, when we look back we often forget the turbulence associated with our teen years. Let's face it, things are tough for teenagers in today's society. Children in middle school have to deal with all sorts of issues. One big issue that effects all children, but some to a higher degree than others, is the issue of self-confidence. Children have to deal with so much and their confidence in themselves has such a great impact on their everyday lives.

In one of the general theory papers, a dictionary definition, familiar to all writing instructors, provides the conceptual anchor for the paper, such as in this opening from a paper entitled “Intimidation Among Adolescents”:

What comes to mind when you think of the word intimidation? According to the Oxford American Dictionary, to intimidate is to subdue or influence by frightening with threats or force. Children in middle school feel intimidated everyday. A person tries to take advantage of another person that they think has less power than them. This occurs among all ages and social groups. A person can feel intimidated culturally. They can start to learn to expect this from everyone even around people they shouldn't feel

intimidated by. Children that feel intimidated all the time are usually children who are isolated socially, children who people think are different, and children with poor social skills. My experience mentoring the students in the Web Design class at University Public School has dealt a lot with intimidation. Intimidation plays a large role in the lives of middle school students today. In my paper, I will discuss the affects of intimidation among middle school students as a function of power.

A smaller group of theoretical application essays, three out of ten, employ a specific reference to a concept appropriated from a course reading, a reading found outside of class, or a course discussion. In the following introduction, taken from a paper called "Give A Child an Inch of Praise and See How Far He Will Run With It," the writer opens with a dictionary definition but then quickly cites a concept from one of the main readings of the course to frame the thesis of the paper:

The 1989 World Book Dictionary defines reinforcement as the act of strengthening or increasing in a way, especially as in learning or behavioral processes. Praise, which can work as a type of reinforcement, is defined as the act or fact of saying that a thing or a person is good. Together these actions are believed to be the result of high self-esteem and better performances among children. In Jabari Mahiri's book, Shooting for Excellence, he talked about the advantages that both positive reinforcement and praise have on children, especially adolescents. He wrote about the different atmospheres in which he found "positive talk" taking place. In chapter two of his book he visited a basketball court and observed the

relationship between the coach and the players. He noticed the way the coach used positive reinforcement and continuous praising along with criticism. In his study, it seemed that the students respected the coach more for doing this, because this way the coach was not only noticing their mistakes, but he was also noticing their accomplishments and most importantly their effort. For a child, it may be considered that positive reinforcement from an adult can cause their self-esteem to rise to a higher level, but that is not always the case. In this paper I will argue that today's adolescents react differently to different types of reinforcement depending on their background, how they already feel about themselves and perhaps more importantly, whom the reinforcement comes from. Self-esteem plays a key factor in the importance of different reactions to positive reinforcement.

The following introduction, from a paper called "Why The Mentoring Process Is A Great Experience For the Mentee & For The Mentor," is another example of a theory paper in which the writer ties the argument to a specific concept. In this case, the writer cites two sources, both of which were class texts. This excerpt, moreover, describes the writer's intention of providing evidence from the service-learning experience to validate and explicate the cited sources:

In my experiences working with African American youth, I feel that the theories proposed by bell hooks' in her article "Confronting Class in the Classroom" have some merit. Using my personal ethnographic fieldnotes I will draw my personal experiences into my paper as supporting evidence. Using the remedies proposed by Jabari Mahiri, I will explain a particular

method of coaching young African Americans that I feel have worked well in the class.

Out of the entire corpus, the most explicit and thorough work with theory comes from a student essay that explores Kristie Fleckenstein's concept of somatic mind and its relevance for the service-learning classroom. Here is the introduction of the essay, entitled "What Your Body Can Tell You in the Mentoring Experience: Somatic Mind as a Tool for Self-Knowledge,"

In our current culture, it is unpopular to include the self in our scope of vision when writing for academia. Indeed, "under the sway of postmodernism, 'body functions as an arbitrary abstraction'" (Fleckenstein quoting Geraldine Finn). Regarding the body this way in ethnography, and more specifically in mentoring and recording the mentoring experience, is a sad waste of a valuable resource. The body, at the very least, can serve as a tool, like a compass or thermometer, which can tell us about those aspects of ourselves otherwise unknowable, those that are cloaked by the subconscious.

Despite the intellectual ambition of this essay, this paper does not develop a specific connection between theory and the writer's service experience. Rather, the balance of the essay maintains the writer's theoretical focus, explicating the fine points of Fleckenstein's theory and offering only general reflections on ethnographic practice and the mentoring experience.

In the majority of the theory application papers, the primary form of argumentation is the use of example. In some ways, the structure of these papers are the most reminiscent

of the traditional five-paragraph argumentative theme, with body paragraphs frequently beginning with signpost phrases such as the one found in the following example:

Another example of intimidation that I saw between the mentees in the class occurred the day we had to go to another room and share our web page ideas to the other groups (“Intimidation Among Adolescents”).

Like the case study essays excerpted above, this essay also contains a narrative reference to an event that occurred in the mentoring classroom, but in this example, as in many of the theory application essays, events are cited as illustrative examples of a specific theoretical idea, which in the case of this paper is the general concept of intimidation, and as such reflects the more deductive approach of the theory application essays compared to the case study papers in the corpus. Theory papers also make use of thick description and frequent citations of students’ fieldnote journals, but to a lesser degree than the case study papers. The theory papers in the corpus are also much less likely than case studies to provide a happy ending or neat narrative resolution. The following excerpt provides a good example of how theory essays tend to offer more tentative conclusions related to their theoretical orientation:

In conclusion, my paper has shown how adolescents react differently to different reinforcement depending on their background, how they feel about themselves and most importantly, whom the reinforcement is coming from. In this paper I have discussed two girls whom both crave reinforcement and praise. Jewelita, a mature seventh grader, who receives attention from not only her family but also from her peers shows how she earns and accepts the praises she receives. Annette, who also craves

reinforcement and praise, yearns for it differently. She craves attention from her peers in a desperate plea for acceptance. As I stated earlier in my paper author Jabari Mahiri discovered "positive talk" on the basketball courts, and wrote that during "positive talk" respect was given and respect was shown. "Positive talk" needs to be established in our schools and not just on the courts because if we can bring children's self-esteem up, there is a better chance we will have better students in our schools, which will lead to a better future for everyone ("Give A Child an Inch of Praise and See How Far He Will Run With It").

These excerpts from the theory papers in the corpus illustrate that categories of student papers should not be considered mutually exclusive, but instead reflect differences in degree that nonetheless provide useful indices of comparison between student essays. Like the case study essays, theory essays often contain thick description, verbatim data from fieldnotes journals, and narrative features. The biggest difference between the two groups is the deductive theoretical frames used by writers of theory essays and, in general, a higher degree of abstraction between paper topics and the mentoring experience.

The third most popular kind of essay in the corpus corresponds with what Eyler et al. call self-assessment essays, which reflect on the success of the service experience both for participants and for the writer. As I will show in the examples that follow, the five papers in the corpus that fell into this category, which accounted for 18% of the total, might more accurately be called course critiques. The introduction below is from a paper entitled "The Unwritten Paper," and articulates a general critique of the service experience, the course, and the ethnographic research project:

In the 2001 fall semester at Wayne State University, I registered to take the class English 3010. This particular class was supposed to explore youth culture. The work conducted in the class would lead to an ethnographic research paper about youth culture. The students of English 3010 had to mentor junior high students as a means of acquiring the proper information to complete the study. However, the class failed to present myself with sufficient information to complete the suggested research paper. There are some premises that have brought about this conclusion. The students were not in the proper environment, the time the mentors had to spend with the children, and the distractions of the computer lab. The mentoring role was never fulfilled, because of these factors. Thus, I never got the opportunity to see a clear picture of youth culture being conducted.

This excerpt contains a number of interesting features. In explaining the goal of the course in the second sentence, the author uses the verb “supposed” to assert the flawed expectations of the course design (“This particular class was supposed to explore youth culture.”). Two sentences later, (“The students of English 3010 had to mentor junior high students as a means of acquiring the proper information to complete the study.”) the author positions the mentoring experience not as an end but as an almost arbitrary (“had to”) construction designed to provide students with data for their ethnographic projects. The balance of the paragraph then offers a critique of the design of the mentoring program and a statement about how those factors prohibited the writer from completing the project as envisioned by the instructor (me). By adopting a stance critical of the course design in his introduction, the author of “The Unwritten Paper,” seems to be questioning not only the

specific setting and nature of the course, but the very premise of the relationship between service-learning and ethnography.

The following excerpt comes from the introduction of another critique essay in the corpus. This time, however, the specific object of the writer's critique is the failure of the service-learning experience to live up to the true definition of mentoring:

Disappointed, Wanting Change and Changed

"Just because a program proclaims it does mentoring does not mean it is effective. In fact many mentoring programs do not even create long lasting relationships, let alone change youth's lives." (PPV, p. 1)

When I first joined my English 3010 class I did not really know what to expect. The explanation in the schedule of classes said that it had a tutoring component to it. On the first day of class it was explained to us that we would be mentoring students at University Public Schools. The students were involved in TREE an after school program. This particular TREE program was one in which the students build a web page using Microsoft Front Page. When I first heard the word mentoring it brought noble thoughts of helping some poor disenfranchised inner city youth make something out of his life. Commercials from Big Brother and Big Sisters ran through my head as I imagined how good it would feel to help someone out. Unfortunately things did not work out as I had envisioned. My mentee Abraham never really connected. My time involved with the TREE program was hampered with feelings of frustration and disconnection. In this paper I will discuss the setup of the TREE program and why I feel that while it is noble in its efforts,

it is not designed to develop the long lasting relationships that are necessary to really influence the lives of the youth involved. Both mentors and mentees had no idea what to expect from the class. The mentees really had no say in what they did in the class. The room itself was not setup in a way to help the class. *Using the data that recorded in my class journal I will try and show that my mentee also felt disappointment in the program (although for different reasons than mine).* (emphasis added) *I will also discuss how I feel the class can be improved so as to make it a more meaningful experience for those who take the class next semester.* (emphasis added) Overall my experience with the class was a disappointing one, but I don't feel that it has to be that way for everyone.

I have italicized two passages in the above excerpt that highlight two aspects of the instructional context of the course. In the first sentence, the writer articulates the intention to support his claims using “data” from his class journal and to “try” and show that his mentee felt similar disappointment. I interpret the reference to data as an attempt by the writer to demonstrate a commitment to one of the explicit expectations of the final project, which was to support claims using detailed observations collected during students’ ethnographic observations. In similar terms, the second half of the sentence shows the student’s acknowledgement of another expectation of the assignment which was to use ethnographic observation to seek out participant meanings rather than projecting students’ interpretations onto mentees. The feature I would like to point out in the second passage is the rhetorical move from a position of pure critique to constructive criticism. Unlike the first critique example I cited earlier, this writer, even in his introduction, makes clear that

in addition to pointing out the problematic aspects of the course design and its implementation, he also intends to make positive suggestions for improving the course and its delivery. This move from criticism to offering recommendations for change is a common feature across the group of critique essays, and as I will show later, also a common feature of essays across the corpus.

As an instructor, and a reader, these critique essays are the most interesting and intriguing pieces of writing in the sample. There are a few reasons for this. First, more than any of the other papers in the corpus, it is easy to see myself, the instructor, as the real topic of these papers. For many instructors, including myself, a student's critique of a course is a critique of the instructor, and that is inherently interesting to instructors. Like many instructors, I am deeply invested in my teaching; my ego is deeply invested in my teaching; so it makes sense that any direct engagement of one's teaching, in writing, receives intense interest. Second, most of the time, students' feedback comes from their rushed participation on Likert-based surveys filled out on the last day of class, or worse, in the numbing silence of students' non-responses on qualitative questionnaires. Third, critique essays are refreshing. As a writing instructor of university-required courses, students often fall into two large groups: those who for a variety of reasons are explicitly invested in pleasing the instructor, and those who for equally wide-ranging reasons, have tuned out, leaving the teacher to wonder whether they are bored, unhappy, or perhaps worst of all, confused. In this context, it is unique to be presented with students, and student writing, that thoughtfully and intentionally engages the course. Lastly, bad news, for whatever reasons, gets our attention. An avalanche of negative student critiques would be devastating, particularly in a course that is designed to provide a meaningful experience

to middle schoolers from the community. But that concern aside, negative critiques make interesting reading, and even if they are not always successful papers, even if they do not fulfill the requirements of the assignment, I read them with great readerly interest.

One of the most striking patterns across all three categories of student essays relates to the notion of the stases, which Fahnestock and Secor describe as a series of three to five points “at which certain kinds of questions arise about a subject” (428). Within the authors’ framework, there are questions of fact, definition, value, cause, and policy or procedure (428). They maintain that these question types provide a taxonomy of argument, which they then use to compare rhetorical strategies across different disciplines. Fahnestock and Secor’s central argument is that the vast majority of research essays in the physical and social sciences occupy the first two stases: fact and definition, while work in the humanities, including literary criticism, primarily occupy the stasis of value (432-35). They also argue that most general interest writing, for example articles in magazines such as *Smithsonian* or *Sports Illustrated*, as a rule tend to occupy all five stases: beginning with describing and defining an issue or problem, identifying the stakes, speculating on causes, and finally recommending some course of action. My analysis found the same pattern across the different essay types in the corpus. That is, in case studies, theory essays, and critiques, the majority of papers move through the range of stases, defining a central problem or issue, describing the issue and its manifestation in the service experience, speculating on causes, and recommending some kind of action that would improve the mentoring program or the course for future participants.

I draw two tentative conclusions from this finding. First, the consistent presence of all five stases across the corpus led me to go back to the assignment description for the

final project. After re-reading the description, it was clear to me that in the assignment I implicitly directed students to move through all five stases and that, as suggested by Fahnestock and Secor, students used the stases as both a method of invention and organization, regardless of the kind of essay they ended up writing. Second, and in anticipation of a point I will make again later in the chapter, in the absence of models of ethnographic writing that I could have provided the class over the course of the semester, the stases embedded in the assignment description provided students with a rhetorical scaffold for their ethnographic narratives. It is quite possible that students came to the course with the argumentative moves of the stases as part of their rhetorical repertoire, but I would like to suggest that the articulation of the stases in the assignment functioned as an important cue for students that many, if not most writers, embraced.

In addition to the kinds of papers students wrote, I also coded the essays in the corpus for a variety of features to detect patterns in the relationships between student texts and the rhetorical context of the class and the service-learning experience. Two of these coding categories were inspired by Geertz and Pratt, who separately suggest that the ways in which writers set the scene and describe their task in ethnographic introductions are key to understanding how researchers position themselves towards their participants and their experience.

Eighteen of 34 essays in the corpus (53%) contain passages that identify and describe the location of the service-learning experience. There is no significant clustering of scene-setting passages in a particular paper type. What is interesting is the variety of locations described by students in scene setting passages. Most essays in the corpus identify the location of the service-learning course in the city of Detroit but only four essays

provide a context for Detroit beyond the school's street address or its nearest landmark. The following excerpt is the longest, most detailed, and most reflective passage about Detroit in the entire corpus and it comes from a previously cited paper called "Black and White":

At the first glance of the school my eyes were confused, looking out the window I saw the city, cars driving through busy intersections honking their horns, buildings that looked like they could touch the clouds, and straight ahead an enormous sign that reads "Motor City Casino." A casino next to a school, when I was in middle school we saw the subdivision with one prefabricated house after another. The UPS kids attend school inside the Kresgee Building, a building that was once a powerful office of the Kmart Corporation, and now is still a building too much other business. I would never imagine walking into a building like that when I was an adolescent. We walked into a building designed specifically to teach the young youth, a middle school.

The author of "Black and White," attempts to temper his unease by incorporating references to Detroit's past, ("a building that was once a powerful office of the Kmart Corporation") and city tropes ("cars driving through busy intersections honking their horns, buildings that looked like they could touch the clouds") that attempt to project a sense of wonder and awe onto the present. As I say, this excerpt is an exception to the general pattern found across those essays that identify Detroit as part of the service setting. The following excerpt from a paper called "Work, Play, or Work Disguised as Play?" is much

more representative of the way most students in the corpus geographically locate the school setting:

The T.R.E.E. program takes place at a University Public School, which is a charter middle school of Wayne State University (WSU). UPS is located about a mile from Wayne's main campus.

Six essays in the corpus, including some of those that describe Detroit as the urban context of the school, provide descriptions of the school itself and the same number provide descriptions of the computer classroom where the enrichment activity took place. Five out of the six writers who describe the computer classroom are critical of the set up of the lab, with at least two incorporating their critiques into their thesis. Here is how one writer in this group describes the computer classroom:

The computer lab where the actual mentoring took place is not very big and not very comfortable because the computer desks are in tight rows. Often time when the lab got full with mentors and mentees hot temperature inside that lab was almost unbearable (“The Mentoring Process at University Public School”).

Sixteen out of 34 essays make either no mention, or offer no detailed description of the service setting. In the vast majority of these essays, the setting of the service experience is presented as assumed knowledge. In other essays, however, some writers seem to be unaware of the exigence of providing a contextual location for their narrative. Here is an example:

Music has the power to influence people, culture, and society. The lyrics within musical selections can be very powerful. In the recent past, rap

music in particular, has been charged with negatively influencing young adults. While mentoring middle school aged students at University Public School, I was allotted the opportunity to observe how influential rap music has been on two young men, David and Steven (“Music and Its Influence on Youth Identity”).

The identification of University Public School in the third sentence of this introductory paragraph is the only reference to the location of the school in the essay, although the writer does describe a number of settings within the school later in the paper. I cite this example because I think it shows a writer making a rhetorical choice to *not* locate her narrative within a broader context of place and I find it interesting that so many of the writers in the corpus make the same choice. The absence of a contextual location makes sense for those writers who seem to be writing directly to the instructor, who students would assume are already familiar with the service setting, but in essays that lack articulated assumptions of shared knowledge, the absence of contextual information is curious.

A related feature across the corpus involves how students position themselves with respect to the mentoring program’s community participants. All but one of the essays in the corpus makes direct mention of the mentee or mentees assigned to the writer. Most essays contain a range of descriptions of mentees in terms of dress, personal appearance, and personality. Below is a typical example of how many mentors describe their mentee:

As I walked into the computer lab, I went straight to the front of the classroom and sat next to a girl, who I later found out to be Alyssa. She was dressed in her UPS uniform which consisted of a white polo shirt, navy blue

dress pants, and black dress shoes. She seemed friendly but a little bit shy (“Searching for Acceptance”).

In nineteen out of 34 papers (56%), writers like the author of “Searching for Acceptance,” make no explicit reference to the ethnic background of mentees. When writers do reference or describe the race of their mentees, they usually do so in one of two ways, both of which appear in roughly an equal number of instances across the corpus. The first way that writers acknowledge the race of mentees is to include a general statement somewhere in the introductory narrative, such as in this excerpt from a paper called “Earning Respect”:

The mentees, who I often refer to as the kids, were all between the ages of eleven and fourteen. They were all African American and an equal number of boys to girls, totaling around fourteen students. Their class was designed to teach them how to make web pages, but was meant as an after school activity for students who had to remain occupied due to working parents.

The other way that writers reference the race of mentees is in their description of their particular mentee, as in the following:

My mentee Alexander is a young African American 7th grade student who's a very outgoing/sociable student (“Stepping on New Ground”).

The above excerpt goes beyond simply identifying some of the mentee’s more easily articulated traits (i.e., African American, 7th grade) to offer a more evaluative description of the mentee’s personality, which the writer labels as “outgoing/sociable.” More evaluative descriptions like these, however, often increase the political valence of writers’ depictions.

Consider the following passage from a paper called “Middle School Itch”:

She is an African American girl, looking two to three years older than her actual age of thirteen years. Her clothes, while obeying the school uniform of white shirts and navy pants, are in good repair, free of wrinkles and stains, and they fit her well. While her face is free of makeup and acne, her hair is longer and well cared for, and her posture is strait; she carries herself with confidence. Her speech is slightly influenced by slang and she talks in much the same manner as the rest of the children; quickly, using popular slang with a slightly slurred affect.

Here is a similar example from another writer, from “The Effects of After School Programs on Middle School Students”:

I was assigned to Nate. Nate is a twelve-old sixth grader of African American descent. He is about four feet and five inches in height and has symmetrical facial features that are pleasing to the eye. He is always in good hygiene, and is uniform that consists of a white a shirt and navy blue slacks that are laundered and pressed.

The interesting thing about these last two examples is the apparent correlation between an increased amount of descriptive language and political connotations, at least in terms of the examples in the corpus. The first example, from “Middle School Itch,” refers to the mentee’s language as “influenced by slang with a slightly slurred affect,” while the second example describes the mentee’s hygiene, which for me instantly called up Joseph Biden’s infamous description of candidate Barack Obama as “bright and clean and a nice-looking guy” (Thai and Barrett). As I have said, these two passages represent variations across the corpus. A slight majority of writers chose to not include references to mentees’ ethnic background in

their essays, while many include simple, unmodified descriptions. What these two outlying examples suggest, however, is that when writers do venture into more descriptive linguistic terrain around the issue of participants' subject positions, there also comes the increased chance that such passages heighten the social and political charge of students' writing for readers.

While the number of writers across the corpus who do not acknowledge the race of their mentees slightly exceeds the number of those who do, even fewer students engage the socioeconomic positions of mentees or acknowledge the impact of broader sociocultural factors on the mentoring experience. Six papers in the corpus of 34 (18%) acknowledge the broader social context in some way. A few refer to the student body of the school as "underprivileged," while some simply acknowledge issues like divorce and the presence of single parent households. The following excerpt from an essay called "Piece of Mind," comes from what I deem as the most in-depth and poignant reflection on class and culture across the corpus, which I will note does not make any reference to race:

Unless teachers have lived under the circumstances disadvantaged students have to cope with, they may not fully realize what problems the students may face. I can not even fathom what these kids must go through. Some students live in homes with no electricity because the bill could not be paid. Sometimes that situation stretches out for several weeks. So the student leaves school and goes to a dark home. The student may or may not have somewhere else he or she could go to do their homework. Other students might live in homes where either the adults own no car, or it does not run reliably. Sometimes gasoline money has to be budgeted as tightly as food

money, and the parent simply cannot take the student to a store three miles away to get some needed school supplies. Such students often may not have money for school supplies.

It could be argued that middle school is just too soon to give up on a student. If we call them lazy or just push them to achieve more without providing any of the help they need to accomplish that, perhaps we have given up on them. There is no point in telling a student to try harder when he goes home to no electricity and scrambled eggs for dinner most nights because eggs are cheap.

Despite admitting that the writer “can not fathom what these kids must go through,” the student’s detailed description of poverty adopts an empathetic tone and subject position that articulates a desire to not only understand the life of mentees but to theorize the broader implications for mentee achievement. The writer also uses the description to critique the social logic behind labeling children who are poor as “lazy” or to write such children off. Despite its lack of acknowledgement of race, and the role of race in urban poverty, I read this excerpt as an impressive piece of writing that maximizes the rhetorical potential of ethnography to inscribe the details of everyday life together with a cogent assessment of a narrative’s broader implications for institutions and community members’ social futures.

My study of the lexicon of student papers has explored the ways in which writers position themselves through their texts in relation to the service experience and their rhetorical task. This involves the theoretical frameworks students appropriate, their use of ethnographic data from the service experience, and the ways in which they represent the

service setting, community participants, and the broader social context of the course. One of the goals of this chapter is to begin to understand the implications of the rhetorical features of student texts for course learning outcomes. Below, I have reprinted the course objectives from my syllabus which I will refer to periodically in the context of my findings.

