Introduction
Public/Sex: Connecting Sexuality and Service Learning

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We know the drill: service learning is good. It's good for you, it's good for your students, and it's good for the community partners and the communities they serve. We know the drill but we still want to hear it, and we want to hear *why*.

[But, oooh, baby, tell me how good it is...]

That discussion, we admit, is a harder one to have, although several leading practitioners of service learning in the field of Composition Studies attempt, admirably, to capture the positive benefits—pedagogically and communally—of service learning projects. In "Community Service Writing: Problems, Challenges, Questions," for example, Nora Bacon summarizes well the benefits that students gain in terms of their writing abilities and skills: "Like WAC [Writing Across the Curriculum], community service writing demonstrates the enormous variety in written discourse and the degree to which the forms, processes, and purposes of writing are embedded in particular contexts" (53). More broadly, thinking of relations among scholarly and the non-profit service sector, Thomas Deans maintains that

> service-learning is not volunteerism or community service; nor is it simply an academic internship or field placement. While service-

learning may draw on these practices, it is at heart a pedagogy
of action and reflection, one that centers on a dialectic between
community outreach and academic inquiry. (2)

Both Bacon and Deans suggest how service-learning projects in writing
courses might be ideally situated to address (and perhaps, finally,
to satisfy) both of composition's masters: the necessity of teaching
literacy strategies so students can survive as thoughtful writers beyond
the first year of college *and* the desire to prepare students for literate
participation in complex public spheres and multicultural democracies.
Both are demanding masters, and worthy desires. Satisfying either
one requires patience, skill, and dedication. Fulfilling both remains,
perhaps, our discipline's central fantasy.

Those of us who have practiced service-learning with our students
(for it is most often a practice *with* students, not *for* them) understand
in our bones, in our flesh, that service-learning comes damn close to
satisfying both pedagogical itches. On one hand, students who write
for community agencies (composing pamphlets, websites, grants, etc.)
learn much about audience and the need to be rhetorically flexible,
adapting ideas and information to different genres; we hope that they
take such "rhetorical know-how" with them into other courses, other
writing environments, other challenges of textual production. On the
other hand, offering students experiences of how writing moves in
the "real world," in actual communities (again, through pamphlets,
websites, grants, etc.) shows them writing at work, composition as a
form of rhetorical agency, textual production as part of larger processes
of potential social change. In many ways, fantasy fulfilled.

Those of us who work specifically with issues of gender, sex, and
sexuality are increasingly aware of what remains *unspoken* and *dis-
articulated* in many service-learning experiences. We speak here not
just of the problem of students going out into the community and
figuring themselves as the heroic saviors of the downtrodden and the

dispossessed. We also speak here *beyond* the necessity of alerting students to classed conditions and systemic racism—as important as both of those are to students' intellectual and literate development. We speak—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that we *attempt* to speak—a political unconscious of service learning. That is, what gendered, sexed, sexualized, and even eroticized frameworks form the contexts in which much service-learning takes place, even as such frameworks remain often unacknowledged, perhaps even barely perceivable?

Jackie's first experience with service learning ten years ago was in an upper-division expository writing class—ENG 306. 306 is a required WAC/WID course at California State University, San Bernardino, offered in each of the five colleges with the idea that humanities majors will take the humanities sections, natural science majors will take the natural sciences sections, etc. At the same time, there is a prevailing mythology that the English sections are the "real" sections and so English 306 courses tend to consist of a hodgepodge of majors. In Jackie's Spring 2000 course, she had more Criminal Justice majors than English majors, an equal number of Liberal Studies majors and science majors, bulky readings on language and knowledge, and an overly anxious graduate assistant/team-teacher who wanted to use the experience as a springboard for her thesis project.

Service learning was new at Jackie's campus. The CSUSB office of Community/ University Partnerships graciously granted her department money to fund a team-taught class. There were frequent email calls for proposals for service-learning and community-based projects. At the same time, the overall organization of the campus service-learning infrastructure (if there is such a thing) was quite loose.

