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Advancing Campus-Community Partnerships:
Standpoint Theory and Course Re-Design

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Service-learning pedagogies attempt to bridge the often-distant realms of work in the academy with that of the surrounding community. However, in practice, a true partnership among stakeholders can be challenging to achieve. For this project, I invited three former students and the director of a local non-profit to partner with me in an important aspect of academic work: course re-design. Through the lens of standpoint theory, we see that students and community partners hold unique standpoints, yet all too often their voices are marginalized. I assert that their standpoints offer essential contributions to the course re-design process.

Service-learning is often described metaphorically as a bridge between two worlds: the university and the community. Despite multiple models for campus-community partnerships, we in the academy cannot ignore that this bridge is often rickety, risky, and problematic. As Linda Flower notes in "Partners in Inquiry," the relationships that attempt to bridge "town and gown have a checkered history" (95). Still, Flower's own work with the Community Literacy Center (CLC), a partnership between Carnegie Mellon University and Pittsburgh's historic Community House, serves as an exemplar of how collaborations can thoughtfully address the inequitable power relations that run deep in the roots of university-community work. Partnerships, though, are not necessarily easily forged, and Flower does not discount the challenges of gathering community members, faculty, and students to work in

the same room, at the same table, and on the same page together ("Partners in Inquiry" 95). Furthermore, Thomas Deans, in his assessment and praise of the CLC as a "writing with the community" project, maintains that the administrative support, external and internal funding, long-term partnerships, committed community center, and corps of graduate students are simply not available in most university contexts (140).

In spite of these challenges, scholarship on campus-community partnerships continues to call for new models that enhance our alliances. We still have much to learn about the makings of a successful partnership. Barbara Jacoby notes, in her conclusion to *Building Partnerships for Service-Learning*, "Undoubtedly, we need to know more about the specific elements that enable partnerships to grow and develop…" (325). To research the community's perspective on partnership, Marie Sandy and Barbara A. Holland conducted focus groups with 99 experienced community partners in California, and their work suggests that the community desires more out of campus partnerships. Based on their qualitative data, Sandy and Holland outline several implications for higher education, including the need to cultivate on-going and multi-layered relationships that involve faculty more directly and to expand activities that convene "faculty, community and students together for curriculum planning, evaluating, networking, and celebration" (39-40). The project described in the following pages provides one model for answering Sandy and Holland's call for improving partnerships: inviting community members, students, and faculty to work together on academic course design and curriculum. The partnership model presented here does not function on the scale of Flower's work with the CLC, due in part to the challenges Deans notes above. However, the project offers practitioners a small-scale model for partnership—among students, a community partner, and a faculty member—that is informed by standpoint theory and backwards design of course materials.

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One way of forging strong campus-community partnerships for academic service-learning (ASL) courses is through pedagogical inquiry. As Randy Bass aptly argues in his article "The Scholarship of Teaching," challenges we encounter in the classroom should be seen as starting points for investigation. My first attempt at teaching a composition course with an ASL component was riddled with pitfalls. Rather than abandon ASL, like Bass I chose to consider the challenge as a new beginning. To pursue a line of pedagogical inquiry, I invited three former students and the director of a local non-profit to partner with me in an important aspect of our work in the academy: course design, the intricate and complex choices teachers make when organizing students' educational experiences. The five members of this group comprised the Course Re-Design Team (CRDT). Using the theoretical framework of standpoint theory, service-learning practitioners can begin to recognize the unique standpoints students and community partners can hold in our partnerships.

Standpoint theory maintains that knowledge is socially situated, and the distinctive social location of certain, often marginalized, groups affords them a position from which to offer critical insight. Because of the organizational structures of the academy, student and community voices are often marginalized, especially in relation to curriculum development. However, standpoint theory legitimizes voices that are often eclipsed by the academy's institutional structure. In the following pages, I provide an overview of standpoint theory, contending that it provides a valuable theoretical framework for community partnership research. Next, I explain the method of backwards design for creating and planning course materials, as well as possibilities for partnering with students and community in re-designing a first-year, ASL composition course. Finally, drawing on standpoint theory, backwards design, and the course re-design project, I suggest further research that calls on a multiplicity of standpoints in models for campus-community partnerships.

Standpoint Theory

Standpoint theory provides a distinctive, theoretical framework that service-learning practitioners might use to rethink and promote transformation in campus-community partnerships. Standpoint theory encompasses much more than a brief overview here could afford. However, I will describe three features of standpoint theory that can serve as a foundation for strengthening campus-community partnerships; stand point theory: (1) offers the opportunity for critical insight, (2) locates research in the concrete, lived experiences of participants and values a multiplicity of standpoints, and (3) makes use of the "outsider within" perspective. I will explore these features in more detail after offering a general explanation of the theory and its potential as an analytical framework.