1. View community learning as an important way of learning about the world and society
2. Think critically about one's own opinions, positions, and ways of seeing the world
3. Understand the basics of ethnographic research
4. Utilize ethnographic research methods as a way of understanding the perspectives of others
5. View writing as a socially constructed means of representing oneself, the world, and those around us
6. Write more effectively in a variety of modes with a broader understanding of audience, authenticity and writing as a form of representation

Earlier in the project, I made the distinction between cognitive outcomes, articulated in verbs like *think* and *view*, and more concrete behavioral outcomes like *utilize* and *write more effectively*. Cognizant of Bazerman's ambivalence towards reading texts as transparent indicators of writers' thinking, I nevertheless argue that student texts do indicate writers' progress towards objectives related to the use of writing, ethnography, and community-based learning in meaning-making, which is specifically articulated in course objectives one and three. In particular, the number of students who include either

general recollections, verbatim journal data, or fieldnote-based analytical units suggests a significant level of investment in the ethnographic methodology at the core of the course design. Despite the primacy of ethnography as the primary genre for student essays, however, variations in student essays, which paralleled the types of community-based papers described by Eyler et al., did have an impact on student outcomes. As one example, students who appropriated a case study approach were more likely to include a satisfactory resolution of problems encountered during the mentoring experience. My findings also suggest that the specificity of writers' theoretical frameworks play a role in the locus and focus of students' explorations. Specific theoretical frames can provide writers with an interpretive lens for making sense of fieldnote data or alternatively, they can overdetermine essays, sometimes occluding students' mentoring experiences.

Acknowledging that variations in students' interpretations of ethnography have an impact on the kinds of intellectual work writers are able to accomplish with the genre productively complicates my understanding of course objectives, particularly as they relate to the relationship between writing and the service experience. Perhaps most importantly, I see the need to develop a metadiscourse of ethnography that would provide both myself and students with a vocabulary for assessing the impact of specific textual features, like the inclusion of specific theoretical frameworks, on how texts function. That vocabulary was not available to me while teaching the course but I believe my findings provide a base for talking about how specific textual choices impact the distance between writers and the experiences they inscribe. The development and use of such a vocabulary would help students develop a better "understanding of audience, authenticity and writing as a form of representation" as described in course objective six (see above) and could ground both in-

class discussions and paper comments dealing with the impact of different “modes” of ethnography on students’ writing.

Per Bazerman’s framework, in the next section I take up another important feature of the relationship between student texts and the instructional context of the service-learning courses: writers’ citation practices with outside texts and integration into their rhetorical strategies.

Citation

For Bazerman, citations indicate the relationship of a text with other texts and previously established knowledge (*Shaping Written Knowledge* 25). Citation also invokes the related idea of intertextuality, which as Bhatia defines it, refers to a range of uses and relationships between a text and other texts. Bhatia lists some of the main kinds of intertextual relationships as follows:

- when texts are used to provide a context (such as the reply to a letter)
- when texts are a part of a larger text (such as chapters within an anthology)
- when texts explicitly refer to other texts (such as academic citations)
- when texts are embedded in a text (such as an excerpt from a student essay in a dissertation)
- when texts are mixed within a text (such as quotations from a fieldnote journal) [*Worlds of Written Discourse*, 126-27]

Intertextuality is an important part of academic discourse and learning to work with citations is an important part of students’ orientation in the successful use of academic genres. Indeed, as Thaiss and Sawicki argue, using citations in disciplinarily sanctioned

ways is one of the fundamental expectations of instructors across the academy for student writers (5-7). Interpreting and incorporating a variety of textual types is also critical for service-learning students, who are often asked to work with texts in ways that are unique from most traditional courses. Unlike students enrolled in traditional courses, students in writing *with* and writing *for* service-learning settings are often asked to read and produce professional and community-based genres, and students in writing *about* classes regularly encounter non-academic genres and use specialized genres such as ethnographic fieldnotes and research memos as part of their role as participant observers. As Bazerman and Bhatia argue, writers' citation practices point to critical relationships between rhetors and their subjects, so it stands to reason that an analysis of intertextuality in service-learning essays might also provide some important clues about students' positioning towards the service experience.

Not every essay in the corpus contains references to outside sources. In fact, six out of 34 essays (18%) contain no references at all. External research was not a requirement of the final project assignment, and as I demonstrate in the previous section, the use of general theoretical concepts, such as encouragement, proposed without any tie to a specific source or theory, was a notable feature in a significant number of student essays. Still, 28 essays, or 82% of the papers in the corpus do contain references, from a low of one distinct source in nine papers, to a high of eight in one paper for an overall median of 2 citations per essay.

The majority of external citations reference course texts. Just less than half of those papers that do contain references, reference Jabari Mahiri, author of *Shooting for Excellence: African American and Youth Culture in New Century Schools*. Several students

cited Mahiri's argumentative analogy of effective teaching as coaching, and a handful cited statistics that Mahiri provides about the ethnic diversity of US schools and the high proportion of students of color who have white female teachers. Three essays cite a chapter from bell hooks' book *Teaching to Transgress*, and two cite a chapter from Tom Romano's book *Clearing the Way*, and Geneva Smitherman's *Talkin' and Testifyin'*, all of which were read by students in the first year of the course. I specifically chose these texts because while all deal of them with educational issues and academic discourse, they all are light on disciplinary jargon and insider language. Mahiri's text in particular and its development of the coaching analogy provided students with a way to think and talk about mentoring that many students recognized from their own experiences and could adapt to their own mentoring practice. Drawing on Mahiri, several papers directly or indirectly explore ideas like encouragement and self-esteem, and these provided productive frames for observing and describing the behavior of mentors as well as mentees. Mahiri's *Shooting for Excellence* also features analytic units that sandwich his own fieldnote data between commentary-based paragraphs in much the same way as recommended by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw. This feature, along with the weaving of qualitative research and narrative elements that is modeled in both Mahiri and hooks' texts, provided students with models for their own writing in ways that I did not appreciate while teaching the course. Looking back, I am heartened to see that so many students were able to use these texts in their writing and in their interpretation of the mentoring experience.

For those students who used sources from outside of the course syllabus, there is a wide variety of texts and genres represented, from governmental reports to films, conservative talk radio hosts, and excerpts from popular CDs by artists such as Eminem

and Method Man. The most interesting finding in this regard is the number of students who use scholarly texts from the field of psychology. During coding, I found at least seven different essays in the corpus that cite psychology texts, representing both scholarly journal articles, edited essay collections, and field-specific dictionaries. These texts are most often used to provide or bolster writers' theoretical frameworks around popular topics such as encouragement, motivation, and self-esteem, or to support their interpretations of events or behaviors observed in the service setting.

The overwhelming majority of source-based citations are used to support writers' arguments and interpretations. Only a few writers in the corpus use data from the service-learning experience to problematize or refute perspectives articulated in sources, which while not surprising given the nature of the assignment, is interesting and worth noting. The following excerpt comes from an untitled essay that is deeply invested in refuting arguments about the linguistic and social authenticity of African American Vernacular English:

According to Geneva Smitherman, Black English is an Africanized version of Standard English. She states the English the slaves spoke utilized the same rules of language of their own tribal language. This should go without saying since speakers of other languages will do the same when learning English without the benefit of formal training and daily (or regular) practice. Otherwise, if the person doesn't use what was learned until some time later, the person ends up speaking "Shattered English" as his or her skill in speaking English improves. Her explanation of Black English and how it developed seems a little simplistic.

First of all, there's approximately 6,000 languages spoken in the world with 2,000 of them spoken on the African continent. While I can't argue with her claim that slaves tribal languages shared common sentence structures and word usage, I do take issue with her when she says they couldn't communicate with each other since they had no shared words. Many languages share common roots to their words, if not the words themselves, so there's no reason think the same wouldn't be true of African tribal languages. And if you can recognize the root, you can recognize the word. Notice the similarity between the English word "repaired", the French word "repare", the Italian word "riparato" and the Portuguese word "reparado"?

Second, she overlooks the fact that there were quite a few English speaking Caribbean Blacks here at the same time as the African Blacks. While the Caribbean Blacks may have spoken another version of Shattered English, they would have been able to help the African Blacks in learning the language, thereby shortening the learning curve and, in the process, creating what is now called Creole.

The author of this essay then goes on to engage and problematize arguments by Ogbu and Fordham about black students who resist mainstream attitudes about academic achievement, as well as Eric Michael Dyson and his apologia for the lyrical themes of gansta rap. I read the preponderance and weight of this writer's work with sources as a function of his intellectual and political investment in racial politics that was an intermittent, but never primary, discourse of the class. By frontloading theory building and only later in the paper offering brief reflections on his mentees and the mentoring program, this writer enacts a

kind of pedagogical resistance to the assignment, and perhaps to the instructor, but also a kind of genre confusion or misreading of the assignment and the particular social action called for by the essay.

I would like to continue to explore the two concepts of resistance and genre confusion with an excerpt from another essay, in this instance from a previously cited paper that focuses on Kristie Fleckenstein's essay "Writing Bodies: Somatic Mind in Composition Studies." In exploring Fleckenstein's work, the author of the essay surveys concepts by a variety of authors cited by Fleckenstein, including Jung, James Berlin, and Dabrowski. I read the student's engagement with Fleckenstein's work as advanced for undergraduates, however, like the author of the essay quoted above, the writer of this essay only attempts to apply her work with sources to the service setting late in the essay and without much specificity or detail. In retrospect, it is difficult, and I would say misadvised, to spent too much time locating students' motives. The writer of the Fleckenstein essay, for example, may simply have run out of time to effectively apply her theoretical work to her mentoring experience. But I am interested in thinking about how the citation practices of the student authors of these two papers positions them with respect to the service experience. The untitled essay on race strikes me as a prime example of overdetermination. It is overdetermined by the highly deductive nature of its theoretical positions and also by its use of citations, both of which have the effect of increasing the distance between the text and the mentoring experience at the core of the assignment. The Fleckenstein essay seems similarly removed from the real-life granularity of the mentoring experience but the role of citations in the text is very different. Whereas the writer of the untitled essay deploys citations as a part of an agonistic engagement with his topics, the

author of the Fleckenstein essay uses her sources to develop a kind of narrative understanding of the ways in which her ethnographic assignment is locating her within the service experience. The student writer uses Fleckenstein to offer a critique of academic writing and its privileging of disembodied voices, but as a text her approach gets her no closer to the actual experience than the author of untitled. In that sense, both papers represent a mismanagement, or misappropriation, of the genre frame, at least in terms of what I hoped the assignment would provide. Perhaps more to the point, these papers represent two very different ways in which citation practices and the use of intertextuality can break genres for readers, particularly those reading within the rhetorical confines of classroom settings.

The other most common form of citation across the corpus involves the use of fieldnote data from students' ethnographic journals. The assignment description for the final project explains that students' primary evidence should come from their fieldnote data, but it does not direct students how that data should be presented. In class, however, I did model what Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw call analytical units, which discursively bookend fieldnote data with introductory statements and the ethnographer's interpretation of the significance of a particular passage of fieldnotes (the same method I am using throughout this chapter). I continued to model the analytical unit structure even after I stopped using the Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* text in favor of Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater's *Fieldworking*. In my coding of the corpus data, I found that thirteen essays, roughly 9%, incorporate verbatim fieldnote data from students' journals. When students cite journal data, they almost always appropriate some version of the analytical unit structure that we modeled in class. Here is what I consider a typical example of this

approach, from “The Role of Self-Confidence in the Lives of Teenage Girls”:

In this excerpt, the group was getting a little frustrated because the tower kept falling down:

We were building the tower with gumdrops and sticks of spaghetti, we had five minutes to build the highest tower. Ashley and Sophie were going through and sticking spaghetti into the colorful candy. Briana was a little withdrawn (it looked like she did not even want to be in our group) she would just occasionally reach in to hold it up while the others built it higher. Ashley was taking command, she would tell Sophie to hold something for her. When things were not going right and the tower was not standing up on its own, Ashley said, forget this I'm gonna take it down and start again. With that she tore down the work of four minutes and began to build a tower in the minute remaining.

I think this is a significant moment in that it shows that she has a persistent attitude, that nothing can get in her way. When she felt that things were not going right she took matters into her own hands and spoke out. That shows a lot of self-confidence. It shows that she knew she was capable of achieving better results. Self-confidence is having faith in your own abilities and talents.

As one of the theory application essays in the corpus, this paper builds out of a specific theoretical framework oriented around Kessler, Price, and Wortman's definition of self-

confidence. Consistent with the other theoretical application papers, the writer uses fieldnote data as an illustrative example of the theory to support her thesis about the role of self-confidence in the mentoring relationship. As I say, however, students who cite verbatim data from their fieldnote journals represent less than 10% of the essays in the corpus. A far greater number of writers cite their mentoring experiences in a much more general way, that for me as an instructor leads me to question whether students are quoting textual journal data or personal recollections of their time in the service setting. Below is an excerpt that demonstrates the often vague nature of students' experiential citations:

When we started Yusuf did nothing but play Internet games and look for music (mp3's). The only way I could get him to stop was just by telling him over and over again that he wasn't allowed to do those things during class. It didn't take a lot of effort to get him to stop, but if you weren't telling him what to do every second then his mind would drift and he would start playing on the Internet again. He chose to do a webzine about his favorite rappers. He knew how to search for different sites and also find games to play on the Internet. This was fun for him to do, but this is all he could do the computer. So during class I taught him how to use his web page program. In class the kids were allowed to browse the net and look for pictures or information that they wanted to use on the Internet. The computer was to be used as a tool. In this case we are using it to create a website ("When the School bell rings, Does the learning stop?")

This citation feels more like a general recollection than a direct appropriation from the

writer's fieldnote journal. Not only does it lack an explicit signpost indicating the source of the data, it also is generally located temporally, not referencing a particular day but describing a general trend or pattern of behavior. In Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's terms, this citation of data lacks thick detail and temporal grounding (my term), which would enhance the plausibility of eyewitness observation. As it stands, phrases like "his mind would drift," wade problematically into projecting the internal mental state of mentees, without supporting evidence that readers, like myself, might find persuasive.

Like my analysis of the lexicon of student papers, my exploration of students' citation practices indicate some distinct patterns in writers' use of sources and ethnographic fieldnote data. Close to 80% of essays contain references to either course texts or external sources, and across the corpus, students' use of texts were shaped by the kinds of papers they wrote and the nature of their argumentative claims. In contrast, a smaller number of students incorporated verbatim citations from their fieldnote journals, but for those students who did, most appropriated the analytical unit structure modeled in class and in the course text on ethnographic methodology. Many more students used general recollections, often in ways that make it hard to tell if citations come from notes or writers' mental constructions of the service experience.

Students' citation practices are relevant to course objectives that articulate my desire as an instructor for students to develop facility with ethnographic methodology and its capacity to generate knowledge about local communities. Based on my findings around the variety of citation practices from the use of fieldnote journals to outside texts, I am struck by the degree to which student writers encountered many of the same rhetorical challenges as those articulated by professional ethnographers. Generalizability has been a

recurring issue within the debate over qualitative research and ethnography in particular, and citations, which connect local data with broader bodies of scholarly knowledge, highlight the tensions embedded in the kinds of knowledge claims ethnographers can make (Schofield). As I argue in the previous section on lexicon, students' use of theoretical frameworks, particularly those supported by the citations of external texts, often yield deductive arguments about how a particular pattern of behavior observed in the classroom was representative of a general psychological or social phenomenon. Alternatively, students who based their arguments on fieldnote journal data, and who limited their citations to texts generated within the specific context of the course, in general did not attempt to generalize their findings to broader social structures or bodies of knowledge. In that sense, these essays call to mind Steven North's argument that ethnography is by its nature ungeneralizable, and as such can only create highly mediated accounts of personal experience (277).

In much the same way as my findings around lexicon, my findings around student citation practices complicate my sense of the course objectives, particularly as they relate to developing student understanding about the use of ethnographic writing. Per my analysis, students did, in general, develop the basic skills of observation, inscription, and theory building. However, in the same way that the course design should have provided greater opportunities for students to develop a metadiscourse for thinking about the rhetorical choices embedded in ethnographic writing, students also needed more detailed instruction on the complicated epistemological status of ethnography, and the role of citation of both external and local sources in the construction of knowledge claims. Like all things in the service-learning classroom, the availability of time is a significant issue, and I

am not convinced that there would have been sufficient time to discuss the rhetorical issues embedded in the course objectives as they are written. They are not ancillary issues, however, and my analysis supports the assertion that rhetorical and methodological issues deserve more time and more specific articulation in the writing goals we set for students in community-based courses.

Audience

The third key contextual dimension within Bazerman's method of genre analysis concerns the ways in which texts gesture towards their audiences. Of central concern to Bazerman are the "assumptions and attitudes" that texts assume readers will have, "the types of persuasion attempted," the structuring of argument, and the charges given to readers (*Shaping Written Knowledge* 25). In these categories of analysis, I hope readers can start to see the interconnectedness of Bazerman's categories. The nature of writers' theoretical frameworks and their expression in rhetors' argumentative strategies say a lot about the conceptual distance between the rhetoric of a given text and its subject. But at the same time, those frameworks and argumentative strategies also provide clues about writers' assumptions about their readers. Moreover, analyzing patterns of these features across the corpus yields clues about the genre itself, the constraints it places on writers, and the ways in which writers, and particularly novice users, negotiate genres they are unfamiliar with.

The majority of the essays of the corpus have textual features consistent with documents written for a general audience. These papers make very few assumptions about the reader's previous knowledge of the topic and make no demands on the reader or presumptions that the reader is in a position to effect change within the world described in

the narrative of the essay. In many essays of this type, the sense of audience is established early in the paper's introduction, such as in this excerpt from a piece called "A Cry for Help":

A mentoring experience produces an environment of education and excitement, for both mentor and mentee. While enrolled in a Wayne State University English 3010 course of "Representation and the Community", I received the opportunity to interact in a mentoring capacity at University Public Middle School. Direct involvement with sixth through eighth grade students encouraged me to further investigate the theory of adolescent behavioral patterns. Through the channels of close observation a discovery involving a pre-teen's necessity to feel accepted by fellow peers was made. This theory was confirmed during a special session of our TREE program (after school program at UPS).

This introduction describes the context of the essay, the setting, and the nature of the activity at the center of the paper. It lays out the writer's main topic and uses the passive voice ("a discovery...was made") to identify the intellectual project. I read the use of the passive voice in this excerpt as a rhetorical gesture by the writer towards an academic audience. This feature is rare in the corpus, most essays exclusively use the active voice, but the use of passive constructions is striking in a small number of papers, particularly in the essay "An Ethnography to Represent Youth Culture in Reference to Space":

A more direct way to know this Youth Culture is by mentoring in the school's extended program called T.R.E.E. (Tutorial, Recreation and Enrichment Experiences). T.R.E.E. is an optional program that offers a variety

of courses in relation to artistic, technological, physical, and educational areas...

The goal of University Public School students is to create a website that interests them. With guidelines on topics and requirements for contents, the students of T.R.E.E. in the “Building a Webpage” class are to create a project, develop literacy skills in building a web page, and identify with their own interests and ideas. They are to be guided by a computer expert, and English teacher, and also Wayne State University students in ENG 3010. The English students are supposed to mentor the T.R.E.E. students in building their web page. They are also to learn skills in relation to ethnography and create a final ethnography on the mentoring experience that is to authentically represent the students in the “Building a Web Page” class. The T.R.E.E. mentees are to respect the initiative of the mentors and work in unity to complete the web page projects by seeking and accepting wisdom imposed upon them by the mentors. Though level of authority is referred to respect more than that of domination, keeping the students on task is key if they are to be effectively enriched by the standards of T.R.E.E.

In terms of its appeal to a general academic audience, one of the most interesting things about the essay excerpted above is its use of an introductory forward that sets the scene for the ethnographic narrative and the argument about spatial relations in the classroom that accompanies it. The forward is exclusively written in the third person and makes liberal use of the infinitive which I perceive to be the author’s attempt to

appropriate the objective, scientific ethos of the background and methods sections of lab reports and the like. The author's first use of the first person, "I," comes in the opening sentence of the main paper: "For the purpose of this ethnography, I will argue that the classroom accommodations and the number of people who occupy it alters the amount of production from University Public School students in the 'Building a Web Page' class." The balance of the paper makes regular use of the first person although the writer continues to employ language and linguistic constructions like the passive voice that create distance between the author and her data: "To show that the mentee's personal space is invaded, the characteristics of body language, actions, and reactions must be read." The author of the above excerpt was in fact a psychology major which I believe partially explains her use of linguistic features such as the passive voice to create an objective, scientific research stance. It also explains her use of APA style in the capitalization of the title of the paper.

In contrast to the majority of essays in the corpus that appear written for a general audience, six essays in the collection are written for an audience of insiders. In the following excerpt, the writer explicitly describes who the paper is written for:

By writing this paper, I hope to help future mentors in the mentoring process. I hope to get them thinking, from the beginning, in a way that will not only score points with the mentees, but also help them in their own ethnographic trip.

The writer's intentions are supported by his use of the second person and frequent shifts in stases from definition, cause, and value to policy (informally defined) recommendations for future mentors:

Another thing to do is to have a relationship in which you consider

yourself equal to your mentee. You must somehow be able to suddenly stop thinking of yourself as twenty, and somehow start viewing yourself as eleven or twelve. You can't expect that their web page look as yours would, you have a good ten years head start. You have to realize that just because you see a glitch doesn't mean it has to be fixed. This is their work with our help, not our work with their help. Their work should reflect the work of a middle school age student, not that of a college student. If they see a glitch that they want fixed, trust me they will ask you for your help, but unless they do, don't try to correct their projects.

In a number of essays written for an insider audience, I found it difficult to decide whether the writer was addressing me, other mentors, or a combination of audiences. This excerpt is from a previously cited essay called, "My Mentoring Experience. A Roller Coaster of Both Up's and Down's":

You may ask why I think this is a good ethnographic topic for my final project in English, I'll tell you why.

Later in the same essay, the writer seems to address both current classmates and future mentors:

When beginning the class, be aware of all possible problems. Sure, you will go into the classroom thinking that the children will be the source to many of your upcoming problems. This irrational way of thinking makes you blind to what may turn out to be your true source of your problems, your fellow mentors. While I am not saying that I dislike any of my fellow mentors in any way, and I am sure after hearing this (or reading it) they will think I do

anyway, there is nothing I can do to change their mind so that is why I took the chance to say these things anyway.

The last several essays I have excerpted are good examples of what I am calling genre confusion. I do not mean to suggest that there is a clear ideal, or that I have a clear idea, of what student ethnography should look like. But I do mean to point out examples in the corpus where students' rhetorical moves, or modulations, catch my eye as a reader and instructor. The writer of "An Ethnography to Represent Youth Culture in Reference to Space," for example, writes for an academic audience using appropriations of scientific report writing such as frequent passive constructions that are unusual in writing from the humanities and social sciences. Alternatively, the writer of the last excerpt represents the opposite end of the spectrum, frequently using the second person and direct appeals to the reader, "you may ask why...," that evoke personal and interpersonal rather than research genres. In much the same way that my study of lexicon revealed a range of distances between student texts, topics, and conceptual frameworks, my analysis of students' audience appeals reveals a similar continuum in the ways in which students position themselves in relation to both readers and other writing genres. The existence of this continuum has implications for both teachers and genre theorists. For instructors, these variations point to the need to provide students with detailed feedback throughout the writing process, not to eliminate all variation, but to help students identify and make sense of textual features, like the difference between the active and passive voice, and the differences between how those features are handled in various academic disciplines. For genre theorists more specifically, the range of textual features displayed by student writers calls into question the flexibility of genres and the ways in which novice users both learn

and challenge the parameters of genre. Ultimately, this leads to issues of evaluation and assessment as readers, be they teachers, researchers, or teacher researchers, ask themselves if a particular piece of writing works or, alternatively, if its textual features place it outside of the genre in ways that undermine its efficacy as a form of social action.