Jackie and her colleague had arranged placements in area high schools and middle schools for 25 ENG 306 students, who would tutor students individually, lead discussions on shared readings, and then reflect on

their experience in those classrooms in the context of the class readings and discussions. It sounds fairly straightforward, and on paper, it was. However, the mixed majors in the class made the initial placements difficult; Liberal Studies students, many having already worked in local schools, were current on things like TB tests, criminal background checks, and fingerprinting. Their bodies, in other words, had already been made subject to the panopticon that is the public school. The majority of the students, however, had never been fingerprinted, didn't necessarily want to be, and weren't particularly thrilled about the cost of the TB test. There was no mechanism on campus to easily get these "body checks" done.

Eventually, all the checks were done, fingers printed, classes serviced. The 306 class ended successfully, judging from the students' profound reflections and their evaluations of teacherly performance. However, the particularly *embodied* problems getting it set up steered Jackie away from ever doing that sort of class again. She now works with students individually, placing them as interns with journals or non-profit organizations; she even structures her "expository writing" and "writing in the public sphere" classes to include "field experience" as is called for by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) standards. However, ten years ago, as she cajoled her students into their placements and bemoaned the lack of body-check infrastructure on campus, she became deeply troubled. Why on earth would she want such infrastructure? Shouldn't she be more concerned about the fact that the public classroom makes us all presumptuous intruders, offenders, TB-carrying predators? What are the unspoken assumptions about sex and sexuality (partifularly on the part of new teachers) that necessitate such preemptive surveillance? What was it about service learning that made it possible to set aside concerns about students' bodies and/or privacy in order to push the pedagogy through?

Our work in queer theory primarily inspires such questions, particularly since it has focused such attention on not just giving voice to gay

and lesbian narratives but also to demonstrating the essentially erotic nature of most narrative. Numerous queer theorists and scholars in sexuality studies underscore the extent to which the erotic structures multiple social situations, even when such structuring remains hidden or "unspoken." Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, following Michel Foucault, famously noted in *The Epistemology of the Closet* that the Western socio-cultural and political (and originally medical) distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality structured numerous ways of thinking and knowing that continue to be relevant today, most notably in terms of what kinds of citizens are legitimated and what kinds aren't. Sedgwick and other queer theorists see the homo/hetero binary as not just an issue of gay or minority rights. Rather, in Sedgwick's words, the critical work of queer theory lies in the difference

> between seeing homo/heterosexual definition on the one hand as an issue of active importance primarily for a small, distinct, relatively fixed homosexual minority ... [and] seeing it on the other hand as an issue of continuing, determinative importance in the lives of people across the spectrum of sexualities" (1).

Again, we can easily see how the homo/hetero divide structures questions of citizenship in "big ticket" issues, such as the right to marry and the right to serve openly in the military. However, given service-learning's investment in promoting an active and literate citizenry, we might ask ourselves what kinds of sexualized divides structure *students'* experience of service-learning. More importantly, what might be gained—pedagogically, intellectually, and politically—by making such structuration conscious?

[Oooh, baby, tell me how good it is...]

Jonathan remembers distinctly how he was first drawn into service-learning. In the late 1990s, he was a new Assistant Professor at the University of Cincinnati, working in the open-access college, serving

primarily first-generation, lower-income, and minority students. Since the University of Cincinnati offered two-year degrees, it was eligible for grant funding from the American Association of Community Colleges, and the academic staff serving as liaison with community and grant-giving organizations urged Jonathan to apply for a special AACC project called "Bridges to Healthy Communities." Bridges grantees were expected to develop educational programming about HIV and AIDS awareness, primarily through implementing service-learning. The liaison knew her audience well: Jonathan was pretty openly queer, and the Bridges project addressed a complex nexus of education, community outreach, and sex education. No current Bridges project used English or composition courses; most grantees were in nursing, community health, and the sciences. But Jonathan was hooked, wanting both to experiment with service learning and to attempt to connect his interests in sexuality studies with his disciplinary home: composition and rhetoric.