Emerging in the 1970s and 1980s during the rise of critical feminist theories, standpoint theory is concerned with the relationship "between the production of knowledge and practices of power" (Harding, "Introduction" 1). Feminist theorists such as Nancy Hartsock, Sandra Harding, Donna Haraway, Patricia Hill Collins, and many others have made important contributions to developing standpoint arguments. A foundational tenet of the theory is that knowledge is socially situated. Standpoint theorists recognize and value the experiences of oppressed groups, such as women, and maintain that their unique standpoints can enable distinctive knowledge. "Standpoint theory has largely been used as a feminist theoretical framework," notes co-cultural theorist Mark Orbe; however, "standpoint theory [has] applications for other subordinate groups" (25). Institutions of higher education hold practices that have traditionally situated the community and students outside of essential decision-making positions, thus marginalizing their ability to offer critical insight from their social standpoints. Though many instructors employ engaging, active learning strategies—a continued move away from the "banking concept" of education (Freire)—we rarely invite students to act as agents in designing curriculum or

critiquing their learning experiences. Similarly, community partners in service-learning are seldom invited to participate in the development or assessment of academic course materials in campus-community partnerships, as Sandy and Holland's research illustrates. Standpoint theory offers the theoretical framework to incite critical reflection and evaluation of the traditional paradigms of university work, in this case the design of course materials solely by the instructor.

Standpoint theory can be employed as an analytical tool, a methodology, and as a framework to guide research. In her work *Feminist Inquiry*, Mary Hawkesworth advocates using feminist standpoint theory as an advantageous method of inquiry. Hawkesworth explains how standpoint theory encourages researchers to gather information in a way that "presupposes multiplicity and complexity" and that acknowledges claims being "produced and accredited within specific communities" (177). Standpoint theory also "provides a mechanism for comparatively assessing accounts that emerge within markedly different communities" (Hawkesworth 177). In other words, standpoint theory values multiple standpoints, making it valuable for researchers; standpoint theorists would argue that a multiplicity of critical, even competing, standpoints leads to more objective research.

Critical Insight

The social locations of certain, often marginalized, groups afford opportunities for critical insight. Because of their positioning outside of the traditional standards, marginalized groups can offer "critical insight about how the dominant society thinks and is structured" (Harding, "Introduction" 7). Therefore, standpoint theory offers a method for disadvantaged groups to turn "social and political disadvantage…into an epistemological, scientific, and political advantage" (Harding, "Introduction" 7-8). However, subordinate groups do not automatically gain this political advantage. Without a platform through which one might express this critical insight, and without a dominant group

willing to listen and move toward change, standpoint theory does not necessarily work toward this advantage. The CRDT project was intended to take time and make space for persons to critically reflect, in the hopes that the standpoint of each participant would lead to insight and curriculum change.

Standpoint theorists emphasize the distinctions between a standpoint and a mere perspective. Orbe defines a standpoint as "a specific societal position, the result of one's field experience, which serves as a subjective vantage point" (26). Hartsock claims that the "understanding of the oppressed, the adoption of a standpoint"—here making connections to Marxism—"carries a historically liberatory role" (218). Similarly, Harding works to distinguish a standpoint as not "simply another word for viewpoint or perspective;" she states that "a standpoint is an achievement" ("Introduction" 8). In other words, it is not enough for scholars to simply gather "perspectives" from marginalized groups. Rather standpoint theorists argue that empowerment results from the struggle to reveal the deficiencies of oppressive structures. Furthermore, Linda Bell states that without "critical effort to free themselves from the ways they have been taught, their reports…of their own experiences, will simply reflect those mystifications of the status quo" (183). In the CRDT project, this translated to students and the community partner needing to become comfortable with critiquing the course that I as the instructor had originally designed. With a foundation in trust and shared experience, the team slowly began breaking free to offer critical insight into the pitfalls and to negotiate the best changes to the course materials.

Lived Experiences and Multiplicity of Standpoints

The experiences of marginalized persons should be a starting point for scholarly investigations, according to standpoint theorists. Moreover, these oppressed groups should take an active role in the process of research "in meaningful ways" (Orbe 27). In fact, Orbe argues that

groups should be invited to take on roles as "co-researchers" (27). We might see the case example of the CRDT described here as one model that invites important stakeholders to work as co-researchers investigating curriculum. Each participant's unique standpoint contributed to designing more effective service-learning course assignments. By valuing the lived experiences of the community partner, the students, and the instructor, we opened the opportunities for critical investigation and change. Standpoint theory empowers marginalized groups by "valuing their experiences" (Harding, "Introduction" 2). Indeed, Harding asserts, "knowledge-seeking requires democratic, participatory politics. Otherwise, only the gender, race, sexuality, and class elites who now predominate in institutions of knowledge-seeking will have the chance to decide how to start asking their research questions" (*Whose Science?* 124).