Authorial Persona

Bazerman's fourth and final contextual dimension involves writers' construction of authorial persona. It is in this context where readers can most readily see the individual writer. For Bazerman, textual features of authorial persona include expressions of writers' thoughts, feelings, values, attitudes, reflections, and in "the breadth and originality" of claims (*Shaping Written Knowledge* 26). In terms of my own coding, I also explored the ways in which students articulated their own subject positions and included personal experiences from outside of the mentoring experience in their narratives.

The most interesting finding from my analysis relates to the lack of engagement between writers and their own subject position, particularly in terms of race. The issue of subject position was particularly relevant in my classes because of the fact that, while mentors represented a diversity of racial and socio-economic backgrounds, the mentees at the middle school were exclusively African American. Moreover, the concept of subject position and the importance of identifying and describing how subject positions shape a writer's ethnographic stance was a frequent topic of in-class discussion. Against this backdrop, I found that while 18 out of 34 (53%) essays in the corpus make explicit mention of the race of the middle school mentees, only eight writers (24%) make either explicit or implied reference to their own ethnic subject position. The majority of essays that make no mention of the ethnicity of the mentor are simply silent on the subject. In a number of

cases, however, those silences are made more conspicuous by the topic or argument of the essay, or some other aspect of the author's persona. For example, one essay in the corpus makes the argument that African American students' use of African American Vernacular English is to blame for the academic achievement gap between black and white students. The writer also engages in several other areas of racial discourse, but at no point in the essay does the writer acknowledge his own race or the possibility that his own history with race may be shaping his perspective.

Less conspicuous, but no less notable, are essays in which students elide their own subject position, such as in this example from "Differences do not have to be a problem":

My job as a mentor was to play the big sister role for Sydney. This was not as easy as it sounds because she and I are completely different, from age to religion. Instead of building a big sister/little sister relationship, we built a working-relationship. A working-relationship is a relationship that people can develop by working together towards a common goal. Mentors and mentees can build a strong working-relationship by utilizing their differences to compliment one another and get the job done.

Age and religion are important characteristics and are certainly issues worthy of discussion in describing how mentors and mentees negotiate their differences to work together. But the author of this essay, who was white, never acknowledges either her race or the race of her African American mentee. For me as a reader, this silence impacts my sense of the writer's ethos. It is possible, of course, that many writers simply do not see race, or see race in the same way as a graduate student trained to see discourses of difference and power in all texts. The argument that I would make, however, is that many students' reticence to

engage their own subject positions, and particularly those involving race and ethnicity, is due to their lack of familiarity with ethnography and other reflective genres that increasingly expect such disclosure from writers.

For those writers in the corpus who do engage their own ethnicity, they do so in a number of interesting ways. The following excerpt is from the essay, “Black and White”:

The inside of the computer lab looked typical of any other computer lab I’ve seen in the past. A bunch of the exact same computers lined up in rows of five or six with a walkway down the middle for the teacher to get through. The difference was the kids sitting in front of those computers they were all African American. Now my middle school wasn’t one hundred percent Caucasian but I could count the kids of African American decent on one hand, kind of huge flip culturally from when I was growing up.

In this example, it is tempting to assume that the writer is not African American (“I could count the kids of African American decent on one hand”); in fact, he was Caucasian. But what is interesting is that the writer never explicitly states his ethnicity, either here in the introduction or later in the essay. It is possible that the writer of this essay is working from the assumption that his readers already know his race. But this explanation is complicated by other features in the essay consistent with a rhetorical strategy aimed at a general audience: the introduction sets the scene and describes the task and mentees are described in detail. In this regard, I read this excerpt as representative of a minor, but nonetheless interesting misreading of audience along with a similar misjudgement of the generic expectations of the rhetorical situation.

My last example regarding authors' presentation of their own ethnic subject positions comes from an essay in which the writer argues that the lack of racial diversity at University Public School has negative consequences for its students. It features the most explicit recognition of a writer's subject position in the corpus:

My personal experiences have clearly shaped me into the type of person I am today. I came from a family whose priority was their children's education. Coming from a school surrounded by blacks, whites, Indians, Arabs, Asians all played crucial roles in my life. I had many friends that were all different ethnicities. I had many friends that were all different ethnicities. A lot of what one learns growing up is acquired by their friends. Therefore, my friends influenced the music I listened to, the way I talked, the clothes I wore, the parties I went to, and all different social atmospheres surrounding teenagers. I would listen to all rap and hip-hop music, and have a split tongue being able to speak slang with my friends, fixed up and well-rounded English with my teachers, Punjabi with my parents, and English with everyone else. It may seem odd to mention this but this was all influenced essentially from my schooling as I grew up. Coming from a diverse school has helped me tremendously with my future career at the university and will help me with the adventures that I will encounter later in life at the work force. I guess you can say that I am a clear example of a student coming from a minority background that has achieved much success from their diversified school system ("The Power of Choice").

In this excerpt, the writer looks to his own minority status and his experience in diverse

school settings as a key piece of evidence in the argument that ethnically homogeneous educational settings, like those found at UPS, have negative consequences. Here again, the writer's disclosure of his ethnic subject position plays a role in constructing an authorial ethos, but this time as part of a broader argumentative strategy built, in part, on the author's personal experiences.

Another way in which texts reveal writers' authorial personas is through attitude markers, words or phrases that express personal perspectives, values, or affective responses. In this regard, the most interesting finding from my analysis is the large number of emotive, affective expressions throughout the corpus. This feature is most striking in comparison to most classroom research genres. To give the reader some idea of the kinds of expressions I have in mind, here is a partial list of words and phrases found throughout the corpus that communicate writers' attitudes and emotional responses:

- intimidated
- great
- disappointed
- hoped
- anxious
- happy/sad
- glad
- unsettling
- sorry
- enjoy/didn't
- enjoy
- apprehensive
- frustrating and
- hurtful
- satisfying
- disturbs
- extremely
- interesting
- neglected

Writers' use of words and expressions like these are unusual in most academic genres but they are a frequent and reoccurring feature across the corpus. They demonstrate a high degree of emotional investment in the service-learning program, even when students have not had a positive experience. The widespread appearance of this feature also marks writers' recognition that the genre in which they are writing allows, or even encourages, such expressions, in a way that other classroom genres, with the exception of genres like personal narrative, do not.

Not all writers in the corpus included emotive attitude markers in their texts. Earlier in this chapter, I cited an essay called "An Ethnography to Represent Youth Culture in Reference to Space" that contains several features of scientific research genres such as consistent use of the passive voice. This essay, which stands out as a variation amongst the corpus, is noticeably devoid of affective language. It contains theoretical and practical judgments regarding the suitability of the mentoring classroom for student engagement, but it does not disclose the writer's attitude or emotional response to what she sees. I read this feature as part of the student's strong attachment to her understanding of academic research genres, and to some extent, her unease with ethnography and the rhetorical spaces that ethnography opens for writers' affective responses.

In contrast to the relatively high level of emotional language in the corpus, only a very small number of essays contain attitude markers that establish students' political engagement in the service experience. The most notable exception comes from a previously cited essay that is deeply invested in the rhetoric of race:

The only reason black students are "at risk" is because they are getting a mixed message and they don't know what to do or which way to go.

On the one hand they hear, from society at large, get an education so you can move on and do something with your life and live up to your God given potential. While on the other hand they're confronted with this attitude that to be educated, to speak Standard English, being on time or anything else associated with "being white" is wrong, they they're "selling out" and aren't really black. Furthermore, any efforts to 1) get educated, 2) make something of themselves, 3) assimilate into society and 4) not speak Black English is further proof that they'd rather be white than be black.

As I say, this essay is an outlier within the corpus, but it does illustrate the kind of political engagement that is possible when students write about service-learning experiences in which issues of race and language are present in the classroom. This type of engagement was not required by the assignment description, but it is still worth noting that this type of engagement, accompanied by charged authorial personas, was a not a prevalent feature in the essays associated with my courses.

Writers' reflections are another important feature of authorial personas and they are particularly important in service-learning writing because of the critical role that reflection plays in service-learning theory and the pedagogical foundations of active learning. As such, my coding of student reflection focused on textual features in which writers consider how an experience changed them or impacted their ways of seeing. I also paid attention to passages of text that mark students' reflexivity in which they consider how their subject positions might be shaping their perspective or leading them to question previously held assumptions or values. My premise is that such moves of reflection or reflexivity impact the ethos of the writers of ethnography and contribute to writers'

construction of a persona within their texts.

Through my analysis, I coded 14 essays (41%) as having passages with reflective and reflexive features. In a small number of essays, the reflective passage was a paragraph or so long; in most, passages were only a few sentences to a single sentence long.

Coded passages often include verbs such as *think*, *remember*, *realize*, *felt*, *found*, *see*, and *wondered*. Forms of the verb *to think* and *to realize* were the most common feature of passages I marked as reflective, and both occur in this example from an essay called "Tips on Mentoring":

Maybe she thought she needed someone older, someone with more experience, and this seemed to go against my belief that in our mentees eyes we are "young enough to still be cool, yet old enough to know everything". The more I thought about it, however, I came to realize that it doesn't go against this belief.

Coded passages were fairly split between reflections specifically tied to the mentoring experience and those oriented around previous experiences that shaped the writer's thinking in some way. The following is an example of a reflective passage grounded in the mentoring experience:

As the mentoring sessions went on, I started to realize how my assumptions about at least one of the girls were completely wrong.

Alternatively, here is a longer reflective passage that links back to the student's prior experiences:

Dealing with middle school students brought back memories and feelings from when I was that age. I remember wanting to be accepted and

popular. During that time of my life, I was especially overweight. Therefore I tried extremely hard to be liked. I acted extremely friendly (even to people I did not necessarily like), bought the clothes that were in style, and tried to be interested in the same things even if I did not like them) as everyone else. I often went along with and tried things I did not want to do, thinking they would make me "cool." I wore the Adidas jacket, the Vans shoes, and the "poop" brown lipstick because everyone else was. I even started smoking believing that would help me to fit in. Doing so did help me to gain friends, but they were not true friends. As the mentees are doing, I too changed the real me and shaped my ideas and likes to belong. They liked me because I shaped myself into what they wanted me to be. I was not myself they were not liking the real me. I put up a mask to cover what I did not like about myself in order to belong. Later on in life, during my later high school years, I grew out of the belonging stage I then moved on to the self-esteem stage. I realized that I was who I was and accepted it. I gained self-esteem and made real friends, who liked me for me. I began to be myself and realized that people only make fun of people to make themselves feel better and be a part of the group.

Compositionist Chris Anson has argued that while both qualitative researchers and advocates of experiential learning place a high degree of importance on reflection, there is no working definition, let alone consensus, on the qualities of authentic, effective reflection. Kathleen Blake Yancey says the same in her 1998 book *Reflection in the Writing Classroom* when she admits that "no one really knows what we reward in reflection" (147). Yancey is

primarily concerned with students' reflections on their own writing in the context of portfolio assessment in which students are asked to narrate their development as writers over the course of a semester or while an undergraduate approaching graduation. Even so, based on her analysis of reflective assignments and conversations with colleagues, Yancey argues that teachers do in fact privilege certain textual features in student reflections. At the top of the list is specificity, or the degree to which students include task-specific rather than task-general descriptions of their writing and how it has changed over time (162). Yancey also argues that teachers value expressions of understanding of rhetorical problems, for example, the challenge of balancing audience needs with those of writers to use their writing as a means of personal meaning-making (162).

Yancey stresses that certain writing genres are better than others in the ways that they foster or constrain student reflection. She argues that the reflective letter, which is a component of many portfolio assessment models, carries less scholarly baggage than a genre like the essay, and as such may better facilitate student reflection (153). Perhaps even more importantly, Yancey argues that poor reflection is often a function of poor direction, manifested in vague or confusing questions and a general lack of clarity on the part of instructors in their articulation of what they are looking for in reflection (159).

While it is important to keep in mind that the function of reflection in student portfolios or in conjunction with writing assignments is different than its role in ethnography, Yancey's work is helpful in thinking about the role of reflection in the student writing at the core of this study. Given the amount and types of reflection that I coded in student papers, my attention draws back to the assignment itself, which did not ask students to reflect, and to the relative lack of genre models presented during the course

that could have provided students with a generative scaffold for the reflective work I hoped they would do. In retrospect, it is striking that nearly 41% of student essays contain any reflective passages at all, which in contrast to the absence of direction to be reflective, marks student intellectual and emotional engagement in the service experience across the corpus.

Discussion

The four contextual dimensions of Bazerman's approach that ground my analysis provide windows on the relationship between texts and their rhetorical contexts. In this chapter, I have used Bazerman's concepts of lexicon, citation, audience address, and authorial persona, to think about student texts in terms of writers' representations of their service-learning experiences. On the horizon of the next chapter, hangs the idea of rhetorical outcomes, which I have defined as features that suggest learning, proficiency, or mastery of some course objective. As promised, I will take on the question of assessment in chapter four, but for now I would like to revisit some of the claims made for student writing composed in writing *about* service-learning settings to consider the central findings of this chapter.

Dorman and Dorman suggest that writing *about* models yield enhanced rhetorical awareness around issues of audience, the rhetorical situation of writing tasks, and facility with academic research. In terms of audience, my analysis revealed that the majority of essays in the corpus contain features consistent with a general audience, marked by descriptive passages that set the scene, describe the mentoring activity, introduce and describe program participants, and provide conceptual frameworks that orient and guide students' interpretations of the service experience. A smaller number of papers address

specific groups of readers directly, using the second person to either offer advice to future mentors or to make more general suggestions about modifying aspects of the course. Across the corpus, the most significant and interesting variations in the ways writers address readers is in the policy stasis, where students offer their thoughts on improving the course and the service experience. In particular, a number of essays written with features consistent with a general audience shift, or attempt to shift voice when the text moves into the policy stasis.

A key component of the final project assignment asked students to use data from their fieldnotes to represent the service experience from the perspective of their mentees. This focus on participant meanings, which is consistent with Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's approach to ethnography and is explicitly called for in the assignment, is not a significant pattern in students' essays. A large number of papers contain a general theoretical framework followed by a series of examples demonstrating how a particular event supports the writer's argument, for instance, that self-esteem plays a large role in adolescent behavior. The corpus contains a very small number of instances, however, in which a writer attempts to validate an argument via a mentee's perspective, in terms of the last example, by asking mentees if they think their sense self-confidence is impacting their behavior. After coding the corpus, my sense is that the task of representing mentee perspectives is extremely difficult both methodologically and rhetorically. I suspect that difficulty was compounded by the absence of effective textual models in class. It bears pointing out, moreover, that this task is not only challenging to student ethnographers. Postmodern ethnographers, many of whom are represented in collections like Clifford and Marcus' *Writing Culture*, continue to struggle with this issue, which has led theorists like

Steven Tyler to suggest that writers can at best hope to evoke, rather than represent, the lives of their research subjects (129).

Given the challenges student writers face writing ethnography, my analysis suggests that the students in my class were significantly invested in the methodology at the heart of the assignment. A majority of papers cite either verbatim data from students' fieldnote journals or paraphrased segments of data. A significant number of essays also incorporate analytical units modeled after Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's method. The presence of all five stases (fact, definition, cause, value, and policy) also suggests a predictable, but significant investment in the central rhetorical task of the assignment and an effective utilization of the ethnographic methodology that was at the heart of the course design.

Bruce Herzberg and Lester Faigley have both suggested that student-authored ethnography positions students to develop greater awareness of social and cultural forces. My own findings in this regard are mixed. There are a number of essays in the corpus that explore cultural issues, such as mentees' interactions with hip hop or computer games. But only a very small number of essays look to the broader sociocultural structure of mentees' lives, either inside or outside the classroom. In a number of other papers, students write out of general theoretical frameworks, such as empowerment, that while social and political in nature, are too general to provide any significant insights beyond the mentoring experience itself. Here for example, is an excerpt from the conclusion of the essay I just mentioned about empowerment:

Promoting equality in educational facilities is just as significant as employing it everyday in the real world. Expanding empowerment will help to better evolve respect and equality between the teacher-student

relationship.

This essay, which meets the basic expectations of the assignment, enacts a conceptual and rhetorical distance between the writer, the mentoring experience, and the topic, which makes the evaluation of engagement problematic. In contrast, there are at least two papers in the corpus, one of which I have previously cited, that are marked by rich details that I read as gestures of authentic, sustained consideration of social issues:

It could be argued that middle school is just too soon to give up on a student. If we call them lazy or just push them to achieve more without providing any of the help they need to accomplish that, perhaps we have given up on them. There is no point in telling a student to try harder when he goes home to no electricity and scrambled eggs for dinner most nights because eggs are cheap.

The ways in which writers engage, or fail to engage, broader social issues in their essays is linked to the issue of student reflection. Reflection is a key component of service-learning pedagogy, but as Anson argues, there is no consensus, let alone any sustained conversation in the literature about what textual features mark quality reflection. As just one example, Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede's *A Practitioner's Guide to Reflection in Service-Learning Courses: Student Voices and Reflections*, contains over 200 pages of discussion and activities designed to facilitate student reflection, but nowhere in the book do the authors attempt to describe the elements of quality reflection. As my analysis indicates, the essays in the corpus do contain reflective passages, but there was a wide variety in the amount of text dedicated to this activity. A number of essays contain passages that cite students' past experiences as comparative reference points for their consideration of the mentoring

experience and a number of essays cite rival explanations for their findings based on some alternative theoretical perspective or way of seeing. Overall, based on the number of coded passages and their distribution throughout the corpus, I would say that reflection was not a major textual feature of student essays. It is important to point out, however, that reflection was not a major component of the assignment description. The word *reflection* does not appear in the assignment, although consideration of rival explanations is explicitly required and is one of the criteria listed on the assignment rubric.

In terms of the relative absence of texts that reflect on the role of race and class in the context of the course and the mentoring experience, the apparent reluctance of many students to engage such issues is significant. It is consistent, however, with the findings of compositionists such as Anne Green, who in her own study of community-based writing, found that students often see race as something that exists either in the past or “out there” (288). Green, citing McIntyre, argues that white students’ silence on race is connected to a broader communicative strategy in which talking about race is seen as impolite but one that ultimately whites use to avoid implicating themselves in the problem of racism (292). In that sense, race and the social ills it connotes in the broader context of American society represent both social and rhetorical risks for writers that are wisely avoided. This feature of the texts in the corpus also helps explain students’ preference for more general conceptual frameworks, like self-esteem or encouragement, that enable students to engage the service experience without the political and emotional baggage of issues like race or poverty which directly implicate the subject positions of writers and their relationship to community participants. Conceptual frameworks like self-esteem, moreover, that are not inherently dependent on issues of race or class, allow writers to position both themselves

and their readers outside the risky discourses of difference and the rhetorical pitfalls they entail.

The abundance of general frameworks across the corpus echoes findings reported by Barton in her comparison of the rhetorical strategies of professional academic writers and undergraduates. Barton found that unlike academic writers, who generally ground their argumentative strategies in problematization, student writers, like many of those in the project corpus, orient their arguments around general frameworks, like the concept of justice for example, which are then bolstered by supporting points or illustrative cases (“Evidentials”). Barton’s findings suggest that student writers have a different epistemological stance towards knowledge than academic writers who have been trained to emulate the contrastive, agonistic argumentative style of most research genres (765). My findings with regards to how students position their writing with respect to the service-learning experience are consistent with Barton’s. This point is complicated, however, when one considers that ethnography, in terms of how it has been articulated in the wake of the postmodern critique, occupies a markedly distinct epistemological and rhetorical space than many forms of traditional academic writing. From the perspective of genre theory, the question arises as to the underlying cause of students’ preference for general frameworks such as the ones I have described.

The prevalence of general, deductively-oriented frameworks in student essays runs counter to claims made by scholars such as David Seitz, who argue that one of the advantages of ethnography as a pedagogical strategy is that it fosters inductive approaches to the construction of knowledge, which Seitz sees as more relevant to the lives and interests of students. Based on my reading of the corpus, however, I would like to propose

that deductive approaches to organizing text should not be conflated with deductive ways of thinking. During coding, I became aware of the emergence of a reductive binary in my own thinking in terms of the way I was classifying student writing as either inductive or deductive. That is, even in student essays that are firmly anchored in a theoretical idea, general or specific, followed by examples taken from fieldnotes, that structure in and of itself does not mark a paper as deductive, and it should not necessarily have a negative impact on our evaluation of student thinking. As I say earlier, what is a cause for concern are cases in which students' attachments to theoretical ideas overdetermine writers' thinking, obscuring their consideration of other interpretations or patterns of observational data. In that sense, the presence of features such as rival explanations seems much more important than how a particular essay opens or how its body is organized.

Late in the coding process, I began to develop a profile of those papers that I felt were the strongest of the corpus and closest to fulfilling my hopes for the assignment and student learning. The term that came to mind, *ethnographic praxis*, describes essays that contain thick descriptions of the mentoring experience, a specific theoretical frame that guides writers' interpretations, an empathetic interest in participant meanings, and a reflexive awareness for how writers' own subject positions have shaped their interpretations and their texts. I now realize I have appropriated the word *praxis* from the subtitle of Brown and Dobrin's collection *Ethnography Unbound: From Theory Shock to Critical Praxis*, but in contrast to their use of the term, which they use to connote postmodern ethnographers' interest in using ethnographic inscription to bring about social change, I use *praxis* to describe writing outcomes that I feel capture student learning. In much the same way that the outcomes I have described in this chapter are more modest

than those claimed in the service-learning literature, they are also quite different than the socially-oriented goals articulated by critical ethnographers in collections like Brown and Dobrin's.

In the course of my analysis, I coded ten out of 44 essays, or 30%, as having textual features I associate with my definition of ethnographic praxis. That is not a solid number, that is, I am not claiming any statistical significance or reliability for the number. What I am claiming, is that as an instructor and a reader, approximately a third of the corpus meets or exceeds my expectations for the assignment. Perhaps more importantly, those papers that I read as demonstrating ethnographic praxis establish what students can do with ethnography in service-learning settings, and just as keenly, what kinds of things they may not be able to do given the particularities of the assignment, my teaching approach, and the genre experiences which students bring to service-learning courses.

Of all the course objectives I set out for my class, the one that seemed to present the greatest challenge to students was the directive to try and represent the perspectives of community members. The goal of representing member meanings is central to ethnography in the post-colonial era, and is foregrounded in methods texts like my course text by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw. There are very few examples in the corpus of this kind of writing, those that I did find are often related to describing a mentee as not liking school or resenting having to work instead of playing video games. Despite the intent of the objective, which I continue to read as an articulation of my desire to discourage students from projecting their own meanings onto community members, my findings suggest that this was not an outcome of the course. In retrospect, I believe that this skill, the ability to discern member meanings, was incompatible with both the course design, which tasked

undergraduates with the dual task of mentoring and observing, and students' status as novice users of the methodology.