Jonathan has recounted in much detail his service-learning project, "YOUth & AIDS," in an article for *Dialogue* and in the last chapter of his book, *Digital Youth: Emerging Literacies on the World Wide Web*. Suffice it to say here that the project spanned a year-long sequence of first-year composition courses (English 101, 102, and 103, on the quarter system). Working in consultation with a panel of local health and HIV experts, Jonathan constructed a series of assignments focusing on research about HIV and AIDS[1]. The writing projects clustered around both an active service-learning component in which students wrote pamphlets, educational material, grants, and other documents for several local AIDS Service Organizations *and* wrote academic papers and analyses, including film, television, and book reviews as well as research papers, for potential web publication. Specifically, the YOUth and AIDS Web Project allowed students to create and regularly update a Website—written by college-aged youth *for* college-

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[1]   I have included my sequence of assignments in an appendix to this introduction, on pg. 231. –JA

aged youth. Students contributed articles, artwork, and technical skills, including composing FLASH sites. After carefully writing and researching their pieces, students had the opportunity to edit one another's work and suggest particular pieces for publication on the Website in one of several categories, including basic information about AIDS, information about testing, profiles of students or youth with HIV, AIDS and Art, and youth and sexuality. Students also contributed ideas about additional links to other sites on the Web, including a FAST FACT about HIV. Students regularly reviewed the site for appeal and accuracy, and it was also reviewed by a local panel of HIV and health experts. At its height, total hits per month for the site were frequently in excess of 3000.

From a writing teacher's perspective, the project offered benefits on a number of levels. Students knew that their work would be considered for publication, and thus their writing effort generally increased. Moreover, students' insights about site design and content helped to make the site more appealing to other college-age students, so Jonathan believed they developed a sense of rhetorical efficacy.

But more provocatively, Jonathan believed that students were developing a sense of how to "talk" to one another about sexuality and sexual health issues. At the time, he didn't count this as a significant course component; he was too wrapped up in the community service and web building projects to see how students were engaging and experimenting discourses of sex and sexuality. Indeed, Jonathan's self-evaluation statement about his teaching, composed as he was seeking tenure and promotion to Associate Professor, reflects his immediate concerns:

> I think a good example of how I am designing curricula that implement my philosophy of teaching and utilize my interest in technology to teach writing can be found in the work I am doing with service learning. I am proud of my work in developing a

writing-intensive service-learning curriculum investigating AIDS/
HIV as a social, cultural, political, and personal issue, and I include
in these materials a sequence of assignments for English 101,
102, and 103, as well as text from the grant that I wrote about this
project, which is being funded by the American Association of
Community Colleges. You will note that the work I am undertaking
combines my interests in student publishing, the use of the Web,
and my sense of writing as community action. Students will
not only contribute to the development of a publicly-accessible
Website alerting youth to the dangers of AIDS/HIV, but they are
also constructing pamphlets, curricula, and other materials that
will then be directly passed into the hands of other students or
teachers for use in their courses. Such audience- and community-
driven writing exemplifies, I think, my sense of writing as both
investigative *and* engaged with the community.

As Jonathan reflects on this statement now, he notices mostly what's
missing: any explicit or overt mention of sex or sexuality. While he
might forgive himself for not "throwing sex in the faces" of those
sitting in judgment over me, he realizes now the extent to which he
may have been complicit—complicit with systems of education and our
larger puritanical culture—in failing to recognize how important it was
that students were thinking and writing regularly about sex. Granted,
the site and students' textual projects were never graphic; but they were
frequently about sex and sexuality. Students analyzed representations of
sexual identity and sexual acts in a variety of media, primarily as a way
to help them figure out how to reach other young people effectively in
talking to them, their peers, about HIV and AIDS. Such was crucial in
helping the class to think about HIV, not just as a problem for "gay"
people, but for all sexually-active young people.