Standpoint theory has been criticized in the past for failing to recognize the potential differences in the lived experiences of oppressed groups, being accused of the "very same kind of 'centered' and 'essentialist' ontology that feminists criticize in androcentric accounts" (Harding, "Introduction" 8). However, more recent contributions to standpoint theory arguments attempt to account for the multiplicity of women's experiences, for example Haraway's concept of "situated knowledges" (86). Orbe builds on these developments to claim "a particular strength of standpoint theory is the inherent affinity to acknowledge the infinite number of possible standpoints" (28). Hawkesworth also claims, "feminist standpoint analysis accepts plurality…and uses the comparison of multiple and competing views as a strategy for knowledge production" (177). Hawkesworth advocates using standpoint theory as an analytical tool because it "requires the collection and interrogation of competing claims about the same phenomenon," leading to a more subjective account (178).

The works of these and other standpoint theorists advance the claims of earlier feminists, placing value on a multiplicity of standpoints. For

the course re-design project, it was important to incorporate multiple persons from multiple social situations in the hopes of gathering "competing claims about the same phenomenon" (Hawkesworth 178). In the case of the CRDT, students represented one group—though within that group, participants held multiple, sometimes conflicting, positions—the community partner represented yet another standpoint, and, as the faculty member and facilitator, I held another standpoint. Bringing together the standpoints of these five stakeholders to re-design the service-learning composition course provided opportunities for critique, comparison, and pursuit of scholarly inquiries in ways that could not have been obtained by the sole work of the instructor.

The Outsider Within

An important feature of standpoint theory is the value of the "outsider within" positioning of marginalized persons. In her seminal essay "Learning from the Outsider Within," Patricia Hill Collins argues, "many Black female intellectuals have made creative use of their marginality— their 'outsider within' status – to produce Black feminist thought that reflects a special standpoint…" (103). Similar to Collins, Harding explains that "It is when one works on both sides that there emerges the possibility of seeing the relation between dominant activities and beliefs and those that arise on the 'outside'" (Harding, *Whose Science?* 132). Drawing on the experiences of growing up in a rural, black American household, bell hooks contributes her illustration of the "outsider within": "Living as we did—on the edge—we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out" (preface). This unique social positioning, writes hooks, "provided us an oppositional world view – a mode of seeing unknown to most of our oppressors that sustained us" (preface). Students and community partners both fall into the category of "outsider within," since both groups function within and outside of higher education institutions. Therefore, including these marginalized groups in scholarly research offers valuable insight because of their abilities "to see dominant societal structures from the eyes of a stranger" (Orbe 29).

As summarized here, standpoint theory utilized as an analytical tool has many similarities to the process of intercultural inquiry. In *Learning to Rival*, Linda Flower, Elenore Long, and Lorraine Higgins identify three features of the process: intercultural inquiry (1) invites "actors [to] *use* difference to construct a more complex and diversely grounded meaning," (2) "give[s] voice…to minority students' own interpretations of the logic behind their learning and performance," and (3) "goes beyond…someone else's 'perspective'…[to make] contact with another person's richer, more experientially grounded *situated knowledge*" (5-6). In the definition by Flower, Long, and Higgins, readers will certainly see connections to the way standpoint theory works as an analytical tool, particularly in how it values and gives voice to oppressed groups and seeks to ground research in the concrete, lived experiences of participants. Still, standpoint theory offers a new lens for service-learning practitioners by opening the field of study to other disciplinary perspectives.

Standpoint theory has its roots in feminism examining gender differences, whereas intercultural inquiry has roots in the differences among cultures. However, both have applications to larger communities of marginalized persons. Flower explains that, "intercultural inquiry uses difference—cultural, racial, social difference—not to explain but to pose and solve shared problems" (Flower, "Intercultural Inquiry"). In addition to feminism, standpoint theory has connections to the disciplines of philosophy and science. Many leading standpoint theorists, including Harding, Hartsock, and Haraway, are philosophers interested in science and epistemology. Though there are overlaps in the tenets of intercultural inquiry, standpoint theory offers practitioners a new field of scholarship from which to approach critical inquiry and rethink campus-community partnerships. In addition to standpoint theory, methodologies such as backwards design can guide the work of teachers in re-designing their courses more effectively.