The data analysis at the heart of this chapter has led me to reconsider my teaching approach, specifically in terms of the ways in which I discussed and modeled, or failed to model, the genre of ethnography. As I say earlier, part of the difficulty is that ethnography is an unsettled genre, particularly in comparison to more stayed genres such as the scientific research report. With that in mind, if I were to teach ethnography again, I would spend more class time reading ethnography with students and developing a metadiscoursal vocabulary to talk about the rhetoric of ethnography and the impact of different structures and features on the function of the genre. Some of these strategies are loosely covered in Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater's *Fieldworking* text, but my reading of student texts leads me to believe that students simply do not have the prerequisite experience with the rhetorical positions and moves privileged by ethnography to do the kinds of writing we, and I, would like. For example, the rhetorical move from the stases of description and argument to policy seemed to challenge students in ways that, as an instructor, I did not appreciate. In addition, it seems clear to me now that while many students do have some experience with narrative writing that incorporates personal experience, reflection that creates a rhetorical space for writers to complicate and reconsider the role of their own subject positions in the service-learning experience was a new and extremely challenging task for developing writers, at least for those enrolled in my courses. Modeling reflection for students is complicated by the absence of a clear definition, but texts such as bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* and Robert Rodriguez' *Hunger of Memory* are accessible texts that seem like good candidates for introducing students to the rhetoric of reflection. Yancey's work with

reflection and her identification of textual features that instructors associate with quality reflection also provide starting points for revising the role of reflection in course objectives, moving from the relatively vague goal of “thinking critically” to objectives that ask students to reflect with specificity and detail on moments of confusion, re-consideration, and rhetorical challenge.

With a revised teaching approach in mind, I would like to conclude this chapter by proposing an outline for a revised end-of-the semester project that takes into account some of the major findings of my analysis. In particular, in this revised description I attempt to be clearer about the intellectual project of the assignment, with an eye towards minimizing potential genre confusion between ethnography and the traditional research paper. I also attempt to provide additional direction in the area of reflection with more specific language about the rhetorical challenges student ethnographers face. In the next chapter, I use the results of this chapter to take up the important issue of how we assess service-learning writing and the relationship between assignment-level writing objectives with course-level learning goals.

Revised Final Project Assignment

Ethnographic Final Project

Purpose

The goal of this project is to present a 10-12 page thematic narrative based on your service experience this semester. Primary data for the project will consist of fieldnote data and materials acquired during the mentoring experience and where applicable, class discussions. Secondary sources will primarily include course readings and external research.

As we have discussed in class, ethnographers usually seek to avoid using their data to *prove* a thesis or to assume that what might be true in one situation, or to one group of people, is easily applied to other settings. At the same time, ethnographers do use theoretical perspectives, such as Paulo Freire's banking metaphor, to center their narratives and to open their analysis to new ways of seeing how people live, work, and play. As such, successful final projects will develop ideas and interpretations that create meaning through detailed descriptions of the service experience using theoretical perspectives, thick description, and an awareness of how the ethnographer's own experiences and subject positions shape perception. Writers should take particular care to avoid offering neat conclusions about the beliefs and motivations of participants. Rather, writers should work to represent the experience, attitudes, and motivations of mentees from *their* perspective whenever possible.

Successful essays will offer detailed descriptions of the service setting, the mentoring activity, and project participants. Effective papers will also offer the ethnographer's personal reflections on the specific writing challenges faced while researching and writing the project. Reflections on the research and writing process can be interspersed throughout the essay or presented as part of the introduction or conclusion.

In preparing to draft your essay, consider some of the following questions:

What was the most surprising thing about your experience this semester?

What kinds of preconceived notions did you bring to the mentoring experience? What happened to these assumptions over time?

What is the hardest thing about doing ethnography?

What was the most difficult aspect of the mentoring experience?

What was the most rewarding aspect of the mentoring experience?

What kinds of things did you most often notice while gathering observations for your fieldnote journal? What kinds of things do you think you most often missed?

What might be some alternative interpretations of your experience this semester?

If you could change one thing about the mentoring experience, what would it be?

If you would keep one thing about the mentoring experience, what would it be?

What kinds of things can be learned from using ethnography?

What are the limitations of ethnography as a form of research?

Project Components

Proposal

The proposal is a 150-200 word description of your project. The proposal should identify the general topic of your project, the primary research questions motivating your inquiry, and outline your research plan for completion of the project.

Annotated Bibliography

The annotated bibliography is a list of research sources that you are consulting for your project. As with a Works Cited page, sources should be listed alphabetically using MLA format. Each source should be accompanied by a short paragraph summarizing the source and explaining how it might contribute to the project. An example is attached.

First Draft

The first draft is a five to six page draft of your project. It should have a working title, an introduction, and a Works Cited page.

Final Project Draft

This is the completed ten to twelve page draft of your final project.

CHAPTER FOUR: SERVICE-LEARNING WRITING AND ASSESSMENT

In the last chapter, I presented my findings of a genre analysis of end-of-the-semester ethnographic projects written by students in my service-learning course. In this chapter, I consider the applicability of genre analysis to writing assessment, and its particular relevance for assessing the writing outcomes of students enrolled in service-learning courses. Consistent with arguments I have made throughout this project, I maintain that the socially engaged nature of service-learning courses provides a logical site for inquiry using contemporary genre theory, which considers genres as frames for social action, and genre analysis as a productive framework for exploring the relationships between texts and their instructional contexts. I begin with a review of recent developments in the discourse of assessment, and in particular the rise of the politically-charged accountability agenda and the role of standardized high-stakes testing. Next, I juxtapose standardized approaches to outcomes-based assessment with developments in contemporary assessment theory and current theories of writing assessment. I conclude the chapter by proposing a genre-based model of writing assessment designed specifically for service-learning-based settings using ethnographic pedagogy, with a discussion about the implications and applicability of the model for writing assessment more generally.

As Brian Huot observes, the term *writing assessment* can refer to a range of different things (4). It can refer to evaluating a specific piece of writing, the outcomes of a specific course or section of a course, or an entire curriculum. For the purposes of this project, I consider writing assessment in terms of the instructional learning objectives assigned to a particular course and for service-learning pedagogy more generally. As such, I am offering a layered, or tiered, consideration of writing assessment meant to help individual

instructors and writing program administrators who are responsible for evaluating instructional strategies like service-learning and those strategies' contributions to student learning outcomes.

Identifying and describing the rhetorical outcomes of students' writing in service-learning courses has merits of its own. As an instructor, it is generative to see the continuum of student achievement temporally and spatially removed from a particular course offering, both in terms of student development, but also in the context of my own development as an instructor and service-learning as a pedagogy and civic project in which I am deeply invested. In light of my findings, however, and given the large investment of time and energy expended in service-learning settings, questions of assessment necessarily follow, particularly in an environment in which educational stakeholders are increasingly interested in justifying, and ultimately rationalizing, educational strategies based on their effectiveness and relative cost.

My engagement with writing assessment takes place in an increasingly charged atmosphere in which notions of assessment are articulated from a wide range of competing stakeholder groups involving legislators, bureaucrats, educators, scholars, students, parents, and citizens. Over the last several years, the terms of the assessment debate have in many ways been dictated by what Chris Gallagher calls "the accountability agenda," which he describes as an attempt to recast education as an economic rather than a relational transaction in which taxpayers, and their children, receive goods and services with an emphasis on "getting what you pay for" (8). As Gallagher and others have noted, this focus on accountability is not new; it often accompanies times of economic uncertainty and anxiety, which spreads to concerns about the academic preparedness of American

students. In *Rhetoric and Reality*, compositionist Berlin observes how the launch of Sputnik in 1957 became linked to national concerns about the academic achievement of American students (120), in much the same way as the perception of a literacy crisis after the Civil War gave rise to the creation of the first year writing course in the late 19th century (Connors 128). In the 1970s, the publication of articles like *Newsweek's* infamous “Why Johnny Can’t Read,” and Paul Copperman’s 1978 book *Literacy Hoax* became touchstones for education critics who began to tout the notion of accountability (Gallagher 19). More recently, concerns about the preparedness of American students together with persistent and widening gaps in achievement between upper and middle class white students and students of color and rural whites, have been motivating issues for the rise of legislative initiatives such as No Child Left Behind (2002) and the Spellings report on higher education (2006) which further engage notions of accountability, transparency, and the establishment of national educational outcomes across all levels of American education.

Outcomes-based assessment and high-stakes standardized testing are central to the accountability agenda and its articulation in No Child Left Behind and the Spellings report. Although the US has resisted establishing a nationwide achievement test, most states, including Michigan, now have some form of statewide exam at the elementary and secondary levels that link student achievement to graduation, accreditation, and funding. At the collegiate level, objections from both Spellings Commission members and university presidents struck down efforts to create a national standardized test of achievement, but there is increasing and sustained pressure from state legislatures and regional accreditation boards for colleges and universities to demonstrate accountability and

transparency in their assessment of both student achievement and program and institutional outcomes.

For the assessment of student writing specifically, the primary instrument advocated by the creators of large-scale, high-stakes assessments like the SAT writing test are timed, document based, essay exams (Anson, "Closed Systems" 119). Like the SAT, the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), which was jointly developed by the Council for Aid to Education (CAE), the Rand Corporation, and the Educational Testing Service (ETS), uses a series of writing prompts and a timed essay format to measure freshmen and seniors' critical thinking, analytic reasoning, and problem solving abilities (Perelman 135). As Anson and Perelman argue, these instruments are built on assumptions that writing takes place in a closed system, devoid of context, and that writing skills can be distilled and observed as a series of discrete behaviors across textual forms (Anson, "Closed Systems" 114). These assumptions stand in marked contrast to the views of compositionists who argue that writing always takes place in an open system: "constantly evolving, contextually mediated, and contextually determined..." (Anson, "Closed Systems" 114).

Given national developments around the rise of the accountability agenda, the culture of assessment at my home institution of Wayne State University has recently been characterized by an increased commitment to transparency in sharing assessment data with university stakeholders and an institution wide focus on using assessment to improve the quality of teaching and student outcomes. The stakes for improving student outcomes at WSU have increased significantly over the last year with the recent publication of a report by the Education Trust documenting a dramatic gap between the graduation rates of white and African American students (Carey). The commitment to transparency is

documented in the university's self-study report for its most recent accreditation review by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools ("A Self-Study Report"). The university has also recently adopted the Voluntary System of Accountability, which is a voluntary initiative developed by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) to provide "basic, comparable information on the undergraduate student experience" to students, families, and community stakeholders (Voluntary System of Accountability). The central deliverable of the VSA is the "college portrait"—a standardized, web-based profile that provides institutional information across a variety of categories, including student characteristics, costs, campus life, undergraduate research, and student learning outcomes (Wayne State University College Portrait). The student learning outcomes page on Wayne State's portrait links to a page on the WSU website with links to the university's strategic plan, the self-study accreditation report mentioned above, and the university bulletin. The portrait also contains a statement explaining that Wayne State is in the process of gathering program level and course level assessment data, which interestingly appears on the VSA portraits of at least four other institutions that I surveyed.

Wayne State's institutional commitment to transparency, marked by its participation in VSA and language in its accreditation documentation, is accompanied by an orientation to assessment that foregrounds improving teaching and student learning outcomes. Over the last several years, the university has enhanced orientation programs for new faculty and graduate teaching assistants, in addition to investing in the university's Office for Teaching and Learning (OTL), which provides both instructional and instructional technology support to faculty. A page dedicated to assessment on the

university website contains a variety of links to assessment related articles, many of which are focused on providing faculty with resources to improve instruction and student outcomes (Wayne State University “Assessment”).

Despite an increased institutional commitment to improving assessment at Wayne State, a 2002 internal report noted significant variation in both the degree and approach to assessment across individual programs and departments (Wayne State University, “Advancing Student Success at Wayne State University”). In the writing program of WSU’s English department, recent efforts to improve assessment have taken a three pronged approach: standardizing course syllabi, clarifying course learning objectives, and working with teachers to norm grading and control grade inflation through the implementation of course specific grading rubrics. More recently, the department’s composition committee has embarked on a three year assessment project focused on improving the transfer of rhetorical skills from the writing program’s intermediate writing course to writing intensive courses in university majors.

The WSU writing program’s current approach to assessment marks a significant departure from the recent past, and follows the abandonment of a controversial, high-stakes writing exam required of all students attempting to graduate. The English Proficiency Exam, or EPE, was a timed, prompt driven essay exam usually taken during students’ final year. The exam was discontinued in 2007, due in a part to a number of court cases in which students who had repeatedly failed the EPE sued the university for violation of due process. The legality of the EPE was consistently upheld although the cases contributed to the notion that the high-stakes nature of the test, which could prohibit students from obtaining their diploma even after all other academic requirements had been

met, was overly punitive. The EPE has been replaced by stricter enforcement of prerequisites in the undergraduate writing sequence and a university-wide requirement that students successfully complete a writing intensive course in their major before graduating.⁶

In thinking about the ways in which genre theory might intervene in the conflict between the creators of large-scale, high-stakes tests and the different approaches to writing assessment taken by compositionists, it is also important to consider assessment issues as they relate to service-learning. As I demonstrated earlier in the project, there is now a wealth of data to suggest that a majority of students who participate in service-learning courses believe the experiences have a positive impact on a range of intellectual and developmental outcomes, including writing skill. External verification of such claims has been much harder to come by, however, a problem which is compounded by a number of studies suggesting that the impact of service-learning on grades is mixed and exacerbated by the relatively high cost of time and energy of service-learning compared to more traditional forms of writing instruction (Eyler et al., *At a Glance* 3). One area of shared interest to both compositionists who are involved in assessment and service-learning practitioners is the key role that context plays in positive student outcomes. Service-learning theorists like Eyler and Giles have pointed to the importance of quality service

⁶Interestingly, the EPE entered the public spotlight again in the spring of 2010, albeit indirectly, when it was learned that Detroit school board president Otis Mathis had been unable to graduate from WSU for over ten years because he had repeatedly failed the EPE during the early 1990s. Otis's experience with the EPE became an issue after *The Detroit News* released excerpts of emails sent from Otis to supporters were criticized for their abundance of grammatical, spelling, and usage errors (Berman).

experiences, and in particular quality matches between service experiences and course learning objectives (*Where's the Learning in Service-Learning*). In similar terms, contemporary assessment theorists within composition argue for the importance of context in the development of assessment methods that connect context, genre, and instructional objectives [Huot, *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment* 103].

Writing Assessment: State of the Field

In his disciplinary history *Composition Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory and Pedagogy*, Connors describes the popularity of post war approaches to writing assessment that foregrounded grammar and mechanical correctness over other communicative concerns. In much the same way, Crowley describes prescriptive approaches to writing instruction and assessment that conflated issues of grammatical correctness with the character of writers (75). Connors follows Crowley in arguing that although these approaches were periodically challenged by innovators and reformers with varying degrees of success, overall, writing instruction during most of the twentieth century placed great emphasis on grammar and mechanical correctness as the central measure of effective pedagogy (Connors 128).

In their 2010 *College English* essay "A Usable Past for Writing Assessment," Brian Huot, Peggy O'Neill, and Cindy Moore argue that the origins of large-scale writing assessment, and its emergence as a field of study, can be traced back to the development of intelligence testing and the establishment of the College Entrance Examination Board in 1900 (495). The authors argue that for the majority of the twentieth century, through the creation of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) in 1937 and establishment of the Educational Testing Service in 1947, writing assessment focused on the development of large-scale

essay exams whose results could be used to make decisions about college admission and, to a lesser extent, graduation (500-03). Given numerous studies that consistently showed that groups of readers varied widely in their evaluation of a given piece of writing, the central problem of writing assessment theorists throughout this period was developing techniques to produce interrater reliability, defined as “the ability of two readers to give the same score for the same piece of writing” (496). Central to the notion of interrater reliability are the two related concepts of reliability, which refers to the ability of a test to produce consistent results over repeated trials, and validity, which describes the degree to which a test measures what it intends to measure (Morrison, Ross, and Kemp 251-52). Test designers struggled to provide adequate levels of interrater reliability through the 1940s and 50s, and for a period during the 1960s the CEEB halted the administration of all essay exams in favor of multiple choice tests of grammar and mechanics (Huot et al., “A Usuable Past” 501-02). Essay exams were resurrected in the 1960s, however, with the development of holistic scoring protocols, which combined scoring guidelines on a range of textual features with training sessions designed to train raters on the use of scoring guides with the goal of increasing reliability scores across writing samples (Huot et al., “A Usuable Past” 502). As Huot and his colleagues argue, holistic scoring and its various iterations were the dominant approach to writing assessment throughout the 1960s, 70s, and 80s.

Despite the interest of psychometricians and educational assessment theorists, Huot argues that for much of its history, the majority of compositionists have avoided assessment, seeing it as outside the primary concerns of the field, or worse, opposed to the values of the discipline and the interests of students [(*Re*)*Articulating Writing Assessment* 8]. This ambivalence towards assessment was exacerbated by both the process movement,

with its shift of focus away from student writing as the final product of instruction, and the social turn of the field, which increasingly viewed student subjectivity as a central site of scholarly inquiry. Anne Gere has suggested another reason for the absence of disciplinary interest in assessment arguing that the field has been so intent on developing effective and efficient techniques of assessing student writing that it has neglected theory building on the issue (cited in Huot et al., "A Usable Past" 504).

Recent interest in assessment on the part of compositionists has been facilitated by two important developments outside the field. The first is the emergence of the most recent accountability movement at the national level, which began in the executive and legislative branches of the federal government and the corporate sector but has now become firmly established at the state level and in the philosophies of regional accreditation bodies and across almost all levels of education administration. Second, and perhaps no less important, are significant changes in assessment theory articulated in the work of assessment scholars. In particular, education assessment theorists such as Samuel Messick, Pamela Moss, and Jay Parkes have persuasively argued for new definitions of the concepts of validity and its relationship to reliability in ways that have re-shaped the conversation about the means and ends of assessment (Huot et al., "A Usable Past" 503). Central to this revised definition is the notion that validity should not be technically defined in terms of the degree to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure, rather validity should be understood as an argument which draws on "the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of test scores entailed by proposed uses of tests" [Huot et al., quoting the 1999 standards 506]. As a corollary, this argument operates on the premise that interrater reliability has for too long been at the center of assessment

professionals' agendas , when in fact the real concern is the appropriateness of a given test as the basis for important decisions about students and student learning (Huot et al. 505). Huot et al. conclude that while there is some level of consensus around this re-theorized conceptualization of validity, demonstrated by its listing in the current standards of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), it remains a contested issue within the field of educational measurement where some still argue validity is a technical issue rather than one of appropriateness (506).

Revised definitions of validity articulated within assessment theory and compositionists' persistent assertions about the open, context-dependent nature of all writing provide the theoretical backdrop for recent developments in writing assessment that are proving to be significant responses to the proponents of large-scale, high-stakes testing, and standardized outcomes. Important developments include:

- The emergence of portfolio assessment
- Brian Huot's advocacy of locally developed assessment frameworks in *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment for Teaching and Learning* (2002)
- Bob Broad's method of Dynamic Criteria Mapping (DCM), described in *What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing* (2003)
- the jointly authored *NCTE-WPA White Paper on Writing Assessment in Colleges and Universities* (2008)

Portfolio assessment, championed by compositionists like Kathleen Blake Yancey and Catharine Lucas represents a significant break from the dominance of holistic scoring. For many compositionists, portfolio evaluation provides a natural fit with process

pedagogy, encouraging students to take personal responsibility for their writing and to see their writing as part of an ongoing process of learning and development. For instructors, portfolios also provide a method for formative assessment that can take into account student growth across time, be it over the course of a semester or an entire degree program (Lucas 2). Portfolio evaluation is often held up as a model form of assessment by organizations such as the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) because of the central role that teachers play in the process and claim for its enhanced validity over instruments like timed essay exams. As Anson points out, however, portfolio assessment, particularly when it is conducted by committees rather than individual professors, can be both expensive and time intensive, and by its nature fails to produce the kind of quantitative measures of facility valued by large-scale test designers (“Closed Systems” 119). Lucas argues that portfolio assessment has also been vulnerable to what she calls “the bandwagon effect,” which she uses to describe the faddish embrace of portfolios in settings where its practice is poorly understood and enacted (4).

Brian Huot, whose work I heavily cite in the previous section is largely responsible for calling attention to compositionists’ use of outdated definitions of validity and for centering arguments about the value of locally developed assessment strategies, like portfolios, that meet the needs of individual students and institutions. In his 2002 book, *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment for Teaching and Learning*, Huot maintains that while writing pedagogy is process oriented and increasingly context based, writing assessment, at least in terms of how it is usually framed by the designers of large-scale tests, is contextless (104). He maintains that “assessment procedures that ignore or attempt to overcome context distort the communication situation” and he advocates for the

development of locally-developed interpretive frameworks that connect context, genre, and instructional objectives (101-03). In those terms, Huot articulates a vision of assessment as a kind of “social action” (175), engaged in the relationships of students to the university, and also as a site of scholarly inquiry. Huot concludes his book by providing a list of guiding principles, arguing that writing assessments should be:

- site-based
- locally controlled
- research-based
- based on questions developed by the whole community
- initiated and led by writing teachers and administrators
- built on validation arguments for all assessments that articulate the suitability of a given measure for a given decision
- seen as a practice (178)

In his 2003 book *What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing*, Bob Broad follows Huot’s observation that assessment theory within composition has shifted, and continues to shift, towards a focus on supporting teaching and learning. At the center of Broad’s concerns, however, is the popularity of grading rubrics in writing classrooms, a development Broad interprets as a holdover from holistic scoring and the search for interrater reliability. Broad is sympathetic to the practical concerns of writing program administrators who require accessible tools that can ensure some level of grading consistency across courses and curriculums, but Broad argues that at their core, rubrics run contrary to compositionists’ contextual conceptualization of communicative action (4).

He maintains that rubrics ultimately fail important tests of validity and ethics and instead proposes “a method of evaluative inquiry better grounded both theoretically and empirically” (3-12). The specific method Broad proposes, Dynamic Criteria Mapping (DCM), involves bringing instructors together to evaluate and comment on samples of student papers without the use of rubrics or grading guides, followed by textual analysis of teacher comments for patterns in what teachers actually value. The idea is to explore instructor feedback for what teachers actually value versus what they say they value, or just as importantly, what they are told to value by their departments, or encouraged to value by the dominant discourses within their discipline. Broad argues that DCM moves assessment from the psychometric paradigm of rubrics and holistic scoring to a hermeneutic paradigm centered on instructors as readers rather than graders (15). At the university where Broad piloted DCM, his research revealed significant differences between how instructors were evaluating student writing compared to the instructional objectives of the program. These gaps led to generative discussions between teachers and program administrators about those differences and ultimately led to a revising of objectives and new forms of teacher training and orientation. Broad recommends seeing the differences between instructors and programs that are revealed through DCM as an opportunity to learn and improve teaching but he acknowledges that under similar circumstances other programs may choose a different path, perhaps scrapping objectives, or alternatively, seeking to norm the reading and evaluative practices of instructors. The point is that without DCM, writing programs may misinterpret or misdiagnose problems in their curricula, from grading discrepancies to more serious misalignments with institutional learning objectives, that can be avoided by asking the relatively straightforward question of

what it is teaching instructors and programs in a specific context actually value in student writing. In advocating for the value of such of contextualized, localized approach, Broad echoes assertions made by Huot and shared by many compositionists, that writing quality is not a fixed entity, but is dependent on a wide range of factors that are poorly considered by both large-scale tests and the off the shelf rubrics used in many programs across the academy.