In some ways, a service-learning course about HIV and AIDS is
necessarily also going to be about sex and sexuality. Jonathan was
surprised to discover, on looking back at the course and course

materials, how much sex and sexuality were a significant part of the course, and how much his reflections on the course, and the documents he composed about it, failed to articulate that awareness. This dual sensibility, this nearly double consciousness—the presence of sex and the refusal to acknowledge or offer strong articulation about its presence—seems to us a central problematic in many service-learning situations. Sex and sexuality, not to mention gender and its varied erotics, are present, but infrequently acknowledged, even when one would expect them to be most noticeable.

Such a nexus of presence and refusal became clear, though, when Jonathan and his students would receive comments from visitors to the site. One comment in particular stands out as cutting to the contradictory heart of what the class was trying to do:

Hello all,

Your website is very informative. I can only hope it is making a difference. Unfortunately I have an issue with it...I get the feeling you are not about stopping the epidemic of AIDS. Why do I say this...I never once saw the stand against indulgant [sic] sex. Condoms have been out long before AIDS...so, guess what, that cant be the answer to this problem. The only answer to getting a start on ending this problem is bringing to a close (hah...never happen!!!) this sexual revolution that started somewhere in the 60's and has been gaining followers ever since. Sex is abused by pretty much every single person, here in the US & overseas, aside from where Religion is the major staple in the society.

My point to all this, it is very disappointing to see those that claim to be advocates for something but avoid saying what nobody wants to hear (i.e. DON'T HAVE SEX!!!!!!). Well, anyway, that was just my 2 pennies. I do like the site, espically [sic] the quiz's...hehe.

What's simultaneously wonderful and infuriating about this comment is that it "outs" precisely what is at stake in the discussion of HIV and AIDS—what we do with our bodies, our pursuits of varied pleasures, our acknowledgement, and enjoyment, of our sexual selves—while at the same time wanting to foreclose upon consideration of bodies, pleasures, and sexual selves. At such moments, Jonathan's entire project was being called into question; the class had the opportunity to think critically about its rhetorical purpose, but also about the intersections among rhetorics, bodies, pleasures, cultural values, and pedagogies. The class considered with Michael Warner, writing in *The Trouble with Normal*, the difficulties of talking about HIV and AIDS *without* also talking about sex and sexuality:

> Rather than specifying the form that other people's sex should take, or reinforcing hierarchies of shame and stigma, or pretending that those hierarchies do not exist, the best work in HIV prevention begins by acknowledging the unpredictability of sexual variance and working toward a world in which people could live sexual lives as part of a shared world. Prevention activism of this kind attempts to do the one thing that public policy has always tried to ban, even when policy makers have known that lives would be lost in the process: *promote* queer sexual culture. (218)

At such moments, Jonathan's students realized that they were not just offering a service to local communities, and that they were not just developing skills in rhetorical efficacy, but that they were also understanding how rhetoric and ideology combine to make some discussions possible, others nearly impossible. But more importantly, they were learning that rhetorics of sexuality were among the most constrained in our culture, and that participating actively and effectively in preventing something like HIV and other sexually transmitted infections from spreading might require a more nuanced, sophisticated, and capacious sexual vocabulary. Jonathan would later expand on such ideas, calling for the development of "sexual literacy,"

in his next book, *Literacy, Sexuality, Pedagogy*; he even contemplated (before grant funding on the project ran out) a series of writing assignments on pleasure in our culture—all in the name of exploring and expanding his emerging notion of "sexual literacy." In the moment of teaching, though, just being able to talk about sex and sexuality as a necessary first step in serving larger populations and communities seemed somewhat liberating.

Let us return for a moment to two earlier italicized words: *unspoken* and *dis-articulated*. At the heart of the queer theoretical project is necessarily, we believe, a desire to uncover the kinds of sexualized and even eroticized structures that define—and hence limit—our own self-understanding. Such limitation occurs often through a limiting of understanding not just of the self, but of the self *in relation to the other*. I know I'm straight because *I am not gay*. Assumptions about straightness and gayness, much less maleness and femaleness and masculinity and femininity, not only limit self and other understanding, but potentially *damage* our ability to remain open to the needs, and desires, of the other. In the process, our relations become distorted, disfigured—caught up in what we call the dis-articulations often surrounding sex and sexuality when they actually become *spoken*. This becomes especially true in the classroom, whether it is a service-learning course or not, where discussions of sexuality can heighten our awareness of the multiple relationships (to our students, to our institution, to our imagined sense of an 'ideal' educator) which influence what we consider to be acceptable speech.

As a graduate student teaching a first-year composition course at a state university in the Midwest, Janell was leading a discussion on the contextual nature of language use. The conversation quickly turned to examples that students had first-hand knowledge of or experience with, including the popular expression "That's so gay!" to describe anything distasteful. A rather intense discussion broke out since both local and national organizations had launched campaigns against the

phrase as offensive and perpetuating homophobia. Some students stated that they could understand why it would be offensive to others, though they had difficulty not saying the phrase. Others claimed that recent campaigns were offensive themselves because it labeled the students as homophobic, even though they did not perceive themselves that way. Still others just thought it was all nonsense because, after all, they're just words. As Janell pushed the students to consider why members of the LGBT community might find the phrase offensive, one student exclaimed loudly, "They've just got their panties in a wad!" This statement elicited a laugh from the class and a smirk from the speaker, confident in his belief that he had gotten the last word and won the argument.

Janell waited for another student to respond, to counter his obviously flippant comment, but the students remained silent, seemingly satisfied to let the remark stand. She was infuriated by the comment on multiple levels: as a woman and a feminist, by the clearly gendered nature of his comment; as a new teacher, by the disregard for the serious discussion in the classroom; and most importantly, as a lesbian who did not take the constant belitttling of the LGBT community lightly. She wanted to ask the student if he would have said that comment if he knew that she was a lesbian. She wanted to shout at him that comments like his were exactly the reason why she felt so offended by the "that's so gay" phrase in the first place. But she hadn't announced her sexuality to the class, or even her department, because the university administration had publicly fought against including sexual orientation in its nondiscrimination policy, and previous incidents led Janell to believe that revealing her orientation could lead to further harassment or even termination, given her already tenuous position as a graduate assistant. Janell told the student firmly that his comment was not appropriate language for the classroom, and she silenced the discussion by briefly lecturing about why someone else (i.e., not Janell) might find "that's so gay" to be discriminatory. She left the classroom that day knowing that she had missed an opportunity, a "teachable moment" as we say,

in which discussion about sexuality, identity, politics, and language had been genuine and honest. She felt so trapped by her own silenced position that she had no way of articulating a response.

As we reflect on our experiences with sexuality, literacy, and service learning, we see many dimensions in which a failure to acknowledge the sex, sexual, and erotic realities of others limits—and, yes, can even damage—our understanding of others and of their particular situations and needs. In the process, we can fail to communicate effectively, or recognize the complexity of rhetorical efficacy (as with Jonathan's students). We can also fail to see how erotics and sexualities are at play but often hidden in socio-political dimensions of community work (as with Jackie's students). We can also fail to see how our own sexualized, authoritative, but sometimes silent bodies are implicated in such discussions (as in Janell's example).