Broad's DCM methodology has received considerable attention in the field, prompting publication of an edited collection in 2009 entitled *Organic Writing Assessment* featuring five case studies of DCM and its iterations at a range of institutions, including Eastern Michigan University and the University of Nevada at Reno. Across the case studies, authors describe how the DCM process led to an enhanced sense of the degree to which writing cultures, and assessment culture, are locally determined, even in the face of institutional and bureaucratic pressures far beyond the scenes of writing and evaluating. Those pressures continue to be felt across the discipline and across the academy, however, and are a factor in efforts by professional organizations like the Council for Writing Program Administrators (WPA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) to develop position statements that attempt to consolidate and recommend best practices for the field.

The *NCTE-WPA White Paper on Writing Assessment in Colleges and Universities*, written by a group of ten compositionists, including Huot, Linda Adler-Kassner, and Howard Tinberg, articulates a set of values and best practices for the evaluation of student writing. In terms of core principles, the document argues that assessment should be *appropriate, fair, and valid*. In the language of the statement, *appropriateness* connotes the

“fit” between an assessment and the “context and decisions that will be made based on it.” The statement defines *fair* in terms of guarding against “disproportionate social effects on any language minority group,” and the importance of informing students of the “expectations, roles, and purposes” of a given assessment. Finally, the statement defines *validity* using the revised definition advocated by theorists like Huot, even citing verbatim the definition articulated in the 1999 assessment standards jointly authored by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), which I quote per Huot et al. earlier in this chapter.

The statement’s list of best practices also echoes familiar themes. Below are the headings of the list, which I have numbered for easy reference:

1. Writing assessment should place priority on the improvement of teaching and learning.
2. Writing assessment should demonstrate that students communicate effectively.
3. Writing assessment should provide the foundation for data-driven, or evidence-based, decision making.
4. Writing assessment should be informed by current scholarship and research in assessment.
5. Writing assessment should recognize diversity in language.
6. Writing assessment should positively impact pedagogy and curriculum.
7. Writing assessment should use multiple measures and engage multiple perspectives to make decisions that improve teaching and learning.

8. Writing assessment should include appropriate input from, and information and feedback for, students.
9. Writing assessment should be based on continuous conversations with as many stakeholders as possible.
10. Writing assessment should encourage and expect teachers to be trusted, knowledgeable, and communicative.
11. Writing assessment should articulate and communicate clearly its values and expectations to all stakeholders, especially students and, if applicable, parents (*NCTE-WPA White Paper on Writing Assessment in Colleges and Universities*).

The idea of tailoring assessment efforts to local needs and contexts is a running theme throughout the document, in the elaboration of best practice number four, which advocates situating assessment practices in between both current research and local contexts, and in the statement's recommendations for respecting language diversity and the communicative practices of local communities. The centrality of using assessment to improve teaching, learning, and student outcomes is also embedded throughout the document. This extends to recommendations that teachers be seen as central to any assessment and to the importance of student input and feedback about the "methods, findings, and products" of assessment measures.

Accompanying the white paper on the WPA website is a gallery of model assessment efforts from across the country that emulate the core principles and best practices of the statement. Common to all seven models described in the gallery is the formation of a local, departmental, or institution-based working group that works to identify and discuss the

desired writing outcomes of a given program. Using this description of desired outcomes, which is often formulated in some form of rubric, four of the seven models then utilize some form of random sampling of student papers to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas in need of improvement across samples. In three of the seven models, alternatively, assessment committees use student portfolios to conduct their analysis, sometimes using samples of student portfolios, and at some smaller institutions, to evaluate an entire rank of students, such as the evaluation of sophomore-level portfolios at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota (“WPA Assessment Gallery”). Another theme articulated throughout the models is a focus on using assessment to improve teaching and the absence of language recommending the use of assessment for high-stakes evaluations, such as exit exams.

As Michael Neal implies in his review essay “Assessment in the Service of Learning,” there seems to be some consensus amongst writing assessment scholars that the core goal of assessment is the improvement of teaching and the enhancement of student learning (755). There is also reason to think that despite the sometimes ominous discourse about high-stakes testing and large-scale standardized assessments, stakeholder groups central to the debate are becoming more sympathetic to educators’ arguments about the importance of insuring that accountability agendas help and not hinder the improvement of teaching. As just one example, the Higher Education Commission’s article “Student Learning, Assessment and Accreditation,” describes assessment generally in terms of advancing student learning, and assuring its readers that effective assessment is “a matter of commitment, not a matter of compliance.”

If Neal is correct in asserting that recent developments around the re-definition of validity and the importance of locally designed assessment frameworks have calmed

assessment anxiety amongst higher education professionals, effectively communicating assessment outcomes to both internal and external stakeholder audiences is still a challenge. Interestingly, another component of the WPA-NCTE paper on assessment is a document with suggestions for communication strategies (“Communication Strategies”). Central to the approach of the document, which borrows from the political advocacy strategies of Senator Paul Wellstone’s Wellstone Action Network, is learning to listen to the discourse of assessment from outside education and to develop responses that reframe the conversation in terms of what practitioners know about student outcomes and assessment. As one example, the authors of the document observe that a frequent trope used by education critics and legislators is that universities do not know what students are learning. Using tactics from Wellstone Action, the authors recommend that practitioners focus on explaining, in detail, what kind of assessment procedures are in place at a given institution, what kinds of data are used as evidence of student outcomes, and how that information is used to improve student learning. Rather than engaging in the national discourse of education reform, the authors also advocate for creating locally-focused communication strategies that focus on developing relationships with local and regional stakeholders and for working to understand the core concerns of stakeholder constituencies, which are often very different than the broad spectrum attacks of national pundits.

Over the last few years, genre theorists have begun to assert a more active voice in the assessment debate. In particular, Michael Carter’s work has begun to connect genre theorists’ conceptualization of genre with Huot’s articulation of assessment as a form of social action. In his 2007 *CCC* essay “Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the

Disciplines,” Carter uses genre theory to build on observations made by David Russell and others that in many disciplines faculty continue to believe that writing is a generalized skill, distinct from disciplinary knowledge and properly learned in undergraduate composition courses (385). Carter argues that genre theory “is useful not only because it establishes a direct connection between writing and doing and thus knowing but also because it points to certain patterns in ways of doing across the disciplines” (388). Carter works from this premise to describe a faculty-led institution-wide assessment process he helped design at North Carolina State that asked faculty to identify the intellectual and rhetorical tasks embedded in their disciplines. This process was designed to reveal epistemologies and intellectual processes that faculty had assimilated but had unintentionally obscured from students and led to the revision and development of course outcomes to combine intellectual and communicative objectives. An explicit part of the strategy, moreover, involves identifying and unpacking the communicative genres that transact the intellectual and professional work of a given discipline. Consistent with the best practices advocated by Huot, Broad, and WPA-NCTE white paper, the process described by Carter is a localized, contextualized approach that leverages disciplinary expertise in identifying the range of skills and genres students need to be familiar with to be proficient in their disciplines and professions.

Carter’s approach to outcomes-based assessment also builds on recent thinking on the nature of academic expertise and generic competence that highlights some of the differences between cognitive and social theories of writing. Cognitive theories, which are the basis for most standardized, large-scale assessments, see writing skills as universal and transferable, while social theories conceive writing as contextually situated and

determined (Anson, "Closed Systems" 116). As Anson acknowledges, a social theory of writing does not ignore rhetors' need for general abilities, but it does shift the focus of effective assessment to adaptive expertise, which Anson defines as the "ability to match new situations to previous experiences combined with the ability to abstract general problem-solving skills from previous experiences to apply in new situations ("Closed Systems" 118). This conceptualization of writing calls for writing instruction that exposes student writers to a range of writing experiences involving authentic genres (Anson, "Closed systems" 118). As the work on portfolio assessment has demonstrated, assessing student writing in contextually-rich rhetorical environments is possible, even if, as Anson maintains, the culture of mass testing finds such approaches "undesirable" in terms of their cost and relative effort (Anson, "Closed Systems 119).

The idea of adaptive expertise is related to genre theorist Vijay Bhatia's notion of genre competence, which he defines as the ability "to identify, construct, interpret and successfully exploit a specific repertoire of professional, disciplinary or workplace genres to participate in the daily activities and to achieve the goals" of (using Lave and Wegner's term) a "community of practice" ("Worlds of Written Discourse" 145). In terms of this definition, Bhatia argues that genres are "reflections of disciplinary practices and the *acquisition of generic competence* is a matter of acquiring *specialist competence* or *expertise* in the knowledge-producing and knowledge-consuming activities of disciplinary, professional and workplace cultures" (emphasis in original) ["Worlds" 145].

Understanding how novices acquire generic competence can help craft effective instructional strategies to foster the adaptive expertise that both Bhatia and Anson have in mind. Compositionist Susan Peck MacDonald, in her 1994 book *Professional Academic*

Writing in the Humanities and Social Sciences has theorized that the movement from novice to expert might best be conceived as a continuum across which writers gain greater access and develop greater experience with forms of academic and professional discourse. MacDonald suggests the four steps along the continuum involve experience with:

1. Nonacademic writing
2. Generalized academic writing concerned with stating claims, offering evidence, respecting other's opinions, and learning how to write with authority
3. Novice approximations of particular disciplinary ways of making knowledge
4. Expert, insider prose (187).

MacDonald's stepped continuum between novice and expert writers, together with notions of genre competence and adaptive expertise, provide a productive frame for consideration of the ways in which the writers in my course experienced and used the genre of ethnography to create knowledge based on their service-learning experiences. Against the backdrop of developments in writing assessment theory, and using the findings from the genre analysis from my last chapter, I will use the rest of this chapter to propose a theory and framework of assessment for writing done in service-learning courses with a specific focus on those that involve writing *about* settings in which students construct meaning out of their experience with community members.

Writing Assessment and Service-Learning

Earlier in this project, I explained how many of the claims made on behalf of student achievement in service-learning courses have relied on self-reported data from students and faculty or the showcasing of exemplary student work. Service-learning researchers

such as Janet Eyler and Edward Zlotkowski have acknowledged this problem and have called for more systematic efforts to document the educational outcomes of service-learning courses. These efforts have been complicated, however, by a number of studies suggesting that the impact of service-learning on student grades is mixed (Eyler et al. "At a Glance" 3-4). In addition, service-learning researchers Driscoll et al. argue that effectively assessing service-learning outcomes is made more difficult by the possibility that many of the effects of service-learning may not manifest themselves in the lives of students until long after the experience is over (6). They also note that depending on the type of service-learning course being taught, outcomes are also distributed over a number of diverse constituencies including students, community members, school districts, community organizations, and non-profit agencies (7).

Assessing student writing outcomes in service settings is further complicated by theories of writing and assessment, informed by genre theory, that argue that texts should be evaluated by locally situated criteria and a pragmatic approach to rhetorical action that focuses on what works rather than how a given piece of writing comports to general values (Freedman and Medway 8). In those terms, I would argue there is no reason to think that service-learning writing will be *better* than student writing done in comparative courses without a service component in the kinds of ways envisioned by the designers of large-scale standardized texts. There may actually be some reason to think that, at least on some measures like breadth of research and paper formatting, student writing in service-learning courses might actually be worse than traditional composition courses because of the practical lack of time to talk explicitly about writing and conduct peer review and workshop sessions. Potential compromises like these might be worth making, of course, if a

pattern of significant positive outcomes can be established for student writers in service-learning courses.

In their 1996 article “An Assessment Model for Service-Learning: Comprehensive Case Studies of Impact on Faculty, Students, Community and Institution,” Driscoll et al. propose a case-study-based model of service-learning assessment that includes outcomes objectives for students, faculty, the institution, and community members. The outcomes matrix for students lists 11 dimensions consistent with the personal and socially oriented claims of the service-learning literature, including one item that specifically identifies academic achievement:

- awareness of community
- involvement with community
- commitment to service
- career choices
- self awareness
- personal development
- academic achievement
- sensitivity to diversity
- autonomy/independence
- sense of ownership
- communication

Analysis of student journals is listed as a source of evidence for five outcome areas, including academic achievement, but evaluation of that dimension in the model also relies

on student interviews, student focus groups, and course grades. The authors do not mention how student journals were evaluated, and the overall structure of the article focuses on a presentation of the model rather than the presentation of results, which at the time the essay was written were incomplete.

Driscoll et al.'s multi-modal case study approach to assessing service-learning outcomes is consistent with the contextualized, highly situated approach favored by many assessment theorists within composition. Even so, there is a relative lack of emphasis on student academic achievement in the model and, despite the role of journals in the design, it only tangentially involves writing in its conceptualization of student learning. Student writing is more centrally situated in the assessment framework of Feldman et al.'s 2006's *MJCSL* essay, "The Impact of Partnership-Centered, Community-Based Learning on First-year Students' Academic Research Papers." In the article, the authors attempt to respond to calls for more systematic and quantitative research on the service-learning outcomes, while acknowledging that the impacts of service-learning are inherently complex and imbricated in the "deeply situated" learning that takes place in community-based classrooms (16). Citing work by Eyler and Giles, the authors situate their research in terms of experiential learning theories that posit that learning occurs discursively following cycles of experience followed by reflection (18). The specific context for the study is the Chicago Civic Leadership Certificate Program (CCLCP) at the University of Illinois at Chicago, which is a multi-semester program that combines traditional course work with a range of community-based service experiences using all three of Deans' writing paradigms. The centerpiece of their approach to assessing student writing is an assessment matrix that

features research questions, key indicators, and methods of evaluation. I have reproduced the matrix below.

Table 4
Feldman et al.'s Assessment Matrix for Student Learning Outcomes

	We want to know... (Core Concepts)	And we will know by...(Key Indicators)	Method
Rhetoric and Academics	How do students apply the rhetorical dimensions of situation, genre, language and consequences in the context of their work at community agencies?	Articulation and application of rhetoric to specific situations.	Analysis of cover letters, field notes, other student writing; student focus group.
	How does writing and learning in this program facilitate writing and learning in other university classes?	Articulation of how students' understanding of rhetoric has facilitated writing and learning in other university classes.	Course surveys; student focus group; field notes, and other student writing.
Community-based writing and research	How effectively are the documents created for the community partners?	Feedback from community partners. Feedback from faculty. Student self-evaluation of changes in writing skills.	Community partner focus group; faculty interviews; analysis of field notes, student surveys, and other student writing.
	How do students apply communication methods and skills to conduct research within various discourse communities?	Feedback from community partners. Feedback from faculty. Student self-evaluation of changes in research skills.	Student focus group; student surveys; analysis of field notes and other student writing.
	How do students adjust their communication styles to enable them to function optimally in both complex community-based and university-based	Perceived change in ability to identify communication problems. Feedback from faculty. Feedback from community partners.	Student focus group; analysis of field notes and other student writing; faculty interviews; community partner focus group.

	situations?		
Civic Engagement	How do students value civic engagement for its impact on society at large?	Articulation of knowledge about community and public issues. Recognition of changes or possibilities for change in public life as a result of their actions. Understanding of community strengths, problems, resources. Identification of community assets and needs.	Analysis of research papers; student focus group.
	How do students integrate their civic engagement activities with their academic, career and personal goals?	Choice of a major that enables students to pursue civic engagement activities. Career decisions that enable students to pursue civic engagement activities. Extra-curricular activities that enable students to pursue civic engagement activities.	Student surveys; student focus group.
Leadership	How does participation in this program shape students' understanding of leadership?	Articulation of a dynamic definition of leadership that includes examples. Articulation of how leadership skills have been demonstrated by community partners.	Student focus group; community partner focus group.
	How does participation in this program shape	Sense of responsibility for solving problems	Faculty interviews; community partner focus group;

	students' ability to lead?	and taking ownership of projects. Ability to collaborate with others and facilitate teamwork.	student focus group.
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Readers of the matrix will immediately notice the increased attention and level of detail dedicated to student writing, in addition to areas of leadership and civic engagement, in which an analysis of student writing also plays a part. Other notable aspects of the matrix, apparent in the motivating questions around rhetoric and academics, are the embedded and related notions of generic competence and adaptive expertise. This is tied to the fact that the program itself involves reading and writing in multiple genres and that students' rhetorical skill in adapting to diverse rhetorical situations and their attendant genres is built into the design of the CCLCP curriculum. This feature involves a significant advantage of the CCLCP assessment matrix over other assessment frameworks, in that rather than having to identify program objectives as part of the assessment process, the CCLCP program already had objectives in place from which the designers of the model could build.

With the assessment matrix as their guide, Feldman et al. then used UIC's intermediate writing rubric and trained raters to compare the writing crafted by CCLCP students with a control group of essays written by students enrolled in traditional sections of UIC's second semester course (22-23). I have reproduced the rubric in Table 5 below. Unfortunately, the pilot study at the heart of Feldman et al.'s study ran into methodological problems that complicate an evaluation of its effectiveness. Early in the rating process, readers deduced from the topics of student essays that they were in fact reading two

distinct groups of papers. Raters did report that the service-learning essays in the corpus generally made more specific argumentative claims, but the loss of control conditions make any significant conclusions untenable.

Table 5
Evaluation Criteria for English 161 Research Papers at UIC

Evaluation Criteria	Description
Taking a position	The writer articulates a position or thesis that contributes to a significant public conversation. The position relates to key themes discussed in class materials and work. The writer attends to the consequences of his or her position, its personal relevance, and the potential or real public impact.
Developing arguments in context	The writer understands that arguments emerge from important public and academic conversations in which participants respond to each other as if in dialogue. They question claims, ask questions about evidence, consider the appropriateness of the evidence, qualify their assertions, and respond to counter claims.
Using sources effectively	The writer identifies and reviews appropriate source material relevant to his or her position, characterizes the sources' arguments, discusses disciplinary methods and approaches, provides historical context, critiques the sources, and considers the sources' perspectives.
Engaging intellectual strategies	The writer demonstrates the ability to engage in dialogue of ideas with the sources used in the paper. The work is enhanced by the ability to summarize, synthesize, and analyze. In addition, writers demonstrate how appropriate paraphrasing and quoting contribute to this dialogue of ideas.
Using language appropriately	The writer makes grammar and stylistic choices appropriate to audience and purpose. The writer also cites sources appropriately, integrating the cited material into the writer's work.

Methodological problems aside, Feldman et al.'s matrix effectively combines a contextualized but highly detailed approach to assessing student outcomes in a specific program. The experimental design of the second phase of their model, which uses trained raters to compare the writing of CCLCP writers with that of students in traditional composition courses, also acknowledges the perceived need for systematic, quantitative evidence that might be persuasive to external, and depending on the culture of assessment at a given institution, internal evaluators tasked with rationalizing the costs and benefits of a particular program. The use of a standard first-year writing rubric to assess students' service-learning outcomes, however, fails to incorporate the highly contextualized nature of students' community-based experiences. It is certainly fair to assert that writing students should achieve a certain level of rhetorical facility in terms of the general objectives in a given course, but if it is true that service-learning students' rhetorical outcomes lie at a more contextualized level, outside of a generalized rubric, than the use of such a rubric to gauge student outcomes becomes insufficient and can be misleading for those who seek to understand what student writers actually get out of community-based courses.

A Genre-Based Model of Writing Assessment

Feldman et al.'s assessment matrix provides an excellent high-level heuristic for thinking about student outcomes in service-learning courses. It is calibrated for the highly contextual nature of service-learning courses, and it combines academic impacts with more social, developmental outcomes like leadership and civic engagement. In this section I provide a more detailed assessment frame for thinking about student writing at the genre level in a way that is missing from Feldman et al.'s study and their use of a general grading

rubric for their evaluation of student papers. My rationale for using genre theory and genre analysis to design an assessment model for service-learning courses is based on two core premises. First, the contemporary conceptualization of genre as social action provides a lens for exploring the special role of context on students' service-learning writing and the interaction between student novice writers and genres, like ethnography, that most students come to as novices. Bazerman, as well as genre theorist Anthony Paré have argued about the power of genres to shape writers' subjectivities and their representations of experience and this question is particularly relevant in the case of the highly debated genre of ethnography (Bazerman, "The Life of Genre"; Paré, "Genre and Identity"). Second, genre analysis provides a way of reading and assessing this "deeply situated" writing which can help practitioners understand and improve the outcomes of service-learning courses and evaluate the role of service-learning in composition curricula. Michael Carter's successful use of genre theory to build an assessment model that helps faculty of different fields to determine the intellectual and epistemological function of their disciplinary genres is an important step in demonstrating the utility and usability of genre theory to design effective assessment frameworks. My goal is to extend this work with the development of a course-based model that can help both instructors and writing program administrators in their consideration of student outcomes in service-learning courses.

In a way similar to Broad's method of Dynamic Criteria Mapping, I found that the process of genre analysis using Bazerman's four dimensions (lexicon, citation practices, audience address, and authorial representation) explicated my own values as a reader and instructor in ways that I had not been aware of, either while teaching the service-learning courses at the core of this project, or in the more traditional courses I have taught since.

The grading rubric that I used to evaluate student papers in my course will be familiar to many writing instructors. Like Feldman et al.'s use of their institution's standard rubric for second semester writing, the rubric I developed for my course, while usable as a grade-assigning heuristic, fails to appreciate the situated nature of the service experience or students' interactions and development with the genre of ethnography.

In chapter three, I introduced the idea of ethnographic praxis, which I used to describe essays that contain thick descriptions of the mentoring experience, a specific theoretical frame that guides writers' interpretations, an empathetic interest in representing participant meanings, and a reflexive awareness for how writers' own subject positions have shaped their interpretations and their texts. These features and their qualitative value to me as an instructor emerged via genre analysis and now sit at the center of how I *now* assess student-authored ethnography. This framework for reading student texts and assessing student outcomes has significant implications: for setting standards and expectations for work, for providing summative feedback on drafts, for the grading, for assignment and syllabus design, and for the evaluation and reporting of course outcomes.

As previously reported, approximately ten out the of 44 (30%) student essays in the study corpus meet my definition of ethnographic praxis. These papers represent student work that exemplifies my sense of how ethnography was modeled in the course, which draws heavily on the conceptualization of ethnographic texts articulated by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, in their book *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, and my reading of those papers in the corpus that successfully used ethnography to represent students' service-learning experience. In identifying these papers as exemplars of what is, or rather what was

possible, in a given instructional context, certain goals or standards are deferred or re-considered. Critical consciousness, for example, which service-learning scholars like Herzberg have identified as desirable outcomes in writing *about* settings was not a patterned outcome in my corpus. It is important to point out, however, that it was neither an explicit theme of my instructional approach nor of the general discourse of the class, and as such students lacked access to texts that enacted critical consciousness which they might have used as models for their own explorations of social issues and the broader socio-political context of the service experience. Critical consciousness may be a reasonable aspiration for undergraduate writers in service settings. It may not. My argument is that student outcomes are always context specific, and that if higher order outcomes like critical consciousness are objectives they need to be supported and modeled in the kinds of texts that students read and discuss in the classroom. Genre analysis of course materials and student writing can identify gaps in course designs in ways that inform the development of new classroom strategies and support more realistic, precise parameters for student writing outcomes. In that sense, genre analysis can help instructors to assess where they are in terms of the relationship between learning objectives and student outcomes. It cannot tell them, however, what students should learn.

This genre-based framework for assessing student writing can also improve the grading of student papers. Table 6 is the rubric I originally used to evaluate student papers in ENG 3010. It combines a generalized, points-based rubric that many instructors will recognize, featuring the major categories of content and organization, infused with genre-specific attributes such as the inclusion of “fieldnote excerpts that are rich in concrete sensory observations and rich detail,” inspired by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw’s text.

Table 6
Original Final Project Rubric for ENG 3010

Content (25 points)	Points
1. Is your thesis clearly stated at the beginning of your paper? (2 points)	
2. Is your argument organized and clearly laid out at the beginning of your paper? (4 points)	
3. Do you successfully back up your conclusions with detailed observations? (5 points)	
4. Are your fieldnote excerpts rich in concrete sensory observations and rich detail? (4 points)	
5. Does your argument effectively deal with alternative explanations? (2 points)	
6. Does your paper explore how your findings might be used to improve the mentoring experience or adolescent education in general? (3 points)	
7. Have you successfully connected your observations with existing theories and literature? (3 points)	
8. Does your conclusion successfully sum up your argument? (2 points)	
Organization (10 points)	Points
1. Are there effective transitions between paragraphs? (1 point)	
2. Is your paper free of surface errors related to spelling, grammar and punctuation? (4 points)	
3. Are your sources adequately cited? (2.5 points)	
4. Does your paper have a list of works cited? (2.5 points)	

From my perspective, the rubric has two major shortcomings. As a general critique of point-based rubrics, and a targeted critique of my version, this rubric makes it difficult to articulate the differences between exemplary, satisfactory, and developing work. It provides very little generative guidance, to either instructors or students, about the difference, for example, between a thesis that receives two points versus one that receives four points. More specifically, the rubric fails to provide insight into the rhetorical dimensions that Bazerman's model predicts are most illustrative in revealing writers' interactions with a genre or into the ways students actually used the genre to create meaning out of their service experience as revealed by my analysis. For example, none of the criteria listed under *content* articulate the notion of lexicon, or fit, between students' theoretical frameworks and the service experience. Likewise, there are no criteria that capture the quality of writers' descriptions of the service setting or community participants. Knowing how students would actually use the assignment would obviously not have been possible before the first course took place, but genre analysis makes that data available now and can be used to design a rubric that is both more descriptive and more generative for students and instructors.

Below, I present a rubric that incorporates my department's now standard, graduated rubric with attributes (marked in italics) generated by my genre-analysis of student writing. The infusion of these attributes is also consistent with new guidelines set by my department that writing assignments should have their own criteria that synthesize the standard rubric with project-specific objectives. I realize that many institutions will have their own assessment practices in place, so I do not intend this rubric as a universal

solution but rather as one particular iteration of how genre-specific attributes might be used to contextualize assessment heuristics in ways consistent with contemporary theory.

Proposed Grading Rubric for Student-Authored Ethnographies

The "A" Paper:

1. The "A" paper has an excellent sense of the rhetorical situation. Its aim is clear and consistent throughout the paper. It attends to the needs of its audience and the topic itself is effectively narrowed and clearly defined.
 - A. *The essay contains a specific theoretical frame of analysis based on relevant research and/or course readings which guides the writer's interpretations of the mentoring experience.*
2. The content is appropriately developed for the assignment and rhetorical situation. The supporting details or evidence are convincingly presented. The reasoning is valid and shows an awareness of the complexities of the subject. If secondary sources are used, they are appropriately selected and cited.
 - A. *The essay contains thick descriptions of the service activity's setting, its participants, and specific mentoring experiences that support the writer's interpretations of the mentoring experience.*
 - B. *Whenever possible, the essay presents and analyzes fieldnote data about specific events or exchanges that support the paper's theme.*
 - C. *The essay captures attempts by the writer to represent community member meanings and interpretations of events and other aspects of the mentoring experience.*

- D. The essay contains numerous and specific reflections on the writer's development as an ethnographer over the course of the term and the ethical and rhetorical challenges he or she faced representing the mentoring experience.*
3. The organization demonstrates a clear and effective strategy. The introduction establishes the writer's credibility and the conclusion effectively completes the essay: paragraphs are coherent, developed, and show effective structural principles.
- A. The essay presents concrete details from the service setting to create credibility and the sense the writer has "been there."*
4. The expression is very clear, accessible, concrete. It displays ease with idiom and a broad range of diction. It shows facility with a great variety of sentence options and the punctuation and subordinate structures that these require. It has few errors, none of which seriously undermines the effectiveness of the paper for educated readers.

The "B" Paper:

1. The "B" paper has a good sense of the rhetorical situation. It shows awareness of purpose and focuses on a clearly defined topic.
- A. The essay contains a theoretical frame of analysis which guides the writer's interpretations of the mentoring experience.*
2. The content is well developed and the reasoning usually valid and convincing. Evidence and supporting details are adequate.

- A. *The essay contains specific descriptions of the service activity's setting, its participants, and specific mentoring experiences that support the writer's interpretations of the mentoring experience.*
 - B. *The essay frequently presents and analyzes fieldnote data about specific events or exchanges in support of the paper's theme.*
 - C. *The essay includes the voices and perspectives of community members.*
 - D. *The essay contains specific reflections on the writer's development as an ethnographer over the course of the term and the ethical and rhetorical challenges he or she faced representing the mentoring experience.*
3. The organization is clear and easy to follow: the introduction and conclusion are effective, and transitions within and between paragraphs are finessed reasonably well.
4. The paper has few errors, especially serious sentence errors. Sentences show some variety in length, structure, and complexity. Punctuation, grammar, and spelling conform to the conventions of edited Standard American English.

The "C" Paper:

- 1. The "C" paper has an adequate sense of the rhetorical situation. Its purpose is clear and it is focused on an appropriate central idea. The topic may be unoriginal, but the assignment has been followed, if not fulfilled.
 - A. *The essay contains a frame of analysis based on an idea or personal experience which guides the writer's interpretations of the mentoring experience.*

2. The content is adequately developed. The major points are supported, and paragraphs are appropriately divided, with enough specific details to make the ideas clear. The reasoning is valid.
 - A. *The essay contains descriptions of the service activity's setting, its participants, and specific mentoring experiences that support the writer's interpretations of the mentoring experience.*
 - B. *The essay presents specific recollections from the mentoring experience in support of its theme.*
 - C. *The essay includes the voices of community members.*
 - D. *The essay contains general reflections on the writer's development as an ethnographer over the course of the term and a description of the most difficult challenges he or she faced representing the mentoring experience.*
3. The organization is clear and fairly easy to follow. The introduction and conclusion are adequate; transitions are mechanical but appropriate.
4. The expression is generally correct, although it shows little competence with sentence variety (in length and structure) and emphasis. The paper is generally free of major sentence and grammar errors and indicates mastery of most conventions of edited Standard American English.

The "D" Paper:

1. The "D" paper has a limited sense of the rhetorical situation. Its purpose may not be clear, its topic may not be interesting to or appropriate for its audience.
 - A. *The essay lacks a frame of analysis or organizing idea which might guide the writer's interpretations of the mentoring experience.*

2. The content is inadequately developed. The evidence is insufficient, and supporting details or examples are absent or irrelevant.
 - A. *The essay does not contain descriptions of the service activity's setting, its participants, or specific mentoring experiences.*
 - B. *The essay presents insufficient or overly general data from the mentoring experience.*
 - C. *The essay does not attempt to include the voices of community members.*
 - D. *The essay does not present any reflections on the impact of the mentoring experience on the writer's thinking.*
3. Organization is deficient. Introductions or conclusions are not clearly marked or functional. Paragraphs are not coherently developed or linked to each other. The arrangement of material within paragraphs may be confusing.
4. Expression demonstrates an awareness of a very limited range of stylistic options. It is marred by numerous errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation that detract from a reader's comprehension of the text.

At more than four double-spaced pages, readers may complain that the rubric is simply too long. My response is that while the rubric may be long, its length is compensated by its detail and conceptual simplicity, which should help instructors and students to identify revision strategies as writers work from rough to final drafts of their work. My experience using rubrics also suggests that instructors often situate student papers in one or two grade ranges fairly easily, meaning that even though the rubric itself is long, instructors and students are usually working with a small portion of the instrument.

A more significant critique involves Huot's argument that rubrics themselves are reductive and fail as both documents and a process of inquiry into what readers value in a given time and place (12). Huot's premise, of course, is based on a specific kind of evaluative practice in which rubrics that attempt to generalize writing attributes are applied to a wide range of genres which may in fact, have very diverse purposes and contexts. The use of rubrics in the framework I have presented, however, is situated in a recursive process of contextualization and valuing, which integrates the understanding of a discipline about a given genre, in this case ethnography, and an appreciation for the particular context of the use of the genre.

It is critical to point out the dynamic nature of this process and the number of points at which the process can move, or flex, given new contexts and new findings. The use of a generalized rubric as a heuristic stem accounts for Anson's claim that even though successful writing depends on local, contextualized knowledge, composition programs need to be mindful of some level of general abilities ("Closed Systems" 116). At the same time, the specific assessment framework of any writing program can and should change over time as new local and institutional contexts emerge. Heuristics designed with best practices in mind, however, should provide opportunities for the kind of genre-based modulation that I have described. The genre-specific outcomes I have identified are also fluid. A key principle of contemporary genre theory is the assertion that genres are dynamic precisely because users' interaction with genres is dynamic. As just one example, since the very first postmodern critiques, ethnography has been an extremely dynamic genre, previously defined by the colonial politics of its progenitors and a positivist commitment to the transparency of language, but now increasingly complicated and

problematized by both critics and practitioners. In many ways, these dynamics evolve far beyond the awareness of novice users such as the students in my course, but their enacting of the genre, strongly shaped by the instructional frame of the course, echoes development in the use of the genre in its native discourse communities. As such, the assessment framework I am proposing requires a recursive approach to genre analysis to track how novice users' enactment of ethnography, or any genre, changes over time and context.

In more general terms, the assessment framework I am proposing is a staged, recursive process that moves from course design and then to genre analysis, reporting, and revision.

Pre-Course Activities

1. Course Design/Assignment Design
2. Design of provisional rubric using disciplinary knowledge about a specific genre, program-level learning objectives, and context-specific learning objectives.

Post-Course Activities

1. Genre analysis of student writing
2. Analysis and report of outcomes
3. Re-assessment of course learning/writing objectives
4. Revise assignments and rubric

Using this framework to revise the course at the core of this project would begin with re-approaching and re-framing course learning objectives to take into account the findings of my genre analysis, and specifically, themes and concepts that emerged during analysis around reflection, genre confusion, and what I have called ethnographic praxis.

First, however, I again present the original learning objectives from the course syllabus. They are followed by a revised outcomes matrix in Table 7 that appropriates a model proposed by Michael Carter (“Ways of Knowing”).

ENG 3010 Course Objectives (Original)

1. View community learning as an important way of learning about the world and society
2. Think critically about one’s own opinions, positions, and ways of seeing the world
3. Understand the basics of ethnographic research
4. Utilize ethnographic research methods as a way of understanding the perspectives of others
5. View writing as a socially constructed means of representing oneself, the world, and those around us
6. Write more effectively in a variety of modes with a broader understanding of audience, authenticity and writing as a form of representation

Table 7
Revised Learning Outcomes for ENG 3010

Learning Outcome	Evidence for Assessment
Students will produce writing in a variety of genres that demonstrates an understanding of audience, scope, and relevance in research settings.	parent letter, short essays, project proposal, annotated bibliography, final project
Students will relate course readings and theoretical perspectives to course topics.	quizzes, fieldnote journal, short assignments, short essays, final project
Students will conduct research of scholarly sources to support inquiry into course-related topics.	annotated bibliography, final project
Students will use ethnographic methods to create knowledge based on their service experience.	fieldnote journal, short essays, final project
Students will demonstrate understanding of the primary differences between quantitative and qualitative research.	quizzes, short assignments, short essays, final project
Students will use written reflection to develop a vocabulary for describing their writing and research processes and the impact of their subject position on their research stance.	fieldnote journal, short essays, final project, course evaluation
Students will produce writing that demonstrates control of discipline-specific writing guidelines, along with standard grammar, spelling, and mechanics.	short essays, final project

Similar matrices can be created and applied at the program level that incorporate data from additional inputs such as those included in Feldman et al.'s assessment matrix (see Table 4) or those suggested by Carter, which include student surveys and focus groups

(“A Process for Establishing Outcomes-Based Assessment Plans”). The key component of the kind of genre-based assessment framework I have in mind is the recursive process of identifying desired outcomes based on scholarly knowledge and disciplinary objectives informed and tempered by ongoing data analysis of what students actually do with the tasks they are given. Such a framework also requires a longitudinal approach to data gathering and analysis that can shift the attention of teachers and program administrators from individual courses to course sequences up through the program level.

Earlier in this chapter, I described recommendations made by the WPA for communicating outcomes data to stakeholder groups. Much of that document focuses on specific strategies that can be used to develop and disseminate concise messages and personal narratives (“Communication Strategies”). One of the specific messages the document describes is making clear to stakeholders that “composition instructors and WPAs engage in valid, reliable, and discipline-appropriate assessment that is used to improve teaching and learning.” The document’s authors, however, are much less clear in describing the kinds of data that different stakeholder groups might find convincing, which is an admittedly difficult task given the wide range of constituencies involved.

Carter’s approach to developing discipline-specific outcomes uses genre theory to encourage faculty to think about their fields, and the writing that takes places in those fields, as ways of doing and thinking. In much the same way, I propose as part of my assessment framework an approach to reporting that situates student writing outcomes within the general program-level objectives of a course together with method-specific and genre-specific objectives and outcomes. Below is a draft of a sample report based on my course that could be distributed to interested stakeholders.

Assessment Report

ENG 3010: Intermediate Writing: Representation and Community Learning

Background

ENG 3010, Intermediate Writing: Representation and Community Learning, is a community-based service-learning course that teaches students to use qualitative research skills as part of a semester-long service project at a charter school in the city of Detroit.

Service-learning is an instructional method through which students develop course-specific academic and personal skills in real-life situations based in their local communities (*National and Community Service Act of 1990*). Students participating in the course serve as mentors for middle-school students enrolled in an after-school enrichment program and then use course readings and observation-based techniques to develop research writing skills and practical knowledge related to their service experience. The course objectives were as follows:

1. View community learning as an important way of learning about the world and society
2. Think critically about one's own opinions, positions, and ways of seeing the world
3. Understand the basics of ethnographic research
4. Utilize ethnographic research methods as a way of understanding the perspectives of others
5. View writing as a socially constructed means of representing oneself, the world, and those around us
6. Write more effectively in a variety of modes with a broader understanding of audience, authenticity and writing as a form of representation

Undergraduate students participating in the course learned and used a form of qualitative research called ethnography to keep a detailed narrative record of their service experience and wrote a series of essays, including an end-of-semester research project, to document their learning over the course of the semester. Students used data from observation-based

journals together with course readings and other academic sources to craft thematic arguments about their service experience in the context of current issues in education and youth culture.

Findings

After four separate offerings of the course, a faculty working group analyzed student writing to determine the degree to which student essays demonstrate knowledge of ethnographic methods and course objectives. Based on their analysis, faculty determined that X% of student writers demonstrated either exemplary or proficient genre-specific skills, including:

- crafting rich, detailed descriptions of the research setting
- orienting writing within a specific theoretical idea connected to relevant research, course readings, and the service experience
- using qualitative data to support a well-reasoned argument
- using research to find, synthesize, and document sources in support of claims
- presenting the experiences of community participants from the participants' own perspectives
- reflecting on how writers' own values and perspectives impact their research and writing
- generating text that meets the expectations of an academic audience using appropriate style and conventions

Alternatively, X% of student writers failed to demonstrate effective use of the course's writing objectives or to meet the general requirements of the course.

Next Steps

Based upon this analysis, the syllabus of ENG 3010 has been modified to provide students with more reading experiences with ethnographic texts. In addition, additional activities have been added to the syllabus to foster student reflection which, while foregrounded in the literature on service-learning, was not a regular feature of student texts.

Discussion

The principle advantages of the assessment framework I have proposed is that it applies the accumulated knowledge of genre theory about the contextualized, social nature of writing, to two central challenges that face service-learning instructors and, in many ways, all instructors who assess writing in their courses. First, the use of genre analysis in the reading of student writing identifies specific rhetorical outcomes for student writing in specific instructional contexts and aids the development of better rubrics through which instructors can track students' development of both general writing abilities and their facility with specific genres. Second, genre analysis of student writing positions instructors to make theoretically sound judgments about the success, or relative lack of success, of course designs in helping students to achieve course-specific and program-level learning objectives.

In writing this chapter, I have focused on one specific kind of service-learning composition course, what Deans calls the writing *about* scenario, and one particular research genre, ethnography. Although drafts of writing and final projects were shared amongst class members throughout the semester, for all practical purposes I was the primary audience and the final arbiter of both the rhetorical and social outcomes of student writing. Other kinds of service-learning–based writing courses feature different rhetorical situations, writing outcomes, and perhaps most importantly, different stakeholders. In most cases, instructors are still responsible for awarding final grades, but as Nora Bacon has pointed out, community members, particularly those in writing *for* settings in which community members are explicitly positioned as clients, can have very different, but no less valid, ideas about what constitutes good writing (49). Community members in writing

with scenarios, such as those described by Linda Flower and her colleagues, also provide broader, and in some sense more authentic, social settings for assessing the impact of community-based writing.

My hope is that the framework I have proposed can be adapted to the particular needs and contexts of other service-learning settings. The method of genre analysis that I model in chapter three is technical in the way it applies a specific theoretical framework and a particular technology to code and analyze texts. However, in much the same way as I use the literature on ethnography and ethnographic pedagogy to guide my sense of what textual features have value within ethnography, community partners in both writing *with* and writing *for* settings should be seen as local experts whose perspectives have great value for students as they work to craft writing that works for particular situations and audiences. In similar terms, I believe that a genre-specific focus on how texts function in social contexts can guide instructors and community members in describing, assessing, and reporting writing outcomes for critical stakeholder constituencies.

There is some reason to think that the culture of assessment throughout higher education has begun to turn the corner away from the reductive discourse of accountability towards a view of assessment focused on seeing outcomes as a vital component in the improvement of teaching and learning. Led by education assessment scholars who have persuasively challenged outmoded definitions of validity and reliability, composition scholars have used these terms, together with their best understanding of the socially mediated nature of all writing, to advocate for new forms of writing assessment that are teacher-centered, locally-determined, and contextualized around the various rhetorical situations and genres that students encounter. Assessment efforts by service-learning

scholars have developed on a somewhat different track, and have struggled to move past practitioners' reliance on participant survey data and grading studies. Work by service-learning scholars, such as Feldman et al.'s development of an outcomes assessment matrix, has successfully applied some of the lessons of portfolio assessment to the evaluation of student outcomes, but assessing student writing outcomes in service-learning settings has been a more difficult task.

In this chapter, I presented a genre analysis based model of writing assessment that enables service-learning instructors, and writing teachers generally, to identify, describe, and report patterns of text-level features in genre sets of student writing. In those terms, my model is oriented around what students actually do with writing in a given rhetorical situation and, consistent with genre theory, presumes that student outcomes are directly tied to the genre repertoires student possess and are exposed to in class. As such, there is a tension between the claims of composition-based service-learning scholars about what students should do and my findings, which are firmly rooted in what students actually achieve. At the same time, the assessment framework I am advocating is designed to provide instructors and program administrators with actionable data that can inform decisions about the value of service-learning and its role within composition programs. Those decisions will be made, and are being made within individual departments across the academy, and it deserves repeating that my course is only one example using one very specific approach to service-learning pedagogy. The data needed for those decisions is there, however, and I hope my model provides one way of moving forward.

So where does that leave service-learning and composition? In my concluding chapter, I review the implications and limitations of my study, along with a proposal for

synthesizing genre-based pedagogy and service-learning as part of a broader writing studies curriculum.

CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF SERVICE-LEARNING IN COMPOSITION

The goal of this project has been to apply contemporary genre theory to the assessment of student writing outcomes in service-learning courses. This research primarily involves two subfields within composition and rhetoric that also carry substantial interest in the broader academy: service-learning and writing assessment. Both areas are related in that service-learning practitioners are increasingly interested in describing the impact of the pedagogy on participants just as assessment specialists are interested in measuring the effects of particular instructional strategies on student outcomes. Yet the discourses of both fields often have very different intellectual and political investments. The discourse of service-learning is generally oriented around fostering personal development, promoting social change, and breaking down the divide between educational institutions and their surrounding communities. The discourse of assessment, alternatively, and the accountability agenda that plays an increasing role within assessment debates, emphasize the instrumental dimensions of education as a transaction between institutions and their student clients. Genre theory, and its focus on the social dimensions of communicative action, provides a bridging vocabulary between the two fields. Service-learning is an inherently social pedagogy and the various writing genres students use in community-based settings foreground the relationship between rhetorical action and public contexts. As Brian Huot argues, assessment is a kind of social action, and genre theorists such as Michael Carter have attempted to shift the debates over assessment away from notions of inter-rater reliability and outdated definitions of validity to an examination of how writers use writing to make meaning within specific discourse

communities and disciplinary knowledge domains. The purpose of this concluding chapter is to review the major findings of the study and their implications for genre theory, service-learning, and writing assessment. I will also describe some of limitations of the project and its research methodology and suggest areas for further research. I conclude by proposing a model for service-learning writing oriented around the concept of genre awareness as part of a reconfigured writing studies curriculum articulated by compositionists such as Charles Bazerman and Susan Miller.

Major Findings

The most significant claim of this project relates to the applicability of genre theory and genre analysis to assessing student writing outcomes in service-learning courses. As Thaiss and Zawacki argue, the provisional nature of alternative discourses like ethnography makes assessing such genres difficult (80). Applying Bazerman's approach to genre analysis, however, which he models in his 1988 book *Shaping Written Knowledge* to describe text level differences in the writing of various academic disciplines, provides a powerful way to explore and describe student writing outcomes. Bazerman's four dimensions of lexicon, citation, audience appeal, and authorial representation, are particularly useful in looking at relatively under-examined and under-theorized classroom genres like student-authored ethnography. One of the main conclusions of this project, therefore, is that genre analysis can uncover important features of the rhetorical landscape of classroom genres that can provide practitioners with systematic, fine-grained data which can be used to develop an understanding of how novice users encounter and use new discursive forms.

This project also demonstrates that genre theory and genre analysis can go beyond description and can provide a theoretically engaged, yet flexible and practical approach to writing assessment at both the level of individual texts and corpora. Using genre analysis to describe and assess student writing outcomes functions as a form of dynamic criteria mapping that for me, as an instructor, helped to identify and articulate what I value in student writing, and in student-authored ethnography in particular. My analysis and its application in the development of a context-specific assignment rubric demonstrates that genre analysis can be combined with locally-developed rubrics to create more specific, contextualized heuristics that instructors can use for both formative and summative assessment. In those terms, my findings suggest that genre analysis can be used as the basis for an ongoing, recursive approach that cycles between the design of specific instructional strategies and the analysis of student work for areas of strength and need.

The methodology modeled in this project could also be applied to program-level assessments. As described earlier, Carter advocates for using genre-based approaches to facilitate conversations with faculty and program leaders to identify and describe the epistemological work of disciplinary genres and to map those outcomes onto text-level features which students should be taught (“Ways of Knowing”). My analysis of student essays was aided and systematized by the use of qualitative data analysis software but a similar analytical approach could be taken with a group of readers, smaller samples of student writing, and coding without the aid of software. Carter, in fact, recommends short, two to three hour group-based readings of samples of student writing as one efficient, yet effective approach to program assessment that can have significant impact on improving teaching and student learning (11 March 2010).

In terms of student writing specifically, my analysis demonstrates that the writers in my courses were able to use ethnography as a systematic research methodology and as a frame of analysis for their inscription of the service experience. As such, the student writing I studied reveals significant investment in ethnographic methodology. Nearly 30% of writers demonstrate what I call ethnographic praxis, marked by the combination of thick description, a specific theoretical frame of analysis, an empathetic interest in participant meanings, and personal reflection. Approximately 10% of writers explicitly use the analytic unit structure modeled in the course text *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, and in Jabari Mahiri's *Shooting for Excellence*. Perhaps more importantly, and consistent with the course objectives, students demonstrated facility in using ethnography to make meaning out of their service experience and to create knowledge about a range of topics related to youth culture and the mentoring program at the heart of the course. The one course objective for which this was not the case involves the goal of fostering students' critical reflections of their own "opinions, positions, and ways of seeing the world" (Course Syllabus, Appendix A). With few exceptions, notably those papers which I describe as being overdetermined by their theoretical frame, the majority of papers in the corpus are centrally focused on the mentoring experience and only rarely attempt to connect their service narrative with broader social issues.