When engaging communities, we need to be cognizant of fully embodied individuals and groups. We also need greater critical cognizance of the various values and norms that often prevent clear articulation of our needs, no matter how seemingly personal. Most importantly perhaps for us as educators, we should bear in mind that our students may themselves push the boundaries of discussion and consideration, reaching beyond the pristine limits of our courses into the messy realities of real lives. Zita Grover, writing in "AIDS, Keywords, and Cultural Work," notes that "people's interests are not bounded by course outlines; they will consistently 'refuse to limit their questions to the boundaries of the set course'" (231). We should refuse the refusal of the sexual, or the erotic, just because it is messy or uncomfortable or even disturbing. In refusing the refusal, we critically re-invigorate the site of service learning, making it not only more personal, but also more humane in its fuller conceptualization—and imagination—of the needs, wants, and desires of others in complex communities.

[So, oooh, baby, tell me how good it is...]

With such thoughts in mind, this issue of *Reflections: A Journal of Writing, Service-Learning, and Community Literacy* explores the interplay between sexuality and literacy, asking us to reconsider the normative structures that position us as particular kinds of sexed/sexualized/gendered people, with certain trajectories of desire and intimacy. We have invited our authors to reflect with us on community work (broadly conceived) that challenges our normative understanding of "service," "learning," "community," and "citizenship," particularly with regard to the multiple and intersecting discourses of gender and sexuality. We ask, with them, what are the different ways in which we approach these issues? What are the different ways in which these issues are already gendered, already sexualized? What are the political implications of these discourses, since these often-unrecognized literacy events open spaces for discrimination or lack of awareness? How can service learning and community engagement actively work towards positive social change and securing rights for individuals who may be denied them on the basis of sex/uality? And finally, what roles do academic/community partnerships play in current political battles over sexual issues such as battles over sex education, marriage initiatives, emergency contraceptives, funding for clinics, and others? The essays that follow speak to the diverse connections between sexuality, community engagement, and literacy.

Presenting case studies of the literacy practices of two Turkish college students, Serkan Gorkemli's "Legato and Sexual Literacy in Turkey" complicates sexual literacy as it spans place, identity, and media, exploring the ways that online literacy can function as a gateway to social activism. However, he cautions that coming to sexual literacy through such media saturated and potentially consumerists modes "will shape sexual literacy; therefore, researchers of sexual literacy need to construct alternative narratives that approach sexual literacy not only as social activist narratives of coming out, but also those of erotic practice

and affect" (40). By contextualizing these students' sexual literacy practices in terms of place and use, Gorkemli's essay opens the door for more critical studies of sexual literacy practices.

Carrie Jo Coaplen-Anderson's "A Stripped Classroom: Exotic Dancers, Sexuality, University Teaching, and Community Engagement," argues that we need to open space for sharing the narratives of those in sexually marginalized communities, specifically strippers and other sex workers, in our scholarship and our classroom. These narratives not only provide scholars with a better understanding of the diverse experiences, motives, needs, and desires within these communities but can also empower the sex worker community through the telling of their narrative. Further, Coaplen-Anderson challenges assumptions that sex work is always a traumatic experience by revealing her own positive narrative of stripping and suggesting that the literacy practices she learned during her 8-year career as a stripper have had a profound and productive impact on her teaching and her students' learning.

Brenda Glascott's "An (Em)Bodied Workshop: When Service Learning Gets Bawdy," brings to light a further dimension of the erotic dimension of teacher-student relationships by reflecting on the expectations that students may bring to service learning sites about the *dis*-embodied nature of community work. Using her own experience as a graduate student working with senior citizens as part of a service-learning course, Glascott suggests that students are likely to initially view themselves as "teachers" and the community members that they work with as "students," causing them to hold on to assumptions and expectations that these interactions will be purely mental, or *dis*-embodied. However, these expectations may not only result in surprise when issues of sexuality arise, but may cause students to ignore potentially fruitful discussions because they do not fit within the mind/body split so often assumed within the academy.