My analysis reveals a range of variations in the ways students appropriated ethnography in their writing that have implications for the use of the genre in service settings. Consistent with the description of service-learning writing by Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede, I found that students' essays could be divided into four general categories: theoretical essays, problem-solving essays, case studies, and course critiques. These

different types of papers are associated with distinct ways of positioning students in relation to their service experience. Essays that contain a very specific theoretical frame, for instance, articulate positions for writers that are somewhat distanced from the mentoring experience, in some cases leaving little room for thick description and the unfolding of a thematic narrative. At the same time, theory essays were less likely than case studies or problem solving papers to feature traditional narrative arcs replete with exposition, crisis, and resolution.

Earlier in this project, I summarized Ellen Cushman's critique of end-of-semester essays in service-learning courses using the writing *about* paradigm and her argument that these assignments often lack the "systematic, structured, theory-driven research that scholars do" (45). I realize now that Cushman's criticism is directed mainly at assignments which ask students to offer their general reflections on how their service experience affected them and how they think community members were impacted by the activity. At the outset of this project, I worried that my course was vulnerable to Cushman's critique. Based on my analysis, however, I am now convinced that the ethnographic methodology at the center of my course did in fact provide students with a "structured," and "systematic" scaffold for the intellectual work they conducted over the course of the semester. Moreover, the student writing produced in my class demonstrates that undergraduates are capable of working beyond the quasi-genre of the traditional research paper and of engaging in authentic research methodologies to produce knowledge. As Thaiss and Zawacki argue, student appropriations of scholarly genres are different than those texts produced by experienced professionals; research posters created by undergraduate psychology majors, for example, are not the same as conference posters created by experienced psychology researchers

(64). Like students' appropriations of the poster genre, however, the student-authored ethnography produced in my course suggests that students can successfully use authentic scholarly genres, particularly when the instructional context provides an appropriate exigence and personal motivation for investment in the methodology that is presented.

My findings have a number of implications for revising the design and delivery of instruction in service-based settings. Most importantly, the relative lack of reflective, critical writing across the corpus suggests the need for improvement in this area, particularly given the value of reflection in the service-learning literature and the scholarship on experiential learning. This begins with increasing the amount of attention given to reflection in the course design: in readings, in-class activities, class discussions, and assignments. Fostering reflection also involves engaging students' lack of familiarity with ethnography which I believe contributed to some of the genre confusion I observed in chapter three. In retrospect, I believe upgrading the role of reflection in the course would have been improved by two specific strategies. First, students need models for effective reflection. I did not provide these as part of the course design and neither of the primary course texts, Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, nor Stone and Chiseri-Strater's *Fieldworking*, provide sufficiently detailed examples of reflective writing for students to emulate. Second, reflection was not explicitly required in the final project description so even if I assumed reflection would be a part of writers' essays, the lack of reflective writing across the corpus persuades me that this expectation was not equally assumed amongst students. Yancey, in *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*, stresses that students need clear direction and clear expectations when it comes to reflective writing, and it seems clear to me that my course would have significantly benefitted from both.

In much the same way as my analysis revealed a general lack of reflective writing across the corpus, my research also found little evidence that the students in my course used their service-based writing to make connections between their service experience and larger social issues or structures. This finding supports the concerns of service-learning scholars such as Herzberg that while students may complete their courses with an enhanced appreciation of the seriousness of problems like homelessness, few students seem to develop an understanding of the relationship of such problems to broader features of the social structure. Consistent with those concerns, I found that very few, if any, students in the corpus made such systematic connections between their mentoring experience and the broader social context. There are a number of ways to think about the absence of these kinds of connections in student writing, both generally and in terms of my own corpus. In “Digging a Groundwork for Writing: Underprepared Students and Community Service Courses,” Adler-Kassner offers a response to Herzberg’s concerns and argues that undergraduates, particularly those who come to college academically underprepared, simply may not be ready to articulate the kinds of critical connections valued by many compositionists and service-learning practitioners (555). That is not to say, Adler-Kassner cautions, that undergraduates are not aware of the struggles and inequalities that come with certain class and ethnic positions; but students do need practice with the discursive forms of articulating these connections in ways valued by scholars. Alder-Kassner’s argument about students’ need for guided practice also touches on a point I have made at various places throughout the project about the need to provide students with writing models for rhetorical modes and genres with which they have little experience. Cultural critique and its application to specific experiences, like that of the

mentoring experience, is almost certainly a new and unfamiliar rhetorical situation for undergraduates. Such critique is rarely the focus of the traditional research paper and it was not prominent in either my own teaching or class readings, which featured a much more pragmatic focus on preparing students to be effective mentors and ethnographers. I can imagine a course design more committed to helping students to develop the thinking and writing skills necessary for cultural critique, or as in the case of critical ethnography, social advocacy, but I do not believe this was a practical option for the course I taught.

The findings I have presented are limited by a number of factors and are open to critique on a number of fronts. One of the many strengths of the process movement in composition studies is the recognition that texts are not static products but are one important component of the process of writing in which writers are the primary agent. Faigley notes that the process movement is credited by many scholars with forging what was a new consensus in the teaching of writing that shifted emphasis away from student writing as the end product of writing instruction, to a focus on the mind and internal processes of individual writers (29). This project, and my use of genre theory as its central analytical frame, has intentionally attempted to refocus on student writing as important cultural products, particularly as student texts relate to the socially implicated nature of service-learning. In those terms, in this project I explicitly focus on text level analysis to the exclusion of writers' perspectives outside their texts. That choice yields the benefit of a deeper understanding of how student writing works as a frame for social action, but I acknowledge that both during and after my analysis I have wondered what students would say about their approach to their writing, their sense of what they learned from their service experience and their use of ethnography, and now almost 10 years later, the

significance of the course in their lives as students, citizens, and writers. The incorporation of additional classroom and writer data in the form of interviews, surveys, and ethnographic observation both during and after the service experience has the potential to substantially broaden the perspective I have sketched out here and stands as a promising strand of extended inquiry for genre researchers studying classroom writing. Genre theorist John Swales' 1998 book, *Other Floors, Other Voices: A Textography of a Small University Building*, is a good example of what such a study might look like. Swales' defines *textography* as "something more than a disembodied textual or discursal analysis, but something less than a full ethnographic account," and in the text he uses it to study the social and rhetorical function of writing activities that take place within a multidisciplinary office building at the University of Michigan (1). Such an approach could be appropriated for the study of genre activity within service-learning courses, and even more generally to other instructional settings to deepen our understanding about the relationship between context, genre, and the development of rhetorical facility that I have only begun to explore here.

Another limitation of the study is my singular focus on students' end-of-the-semester essays. As the final project of the course, the essays at the center of the study represent the culmination of students' intellectual journey over the course of the term and their service experience. The assignment was designed to capture the core of student learning and the distilled knowledge acquired during the mentoring experience, course discussions, readings, outside research, and ethnographic journaling. In that regard, these terminal projects present a logical and appropriate site of in-depth inquiry into students' writing outcomes and the relevance of those outcomes to the overall course design and

service-learning more generally. However, this focus on students' final projects obscures important outcomes that undoubtedly took place in other pieces of student writing. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, in particular, argue that fieldnotes and the writing of fieldnotes lie at the true core of ethnographic practice, and as such may more directly capture the learning of participant observers than the polished texts they create as the final products of their research. In the same way, drafts of student papers, including texts like coding memos, represent additional sites of student learning that should also be explored to generate a full understanding of how student writers develop facility with new genres. Much of my rationale for focusing on students' end-of-the-semester projects involves the goal of assessing writing outcomes against course objectives, but certainly more research on the breadth of student writing generated over the duration of a course would generate valuable knowledge about changes and progress in student writing that this study leaves unexplored.

My focus on writing and its relationship to student learning outcomes also leaves out important aspects of students' service-learning experience. The focus on writing is motivated by my feeling that student writing has not been given the attention it deserves in the service-learning scholarship, particularly within composition, but I certainly do not intend to convey the impression that other forms of learning, such as those that take place in course discussions or in the context of the service experience itself, do not also deserve more attention. Conrad and Hedin have pointed out that various aspects of service-learning courses, particularly the wide variety of service activities and the difficulty in identifying and defining desired outcomes, make evaluating service-based courses difficult (746). Even so, stakeholders from writing program administrators to community partners expect

program designers to provide quality information about student outcomes. My hope is that the use of particular theoretical frames, such as genre theory and genre analysis in this project, can provide service-learning researchers with lenses to study the relationship between course objectives and specific modes of student learning.

This study is also limited by its focus on one particular model of service-learning writing: the writing *about* model. My analysis has focused on one particular kind of service-learning-based writing course, and one that I have argued involves the least amount of rhetorical interaction between writers and community members of all of Deans' three paradigms. One advantage of this aspect of writing *about* models is that at least in terms of assessment issues, writing *about* models most closely resemble traditional writing courses in that student writing products are rarely read outside the classroom. Still, without knowing the relative distribution of models across the academy, applying the findings of this study to other kinds of service-based programs is problematic. More generally, the highly contextualized nature of this study as a glimpse into a corpus of writing in one particular course, taught by one instructor in a specific space and time, further complicates trying to apply my findings to a broad-based appraisal of service-learning or ethnography. This limitation is somewhat mitigated by the fact that the study includes data from four different offerings of the same course. The genre-based methodology of the study, moreover, is specifically designed to enable practitioners to generate knowledge in highly contextualized rhetorical situations like those found in service-learning settings. While I am not arguing that my findings regarding particular student writing outcomes have any

predictive value for other settings, the methodological model I propose is designed for wider application across different instructional contexts.

Out of the three types of service-learning-based writing courses described by Thomas Deans, the writing *about* paradigm, such as the one I have described in this project, is the least social in terms of audience and public function. While students in writing *for* settings have their work read and used by community members in the role of clients, and writers in writing *with* settings collaborate with community members to produce writing that undertakes some form of social action, students in writing *about* contexts are writing primarily for their instructor and to a lesser degree, their fellow classmates. This structural constraining of writing *about* texts significantly limits both their social function and public nature. As such, writing *about* settings deny students the benefits of seeing their writing do work in the world along with all of the learning that comes with the experience of seeing one's writing read and used by others. At the same time, students' ethnographic texts are rarely published for other scholars, so any knowledge they do contain often remains with students, or in my case, left in three-ring binders unclaimed by students after the end of the term.

My defense of the pedagogical value of writing *about* models, which I offer in response to Cushman's critique, does not elide the ethical implications of such courses. Indeed, I acknowledge that writing *about* settings such as the one I have described also continue to be politically problematic. Gwen Gorzelsky, in her essay "Shifting Figures: Rhetorical Ethnography," reminds readers that critics of ethnography frequently argue that "ethnographic representations inevitably swallow subjects' voices in the researcher's textually enacted agenda," a tendency that has prompted scholars like Bruce Horner and

Min-Zhan Lu to compel ethnographers to use their writing to bring about social change that benefits community members (74). Gorzelsky's concerns highlight the significance of some of the textual features revealed in my own analysis, for example the tendency of many writers in the project corpus to not discuss both their own racial subject position and that of their mentees, and the general avoidance of larger social issues like poverty and male abandonment of families. Service-learning courses like mine, however, while engaged in providing social benefits like mentoring to community members, do not position writing in any explicitly activist role, and as such, can be critiqued for participating in the same kind of objectification alluded to by Gorzelsky and service-learning scholars like Himley. In those terms, service-learning-based ethnography brings to mind cautions voiced by genre theorists Freedman and Medway who argue that all genres have both internal effects for writers as well as external effects for outsiders who are represented, "or significantly not represented," in texts (13).

This project began out of an interest in developing a more systematic methodology for describing student writing outcomes in service-learning courses, and to that end I have focused on writing composed at the end of students' service experience. My findings, however, lead to an important set of questions that lie outside the scope of this project involving the degree to which students are able to transfer the skills they develop in their service-learning course to other courses inside and outside of the writing curriculum. The question of transfer has relevance beyond service-learning of course but it is nonetheless a part of the larger picture of the value of service-learning to student outcomes. In "The Trouble with Transfer: Lessons for a Study of Community Service Writing," Nora Bacon

examines the transfer of rhetorical facility across community-based courses. Bacon concludes that while students are capable of carrying certain discrete skills, for example those involving the citation of sources, consideration of the transfer of higher level rhetorical knowledge cannot be limited to academic skills but rather should be more widely conceptualized as a function of a range of attitudes, social contexts, and social interactions that in many cases precede what students learn in a particular course (61). Bacon's argument is also consistent with claims made by service-learning scholars that many course outcomes may not reveal themselves until sometime after the service experience (152). As such, service-learning scholars are increasingly calling for more longitudinal studies of outcomes for service-learning students.

Another area in need of further research on student writing, and service-learning writing in particular, is student reflection. Defining the elements of quality reflection continues to be a challenge, particularly since reflection continues to have a valued role within both service-learning and ethnographic pedagogy. Yancey's work on reflection, which argues for the importance of task-specific reflection and an awareness of the rhetorical choices that student writers face as qualitative benchmarks, provides a key starting point for this line of inquiry and merits additional work. In particular, there is a need to better understand the role of student reflection in terms of two important goals of service-learning: fostering students' critical awareness of the relationship between their service experience and broader social issues, and enabling students to inscribe community participants' experiences from the community members' perspectives rather than projecting students' own values and ways of seeing on to the social worlds of those with whom they work.

The Future of Service-Learning in Composition

It is easy in a project like this to lose sight of the big picture: the core question that motivated the project in the first place. For me that question is: is service-learning worth doing? The literature on service-learning consistently demonstrates that students in quality service-learning settings like such courses, often significantly more than their other classes. Students in service courses generally report working harder than in other classes and that they value seeing their education having a tangible impact in the communities that surround their school. What is less clear is the degree and manner in which students benefit academically from their service experiences and whether those benefits justify the significant expense in time and energy required to create and sustain community-based courses. The stakes for these questions are particularly high in composition because at least in terms of courses at the freshman and sophomore level, the purpose of these courses is to prepare students to write in their majors, which for the vast majority of students, rarely include English.

This project suggests that significant numbers of intermediate writing students in service-learning courses can successfully use discipline-sanctioned research methodologies such as ethnography, while also performing service that benefits both community members and the university. Perhaps more importantly, my findings demonstrate that service experiences provide an authentic exigency for student investment in learning to use research methodologies. Given the uncertainty over issues of transfer, which as I have said are not exclusive to community-based courses, the question for writing program administrators is whether service-learning warrants the investment, either at the general

education level or within the English major itself, particularly for students majoring in technical and professional writing.

The first question is what place service-learning might have in first or second-year composition. The corpus at the center of this study came from a sophomore-level intermediate writing course but service-learning is not uncommon in either first-year or even remedial courses. Bacon argues that integrating service into first-year composition has a number of positive impacts, including “grounding” course content in authentic rhetorical contexts, linking intellectual inquiry with everyday experience, and encouraging students to see themselves and their school as part of the broader community (“Service-Learning in First-Year Courses”). Similarly, Adler-Kassner argues that service-learning experiences can help underprepared students in remedial courses to articulate their real-world experiences in ways that are acceptable to the academy (“Digging a Groundwork” 555).

From my own perspective as an instructor of the traditional first-year course and intermediate-level service-based courses, I think it would be extremely difficult to progress though the content required of first-year composition and/or developmental English while also providing a quality service experience for students *and* community members. At many institutions such as my own, the first-year course encompasses a wide range of student ability levels, and as such every available moment of instruction not taken up by delivering content needs to be spent conferencing with students individually and orienting students to the academic habits that are essential to their academic success at the university. While I agree with both Bacon and Adler-Kassner that service-experiences can provide desirable linkages between students and the instructional objectives of the first-year course, the

required trade-offs in terms of time and energy are hard to justify, regardless of which service-learning writing model might be involved. That does not mean, of course, that service experiences have no place in the lives of freshman students. Programs like alternative spring breaks or semester-long community service projects which develop students' sense of civic engagement are increasingly common features of many undergraduates' educational experiences. My point is that given the curricular and administrative pressures exerted on freshman writing from both inside and outside the university, I find it highly unlikely that quality service experiences that benefit both students and community members can be successfully integrated into the vast majority of first-year course designs.

I realize that many institutions across the country do not require a second-year, or sophomore-level course, but my findings lead me to believe that service-learning experiences, particularly when it is paired with research genres like ethnography and case study, can provide a valuable exigence that enhances the stakes and authenticity of student writing. The intermediate writing course I taught was oriented towards research writing but within the past year the course has been redesigned with a focus on writing across the disciplines. Embedding the service experience within a structured research agenda enacts an intellectual systematicity and rigor that circumvents the most pointed critiques of writing *about* models and end-of-the-semester essays by scholars like Cushman and Himley. I also want to argue that based on my experience, the majority of students enrolled in intermediate courses demonstrate the developmental readiness to manage the intellectual and practical complexity of the service/research experience that is not present in most first-year students. By the time students reach the intermediate course, most have

acquired many of the academic habits (i.e., formatting papers, basic citation skills, regular attendance) that can take up so much time in first-year writing, which I argue leaves more room for service, both in terms of time and scope of content.

The suitability of service-learning in intermediate course designs oriented around preparing to write in the disciplines is inherently more complicated. These courses are frequently focused on identifying, describing, practicing, and critiquing the various ways in which knowledge is made across the academy. If my own university is representative, this general emphasis is articulated in a variety of ways across course sections so my intention here is to briefly imagine how service might fit into intermediate composition courses that utilize WID designs using Deans' three paradigms of service-learning writing. Perhaps the easiest paradigm to adapt is the writing *for* model in which students create texts for community-based constituencies like non-profit groups. It is not hard to imagine integrating service experiences into instructional units exploring how writing functions in professional fields like social work, communications, nursing, education, and business. While there are important differences between workplace and scholarly genres, for instance between grant applications and case studies, it seems reasonable to assume that service experiences which develop understanding about these generic differences would add a valuable contextual and rhetorical dimension to intermediate courses with a WID focus.

It is also possible to imagine intermediate courses that utilize some aspect of the writing *about* model to explore how scholars in disciplines like education, sociology, and public health create knowledge. Given the survey-oriented nature of many WID designs, service activities normally would not span an entire semester, although as my earlier

survey of service-learning courses at my university demonstrated, short-term activities are increasingly common. The central problem of this approach, however, is ethical. Some short-term service experiences, such as when students participate in a planting activity or a community clean-up activity, seem harmless enough. But taken together with examples like a day trip to a homeless shelter, these types of drop-in activities can quickly become a kind of service tourism, producing either the kind of *noblesse oblige* discussed by Schutz and Gere or, perhaps even worse, a sense of hopeless resignation to the intractable nature of problems like homelessness (133). Moreover, these short-term experiences make it extremely difficult for students to develop authentic relationships with community members which can be an antagonizing factor in the tendency of students to interpret their service experience as validating preconceived notions about particular issues and communities (Herzberg).

Writing *with* models, perhaps best represented by Linda Flower's work with the Community Literacy Center in Pittsburgh, avoids some of the most problematic aspects of writing *about* models, but because of the community-based nature of these models, they can be an awkward fit for intermediate courses with a WID focus. As with my consideration of the applicability of writing *for* models, however, one can imagine the paradigm working in certain fields, such as social work or public health, in which practitioners use writing as part of their work with community members where service and disciplinary discourses intersect. Moreover, if scholars such as Barbara Holland are correct in maintaining that civic engagement will continue to have an increasingly prevalent role in disciplinary work, it is possible that new genres, characterized by new kinds of collaborative relationships

between scholars and community members, will emerge to become a part of the genre repertoires of both the academy and the wider public.

Next comes the question of the potential place of service-learning in the English Major. Perhaps the most obvious, but important, difference between general-education writing courses and major-level composition classes is the fact that instead of servicing the university, broadly constructed, major-level courses in English Studies are focused on preparing students to write as practitioners of the discipline. The problem of course, is defining, or re-defining, the appropriate objects of inquiry for the discipline, which as field historians Sharon Crowley and James Berlin have noted, is a project fraught with conflict and intellectual angst. Perhaps not surprisingly, I argue that service-learning does have a place in the English Studies major, but that future is contingent on a number of factors, including the status of civic engagement as a value within the academy, and more specifically, recent developments in composition pedagogy.

First, it is important to track where the notion of civic engagement seems headed in the future of the academy. As I point out in chapter one, community engagement has always played some role in higher education, but its recent popularity can be traced to calls for revising undergraduate education by figures such as Ernest Boyer. Barbara Holland, director of the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, argues that engaged research will increasingly become a measure of “academic quality and prestige” and that the increasing role of civic engagement in university missions will inevitably impact conceptualization of successful teaching (quoted in Feldman et al. 17). As just one example, at Wayne State engagement and service are one of five primary foci of the university mission and plays a major role in the university’s evaluation by the North Central Association of Colleges and

Schools. At WSU, engagement and service is broadly defined to incorporate both public and private constituencies, but what is interesting is that these values are articulated across the university to include every level of university life, from faculty to staff and students (Wayne State University, “A Self-Study Report”). The example of Wayne State is consistent with national data on the institutionalization of community service and service-learning across the country, evidenced by data gathered by Campus Compact and service-learning scholars like Casey and Springer.

Service-learning scholar Richard Battistoni agrees that civic engagement is becoming increasingly valued in the academy, but he cautions the term can also function as a buzzword with wide ranging definitions across institutional contexts (4). Expressing caution from a different perspective, Kevin Mattson, in his *MJCSL* essay “Can Service-Learning Transform the Modern University? A Lesson from History” argues that despite the recent popularity of service-learning and terms like civic engagement, the modern university, perhaps more than ever, is oriented around preparing students for the life of work, and as such service-learning is vulnerable to being co-opted for that agenda. Mattson’s concerns are certainly not unrealistic given recent work by scholars like J. Blake Scott who has described the increasingly common conflation of service-learning and internship programs in for-profit settings.

If the future of service-learning is dependent on the status and value of civic engagement within American education, its role in composition is contingent on the evolution of composition studies and English Studies more generally. Even as the intellectual status of composition has grown over the last forty years, the ongoing service status of general education writing courses, together with the growing prevalence of part-

time faculty in composition programs, efforts to reposition composition within English face an uphill battle. Still, as the number of literature studies majors declines nationally, proposals to re-vision English Studies are becoming increasingly common. Earlier in the project, I briefly described Berlin's advocacy of a reconfigured English Studies major modeled on British cultural studies (*Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures*). More recently, compositionists such as Bazerman and Miller have imagined a major discipline oriented around writing studies with an emphasis on "the multidimensional story of writing" (Bazerman "The Case for Writing Studies" 33). Bazerman's model conceptualizes writing studies as an array of three primary strands of inquiry. The first would focus on constructing what Bazerman calls an "emergent historical picture of writing practices, genres, systems of circulation, and related institutions and social systems" (36). The second would concentrate on building theoretical perspectives using the "major strains of twentieth-century social theory and social science" (37). The third strand would emphasize the craft of writing and its role in the lives of writers and learners (37). For Susan Miller, adopting and embracing writing studies unloads the subordinate political connotation of composition while also opening new avenues for research and pedagogy (41). In terms similar to Bazerman, Miller argues that a writing studies orientation makes it possible to take a broader historical perspective to the world of writing and the nature of how writing is used to create knowledge across social systems (44). Consistent with this position, the last few years have seen the emergence of a body of scholarship under the multiliteracies umbrella, represented by anthologies like 2004's *Multiliteracies for the 21st Century*, edited by Brian Huot, Beth Strobles, and Charles Bazerman, and *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures*, edited by Australian scholars Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis.