As we return to the central fantasy of service learning, preparing students to succeed academically AND preparing them to participate as literate citizens in the civic sphere, it is important to consider the ways that understanding of the erotic/sexual structurations can lead students to action, to participate in communities beyond the classroom, to have an effect on the larger public policies and discussions. The next three essays all consider the implications of teaching service-learning courses with a main emphasis on sexuality. All three pedagogies worked to resist the possible temptation to simply transfer the "classic" service learning model—one in which students descend upon a middle school to do fifteen hours of afterschool tutoring—to a "sexualized" space such as an LGBT youth center. Rather, McCracken, Bateman, and Mountz and Tweedy utilized service-learning components to engage more deeply with questions and issues affecting sexually marginalized communities: how do heteronormative assumptions about gender and sexuality affect often overlooked communities such as sex workers? How can we resist the monolithic representation of LGBT people as portrayed in the media to better understand the more complex and intersecting needs of a local LGBT community? How do we understand, define, and interact with queer spaces? By seeking the advice of community members about the types of projects that their classes should undertake, as well as inviting guest speakers and incorporating interactive community projects, McCracken, Bateman, and Mountz and Tweedy's pedagogies sought to engage with communities not by teaching them, but by learning from them.

Geoffrey Bateman poignantly describes the difficulties and rewards of working with the multiple intersections of LGBT communities when teaching a service-learning course on queer rhetorics. Bateman's "Queer Rhetorics and Service-Learning: Reflection as Critical Engagement" correctly insists on the productivity of "learn[ing] how to access worlds that are in the process of being created," even when that process is messy or seems, upon first sight, to be a failure (110). The course fostered the sense of students as sexual citizens, connecting

personal identities to larger social and political narratives, drawing out the "complexities of queer rhetorical situations" by demonstrating the situatedness, rather than universality, of a queer experience. In doing so, Bateman sought to "undermin[e] our unspoken assumption that service-learning necessarily manifests itself as a form of charity, but can instead lead to a more mutually enriching interaction among civic agents" (92).

In "Serving the Public: Gender, Sexuality, and Race at the Margins," Jill McCracken argues that service-learning and community engagement pedagogies encourage an understanding of sexuality and gender as more than theoretical concepts to be debated in classrooms and forgotten at the door, but as pervasive social structures that have an impact on people's everyday lives, from the marginalized communities that they studied in the course to the students themselves. Through a series of community engagement activities, McCracken's pedagogy encouraged her students to view sexual minority status as one element in a matrix of oppression and to investigate the ways that social structures of gender, sexuality, and race created marginalizing practices toward specific communities. As the semester progressed, students went from learning about these oppressions to using that knowledge to actively work against them in a final project that invested knowledge back into the community via publicly visible artwork, posters, or presentations.

The final essay in this issue focuses on a community engagement course in geography on "Sexuality and Space: Queering Syracuse" co-taught by Alison Mountz and Amy Tweedy. Their essay aptly articulates the tensions that often exist when partnering theoretical academic materials with the often politically charged nature of community engagement when reflecting on their struggles over how to represent a *queer* city. Mountz and Tweedy express "a desire for something we could articulate as queer politics and queer community; at the same time, we fought to maintain the very political elusiveness that the term

elicits" (212). They pushed their students consider methods of queering the city that moved beyond demarcating the "safe spaces," while at the same time being respectful of the real need for LGBT history, lives, and spaces to be recognized and recorded.

We hope that the articles--and art--in this special issue of <u>Reflections</u> will stimulate and provoke your thinking about the varied intersections among sexuality, civic discourse, community service, and service learning. As we have worked with our authors on this collection, we are more convinced than ever of the importance, even the urgency, of understanding how gendered, sexed, and even eroticized figurations of communities, notions of service, and public spheres influence and shape the work we do in service learning courses. We desire healthy, vibrant communities, with healthy, vibrant citizens. Thinking more critically about our varied definitions of health, vibrancy, and community will allow us to have a more robust and meaningful conversation about what we desire and how we enact those desires in both more inclusive and critical ways. In sum, recognizing our needs and naming our desires-- and bringing our often unacknowledged but desiring assumptions into critical discourse—will enhance both our service and our learning.

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