Proposals from within the field to reposition and rebrand composition by incorporating a scholarly focus on the varied contexts of writing parallel recent work in post-process writing pedagogy that stresses the deeply situated nature of student learning in writing courses. In *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction*, Anne Beaufort advocates for reframing the first-year course by helping students to develop skills in four overlapping knowledge domains: subject matter knowledge, rhetorical genre awareness, writing process, and the concept of rhetorical communities. Beaufort's approach is relevant for arguments by scholars like Chris Anson who maintain that writing students need to develop adaptive expertise, which he defines in terms of genre awareness and rhetorical facility with audience analysis and issues of voice ("Closed Systems" 133). A number of compositionists interested in advanced writing pedagogy also advocate for approaches consistent with a writing studies framework and community-based approaches are frequently mentioned in various advanced curriculum scenarios. In "Constructive Communication: Community-Engagement Writing," H. Brooke Hessler proposes a writing studies capstone course in which students explore case studies of community-based initiatives and then design their own projects. Hessler argues that community-based projects can provide an important experiential complement to courses in contrastive rhetoric, "civic literacy, and genre theory" (128).

Finally, it is worth noting that the use of ethnography as an instructional strategy continues to be suggested by scholars across various parts of the field. As I reviewed earlier in the project, these include Lester Faigley, David Seitz, Mary Jo Reiff, and James Zebroski, who in similar ways all argue that ethnography positions students to explore the situated nature of writing as it occurs inside and outside the academy. It is important to note,

however, that all of these scholars articulate the object of inquiry for composition-based ethnography, not as the study of others from the position of traditional ethnography, but as a rhetorically-oriented means of studying communicative rhetorical action.

Similar to Hessler, who argues that service-learning has the potential to bring an experiential dimension to advanced writing curricula, the model I have in mind would leverage the socially-engaged aspects of service-learning with the ability of ethnography to function as both a genre and a methodology (Reiff 36). This re-framing of the standard writing *about* model would forgo studying community participants as anthropological subjects, favoring instead an exploration of communicative action and the relationship between social context and text. This type of inquiry would be at home in the kind of writing studies curricula described by Bazerman and Miller. This model would position students as legitimate creators of knowledge using field-sanctioned methodologies while avoiding some of the politically problematic dimensions of student-authored ethnography. Next to writing *for* and writing *with* models, both of which seem equally appropriate within a writing studies paradigm, a *textographic* service-learning model (borrowing Swales' term), would also advance the goals of compositionists influenced by genre theory who see genre awareness as an important part of students' development of adaptive expertise. It would provide courses that use such models with a base knowledge domain on which to draw course readings and orient class discussions.

Imagine for a moment, an upper-level writing studies course that combines ethnographic and textographic research and community service. Where I live in metropolitan Detroit, there are a number of relatively small community-based organizations with missions oriented around the environmental stewardship of the many

small river systems that wind their way throughout the region. The environmental health of many of these river systems has suffered over the years because of both industrialization and suburban sprawl. One such organization of which I am a member, Friends of the Rouge, is dedicated to improving the health of the Rouge River and to educating citizens about the watershed and its care. Like similar organizations, Friends of the Rouge sponsors a number of events throughout the year, from membership drives and fundraising events to volunteer-led environmental clean-ups, wildlife surveys, and gardening workshops. To support the work and mission of the organization, both paid staff and volunteers generate a great deal of writing across a variety of institutional and popular genres including grant applications, presentations, membership forms, flyers, governmental reports, and newsletters. These genres are rhetorically complex in their own ways and must speak to a wide variety of constituencies and contexts. Governmental reports and grant applications, for example, are generically rigid and privilege clarity and precision. Flyers and membership appeals, alternatively, while allowing for more creativity and hybridity, face the daunting rhetorical challenge of garnering public interest in a communicative environment saturated by countless other messages and appeals.

Organizations like Friends of the Rouge rely on community supporters and volunteers to fulfill their missions, both in the field and at the keyboard. Students in a service-learning-based course with an organization like the one I have described could work with the group in a writing *for* capacity to create and/or revise documents. Using genre and discourse theory, students would use ethnographic, textographic, and case-study techniques to explore the communicative action embedded in the rhetorical activities and texts of the organization. Relevant readings for such a course might include Gurak and

Lay's edited collection *Research in Technical Communication*, which features a number of essays influenced by genre theory, including Carol Berkenkotter's essay "Analyzing Everyday Texts in Organizational Settings," as well as work on other forms of qualitative research such as Susan Katz's "Ethnographic Research," and Mary Lay's "Feminist Criticism and Technical Communication Research." John Swales' *Other Floors, Other Voices*, as well as Vijay Bhatia's *Worlds of Written Discourse* would also be valuable texts, particularly for the ways in which both model the use of their method and theory building. The reading list for such a course would also benefit from recent work on environmental discourse such as the anthology *Technical Communication, Deliberative Rhetoric, and Environmental Discourse: Connections and Directions*, edited by Nancy Coppola and Bill Karis, which provides a number of perspectives on a specialized area of rhetorical research with direct relevance for student projects.

Writing assignments for the course I am describing would involve documents designed for the community organization as well as writing associated with students' research on the communicative action embedded in the service setting. Research-based writing tasks could include relatively short discourse studies of organizational documents, a genre analysis of a scholarly research article, a literature review, a research journal, a conference proposal, and an article-length research essay based on students' course experience. Like students' investment in ethnographic methodology in the course at the core of this project, the primary instructional objective of the course I am describing is student engagement with disciplinary ways of making knowledge. Another obvious goal would be the development of rhetorical skill around those genres used by the community

organization to do its work with an appreciation for the rhetorical and practical challenges faced by rhetors in such settings.

This model could be adapted to other kinds of service settings in which writing and communication play a significant role, in advocacy-oriented community organizations, public-service organizations whose work involves health care, senior services, or public education, just to name a few. The overall goal of this approach is to facilitate students' development as both scholars and engaged citizens. As I have argued throughout this project, contemporary genre theory provides a generative framework for exploring the relationship between texts and their social contexts, and the combination of theory and practice that is embedded in such a course represents an approach to experiential education that does not sacrifice the development of content knowledge and scholarly inquiry.

Service-learning is hard work. It involves logistical demands of time and energy that are unique compared to most traditional forms of writing instruction. But consistent with much of the scholarship on service-learning which I reviewed earlier in the project, my findings support the assertion that students demonstrate high levels of emotional and intellectual investment in service courses. In addition, my findings reinforce the claim that service settings provide an authentic and challenging exigence that motivates students to invest in ethnographic methodology as a way of making meaning and that a significant number of students in my course demonstrated what I discern to be an impressive facility with the genre.

Service-learning has a future in composition and the broader academy, but that future is dependent on successfully documenting what students achieve in service courses

and connecting what students do in community-based courses with both institutional missions and the intellectual objectives of the fields in which those classes are taught. Ensuring quality outcomes for students in service-learning courses is ultimately a question of assessment. In contrast to the kinds of high-stakes, standardized assessment measures associated with the accountability agenda, in this project I have argued for the value of genre analysis as a theoretically sound method of describing learning outcomes in the highly contextualized and socially situated worlds of the community-based classroom.

In many ways, the future of service-learning in composition is tied to the status of writing instruction in the academy. In “Composition 2.0: Toward a Multilingual and Multimodal Framework,” Steven Fraiberg argues that the situated study of diverse literacy practices, which are increasingly distributed using an almost dizzying array of languages and mediums, will be central to ensuring the relevance of composition studies into the 21st century (1010). Fraiberg’s essay is based on an ethnographic study of literate practices in Israel and his work is an excellent example of what 21st century writing studies might look like, and it also provides an inspirational model for 21st century service-learning. Like the work of Mizuko Ito described by Fraiberg, which uses ethnography to explore the impact of digital media on communicative action, it is not hard to imagine students in service-learning–based writing studies courses doing similar work while also providing services, from mentoring to computing assistance, to members of the community. It is a vision of service-learning that has the potential to meld the best impulses of community-based learning with the intellectual future of composition as both a teaching subject and field of engaged inquiry.

APPENDIX A Course Syllabus

ENG 3010: Intermediate Writing: Representation and Community Learning

Course Description

This course is an intermediate writing course that builds on skills taught in ENG 1020. Students will learn to think and write critically about their own observations, opinions, positions and ways of seeing the world by mentoring students at the Wayne State University Middle School and reflecting on their experiences. Major assignments include one long paper, worth 30 percent of the student's final grade, three short papers, each worth 20 percent, and a number of 1-page protocols worth 10 percent.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. View community learning as an important way of learning about the world and society
2. Think critically about one's own opinions, positions, and ways of seeing the world
3. Understand the basics of ethnographic research
4. Utilize ethnographic research methods as a way of understanding the perspectives of others
5. View writing as a socially constructed means of representing oneself, the world, and those around us
6. Write more effectively in a variety of modes with a broader understanding of audience, authenticity and writing as a form of representation

Teaching Approach

Community Learning, or service-learning as it is sometimes called, is an instructional method:

- Under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community
- This is integrated into the student's academic curriculum to provide structured time for a student to think, talk and write about what the student did and saw during the actual service activity
- That provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities, and
- That enhances what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community and helps foster the development of a sense of caring for others (*National and Community Service Act of 1990*)

Texts (All available at Marwil Bookstore)

Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz and Linda Shaw
Shooting for Excellence: African American and Youth Culture in New Century Schools, Jabari Mahiri

Course Logistics: The community learning portion of this course will begin on XXXX at University Public School, which is located at XXXXXX across the street from XXXXX. The community learning sessions are scheduled to end on XXXX.

Written Work: All out of class assignments should be typed on white 8.5 x 11 paper, according to MLA format. MLA guidelines can be found at the Undergraduate Library's website at www.ugl.wayne.edu or purchased at the Marwil bookstore. Late assignments will not be accepted. Students must satisfactorily complete all assignments to receive a passing grade for the course. Revisions are encouraged and will be accepted.

Revision Policy: All out of class work may be revised for a higher grade. Announcements will be made in class regarding due dates for revised work.

Attendance: Due to the special nature of this course, attendance to every class session is mandatory. Punctuality is required. Students who are more than 10 minutes late will be marked down as tardy. Three tardies count as one absence. To receive an A in the course, students cannot miss more than three classes, regardless of circumstances. To pass the course students cannot miss more than five classes. It is your responsibility to contact me prior to missing class. My email and phone are listed on this syllabus.

Drops/Incompletes: The last day to drop a course and still receive 100% tuition refund is XXXXXX. Due to the special nature of this course, incompletes will not be given.

University/College Policies: See *WSU Undergraduate Bulletin*.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of words and/or ideas. The penalty for plagiarism is failure for the course.

Out of Class Assignments

1. Personal narrative describing formative experience that changed your way of thinking about school (2-3 pp.)
2. Parent Letter (1 p.)
3. Protocols (9) 1 page each
4. Reflexivity Paper I (3-4 pp.)
5. Reflexivity Paper II (4-5 pp.)
6. Project Proposal (1 p.)

7. Long Paper (8-10 pp.)
8. Course Evaluation (1 p.)

Tentative Schedule

Week 1.1 (9/5)

Reading Due: None

Assignment Due: None

In Class: Introductions, review of syllabus, personal narratives (describing formative experience that changed your way of thinking about school), RESPECT exercise

Week 1.2 (9/7)

Reading Due: "Why Community Learning?" (Hand-out)

Assignment Due: Personal Narrative

In Class: Discuss "Why Community Learning?"

Week 2.1 (9/12)

Reading Due: Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, Chapter 1 and Joyce King's "Dysconscious Racism" (coursepack)

Assignment Due: Protocol 1

In Class: Discuss Reading Assignment

Week 2.2 (9/14)

Reading Due: None

Assignment Due: None

In Class: Observation Exercise

Week 3.1 (9/19)

Reading Due: Emerson, Chapter 2 and *The Practical Tutor* (coursepack)

Assignment Due: Protocol 2

In Class: Brainstorming the mentoring process

Week 3.2 (9/21)

Assignment Due: None

In Class: Mentoring Exercise

Week 4.1 (9/26)

Reading Due: Emerson, Chapter 3 and Romano's "Clearing the Way" (coursepack)

Assignment Due: Protocol 3

In Class: Discussion

Week 4.2 (9/28)

Reading Due: None

Assignment Due: None
In Class: Mentoring Exercise

Week 5.1 (10/3)

Reading Due: Mahiri, Chapter 1 and Ogbu's "Literacy and Schooling in Subordinate Cultures" (coursepack)
Assignment Due: Protocol 4
In Class: Discussion

Week 5.2 (10/5)

Reading Due: NA
Assignment Due: Parent Letter
In Class: Fieldnote Writing

Week 6.1 (10/10)

Reading Due: Mahiri, Chapter 2
Assignment Due: Short Reflexivity Paper
In Class: Discuss Mahiri

Week 6.2 (10/12)

Reading Due: None
Assignment Due:
In Class: Fieldnote Writing

Week 7.1 (10/17)

Reading Due: Mahiri, Chapter 3 and hook's "Confronting Class in the Classroom (coursepack)
Assignment Due: Protocol 5
In Class: Discussion

Week 7.2 (10/19)

Reading Due: None
Assignment Due: None
In Class: Coding Exercise

Week 8.1 (10/24)

Reading Due: Emerson, Chapter 4 and Delpit's "The Silenced Dialogue" (coursepack)
Assignment Due: Protocol 6
In Class: Discussion

Week 8.2 (10/26)

Reading Due: None

Assignment Due: Final Project Proposal

In Class: Fieldnote Writing

Week 9.1 (10/31)

Reading Due: Emerson, Chapter 5

Assignment Due: Short Reflexive Paper II (revisit episode from Reflexive Paper II)

In Class: Discussion

Week 9.2 (11/2)

Reading Due:

Assignment Due:

In Class: Workshop project proposals

Week 10.1 (11/7)

Reading Due: Emerson, Chapter 6

Assignment Due: Coded Fieldnotes

In Class: Fieldnotes Presentations/Workshop

Week 10.2 (11/9)

Reading Due: None

Assignment Due:

In Class: Fieldnotes Presentations/Workshop

Week 11.1 (11/14)

Reading Due: Emerson, Chapter 7

Assignment Due: Protocol 7

In Class: Discussion

Week 11.2 (11/16)

Reading Due: None

Assignment Due: None

In Class: Fieldnote Writing

Week 12.1 (11/21)

Reading Due: Emerson, Chapter 8

Assignment Due: Protocol 8

In Class: Discussion

Week 12.2 (11/23)

NO CLASS-HAPPY THANKGIVING

Week 13.1 (11/28)

Reading Due: Pratt's "Arts of the Contact Zone" (coursepack)

Assignment Due: None

In Class: Discussion

Week 13.2 (11/30)

Reading Due: None

Assignment Due: None

In Class: Fieldnote Writing

Week 14.1 (12/5)

Reading Due: TBD

Assignment Due: None

In Class: Final Project Presentations

Week 14.2 (12/7)

Reading Due: None

Assignment Due: None

In Class: Final Project Presentations

Week 15.1 (12/12)

Reading Due: None

Assignment Due: None

In Class: Final Project Presentations

APPENDIX B Final Project Assignment

Ethnographic Final Project

Purpose

The goal of this project is develop a specific idea related to your experience this semester that attempts to increase our understanding of mentoring and the student/mentor relationship. As opposed to the Reflexivity Paper, which asked you to represent your own experience, the goal of this project is to represent the experience, attitudes and motivations of mentees from *their* perspective. Primary data for this project will consist of ethnographic fieldnote data acquired during the mentoring experience and, where applicable, our seminar discussions. Secondary sources, including course readings, outside research, and fieldnote data generated outside the mentoring experience are also welcome.

This project is worth 35 points.

Your project may also attempt to answer the following questions:

Why is the topic you've chosen to focus on of interest, to you personally and intellectually?

What might be some alternative explanations for the behavior you are studying and how does your theory account for them?

How might your findings be used to change or modify the mentoring experience and/or our society's approach to educating adolescents?

What are the implications of your findings for *community learning* as a teaching approach, both for participant observers (you) and community members (the mentees)?

What are the implications of your findings for *ethnography* as a mode of social research, both for participant observers and community members?

Projects will be graded according to the following rubric:

Content (25 points)	Points
Is your thesis clearly stated at the beginning of your paper? (2 points)	
Is your argument organized and clearly laid out at the beginning of your paper? (4 points)	
Do you successfully back up your conclusions with detailed observations? (5 points)	
Are your fieldnote excerpts rich in concrete sensory observations and rich detail? (4 points)	
Does your argument effectively deal with alternative explanations? (2 points)	
Does your paper explore how your findings might be used to improve the mentoring experience or adolescent education in general? (3 points)	
Have you successfully connected your observations with existing theories and literature? (3 points)	
Does your conclusion successfully sum up your argument? (2 points)	
Organization (10 points)	Points
Are there effective transitions between paragraphs? (1 point)	
Is your paper free of surface errors related to spelling, grammar and punctuation? (4 points)	
Are your sources adequately cited? (2.5 points)	
Does your paper have a list of works cited? (2.5 points)	
TOTAL	

APPENDIX C Reflective Essay Assignment #1

The purpose of this paper is to ask you to reflect upon your first impressions as a mentor in the TREE writing program. The goal of this paper is to describe and analyze your particular *stance* (see Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw) towards your mentee and the mentoring environment. In particular, you should attempt to describe, analyze and critique your responses to your experience, be they physical, emotional, psychological, intellectual, political, etc. With your fieldnote observations as your data, attempt to identify how your particular stance might be impacting your own ethnographic processes and your mentoring approach. Take care to connect your observations to our class readings (Emerson, King, Meyer and Smith, Romano, Mahiri) and, where appropriate, our class discussions. Remember that while reflexive observations are in large part personal, your analysis must be supported by concrete observations from your fieldnotes.

This paper will be graded and is worth 15 points. The grading rubric for this assignment is below.

Content (10 points)	Points
Is your thesis clearly stated at the beginning of your paper? (.5 point)	
Does your introduction explain the relevance of your work to the field of inquiry? (.5 point)	
Is your argument organized and clearly laid out at the beginning of your paper? (.5 point)	
Do you successfully back up your conclusions with detailed observations? (2 points)	
Are your fieldnote excerpts rich in concrete sensory observations and rich detail? (2 points)	
Does the evidence you present support your argument? (2 points)	
Have you successfully connected your observations with existing theories and literature? (2 points)	
Does your conclusion successfully sum up your argument? (.5 point)	
Structure and Presentation (5 points)	Points
Are there effective transitions between paragraphs? (1 point)	
Is your paper free of surface errors related to spelling, grammar and punctuation? (1 point)	

Are your sources adequately cited? (1 point)	
Does your paper follow MLA format? (1 point)	
Does your paper have a list of works cited? (1 point)	
TOTAL	

This assignment is due in class on Thursday, October 12. Revisions will be accepted one week after papers are returned.

APPENDIX D Reflective Essay Assignment #2

The purpose of this paper is to revisit the experience or topic you wrote about for Reflexivity Paper One with the aim of incorporating new fieldnote data and new ways of seeing that particular event. As Emerson, Fretz and Shaw point out in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, an ethnographer's stance and particular way of seeing and feeling about an experience changes as he or she spends more time in the specific setting they are studying. For this paper, you should attempt to identify the ways in which your stance has changed, or is changing, as we move deeper into the mentoring experience. Your paper should incorporate new fieldnote data and should explore how your evolving stance is impacting your ethnographic process. Your paper should also demonstrate a deeper understanding of one of the theoretical perspectives we've discussed in class (i.e., King's dysconscious racism, hook's silencing dynamic, Mahiri's literate practices, etc.). The paper should not simply add another example to the argument you employed in Paper One. Rather, it should attempt to show something new about your understanding of your experience.

This assignment is due in class on Thursday, November 9. Revisions will be accepted up until Tuesday, November 21.

This paper is worth 15 points. The grading rubric for the assignment is below.

Content (10 points)	Points
Is your thesis clearly stated at the beginning of your paper? (.5 point)	
Is your argument organized and clearly laid out at the beginning of your paper? (1 point)	
Do you successfully back up your conclusions with detailed observations? (2 points)	
Are your fieldnote excerpts rich in concrete sensory observations and rich detail? (2 points)	
Does the new evidence you present successfully support and expand your argument? (2 points)	
Have you successfully connected your observations with existing theories and literature? (2 points)	
Does your conclusion successfully sum up your argument? (.5 point)	
Structure and Presentation (5 points)	Points
Are there effective transitions between paragraphs? (1 point)	
Is your paper free of surface errors related to spelling, grammar and punctuation? (1 point)	
Are your sources adequately cited? (1 point)	

Does your paper follow MLA format? (1 point)	
Does your paper have a list of works cited? (1 point)	
TOTAL	

APPENDIX E

Data Analysis Code List

Lexicon

- Introduction
 - dictionary
 - framework
 - narrative
 - personal
 - specific
 - general
 - mentees
 - language
 - personal attributes
 - sociocultural factors
 - participant voices
 - race
 - task describing
 - ethnography
 - mentoring
 - method detail
 - scene setting
 - Detroit
 - first day narrative
- Thesis
 - location
 - multiple
 - other
 - 2nd paragraph
 - 1st paragraph
 - no thesis
 - framework
 - deductive
 - inductive
 - argumentative
 - descriptive
 - critique
 - personal
 - specific
 - general
- Argument
 - problem solving narrative
 - confirmation

- narrative
- exemplification
- participants' perspective
- Metaphors/Analogy
- Rival Explanations

Citation

- Data
 - analytic Unit
 - general recollections
 - thick detail
 - verbatim journal data
- Use/Role
 - legitimacy
 - background data
 - frame
 - refutation/engagement
 - definition
 - exemplar
- distance to topic

Audience

- Stasis
 - shift
 - fact
 - definition
 - cause
 - value
 - policy
- Assumption of shared knowledge or attitudes
- Primary role
 - insider
 - instructor
 - general

Author

- Agency
- Nature of claims
- Persona
 - race
 - metadiscourse
 - attitude markers
 - subject position
- Reflection
- Reflexivity
 - personal experience

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ABSTRACT**RHETORICAL OUTCOMES: A GENRE ANALYSIS OF STUDENT SERVICE-LEARNING WRITING**

by

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Service-learning continues to be a popular pedagogical approach within composition studies. Despite a number of studies that document a range of positive impacts on students, faculty, institutions, and community members, the relationship between service-learning and student writing outcomes is not well understood. This study presents the results of a genre analysis of student-authored ethnographies composed in four distinct sections of a service-learning-based intermediate writing course at a Midwestern urban research university. Results of the analysis are then used to develop a contextualized writing assessment framework to evaluate student writing outcomes and to consider the implications of using contemporary genre theory for both service-learning and writing program assessment.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Thomas Trimble is a Ph.D. candidate in the Composition and Rhetoric Program at Wayne State University where he teaches courses in composition. In addition to his interests in service-learning, genre theory, and writing assessment, other scholarly interests include public rhetoric, communication and medicine, and pragmatism. He lives in Dearborn, Michigan, with his wife Monica, and daughters Mary, and Frances.