Backwards Course Design

Another essential piece of the course re-design project is its foundation in what Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe term "backwards design." In their book *Understanding by Design*, Wiggins and McTighe argue, "teachers are designers. An essential act of our profession is the design of curriculum and learning experiences to meet specified purposes" (13). They claim that just as in "other design professions, such as architecture, engineering, or graphic arts, designers in education must be mindful of their audiences" (13). In our work as teachers, "students are our primary clients" (13) note Wiggins and McTighe, and we might also add that in a service-learning course our community leaders and partners are equally important. Wiggins and McTighe advocate for using "backwards design" to more purposefully craft learning experiences. According to Wiggins and McTighe, "many teachers *begin* with … textbooks, favored lessons, and time-honored activities—the inputs—rather than deriving those means from what is implied in the desired results—the output" (15). They, however, advocate for the reverse; in other words, starting with the goals, objectives, and standards, then deriving the curriculum from the evidence of student performance. Wiggins and McTighe offer a three-stage process for backwards design: first, "identify desired results," second, "determine acceptable evidence," and third, "plan learning experiences and instruction" (18). In essence, Wiggins and McTighe's backwards design model emphasizes student learning outcomes in our course planning processes.

However, an emphasis on student learning might lead us to question: where does community fit within this academic model? In their work with service-learning Andrea Vernon and Kelly Ward argue, "Research on service-learning tends to emphasize student learning outcomes and pedagogical issues and de-emphasize the community voice" (30). Vernon and Ward's claim challenges us to consider ways to include community voices. However, I maintain that community voice and student learning outcomes do not have to be in competition with

one another. In fact, the course re-design process described in the following section bridges these equally crucial aspects of our work as service-learning practitioners in higher education. Inviting students, community, and faculty to work together, critically reflect upon, and critique academic course materials can lead to improved campus-community partnerships in service-learning.

Background on the Course and Re-Design Project

The CRDT re-designed course materials and policies for a first-year composition course. College Writing at Elon University is a four-credit hour course that nearly all students are required to take in the Fall or Spring Semester of their first year. However, most College Writing courses are not taught with a service-learning component, and those that include this component are often designated as "SL" in the registration materials. The College Writing course I first taught in Spring 2007 was designated as "SL" and incorporated a minimum 20-hour service requirement to be completed outside of class time. The students' semester-long service experiences at sites such as the Boys and Girls Club, Meals on Wheels, and assisted living communities—to name a few—became the "text" for the course, providing the subject and exigence for their compositions; students wrote "about" and "for" the community in a series of four assignments (Deans).

At the end of the Spring 2007 semester, I reflected on the successes and challenges of this service-learning composition course. Continually I found myself asking questions about the experiences of my students and the community leaders with which we partnered. Were students finding their service experiences and course assignments valuable? What were they learning? What challenges did they face? Were community partners satisfied with our partnership, and what could I do to improve that relationship? To answer these questions, I asked three former students, as well as one of the six community leaders with which my students served, to join me in the process of making curricular revisions to the course that

I would again teach the following spring. The five of us comprised the CRDT. The three students involved were all females who took my course as second-semester freshmen; they were sophomores when they joined the CRDT the following fall. These students were asked to participate because they had served at the same site as the community partner, Deborah Meridith, who also joined the CRDT. Meridith is the founding director of Kopper Top Life Learning Center—a non-profit organization that provides "therapeutic horseback riding, recreational therapy, animal-assisted therapy, and horticulture therapy to individuals with or without disabilities" (*Kopper Top*).

The work of the CRDT was meant to provide a forum for persons with unique standpoints—in this case students, community partner, and instructor—to critically reflect on their experiences with the 2007 service-learning composition course and to re-design materials and policies for the 2008 course. Through the CRDT meetings, participants were invited to analyze traditional course structures and participate as pedagogical co-inquirers. The work of the CRDT marked several shifts in traditional paradigms of higher education: (1) some instructors do not see their teaching as a site for critical inquiry, whereas this project made it a basic premise, (2) some instructors do not reflect on or revise their teaching, but the CRDT's explicit goal was to redesign course materials, and (3) many instructors design or revise their courses on their own, with little to no input from other standpoints, while this project valued the multiplicity of standpoints in course design.

The CRDT met in four, two-hour meetings during the Fall 2007 semester, in addition to a follow-up meeting mid-way through the Spring 2008 semester. After receiving an internal, Community Partnership Initiative Grant from Elon University, each participant received lunch at each meeting and a modest stipend for her participation. The CRDT meetings followed a similar structure: we started with lunch and informal conversation; participants wrote answers to three to five prompted questions; and the remaining time

was used to discuss answers to those questions based on previous experiences. Each of the sessions was voice-recorded and participants were asked for permission to use their writing and voice recordings as part of the research for this project. In the spirit of equal partnership, two of the CRDT meetings were scheduled on campus and two of the meetings at the site of the community partner.

The work of the CRDT employed the framework of Wiggins and McTighe's "backwards design," starting with the end results and working backwards to identify appropriate course activities that would help students achieve those results. The course goals and objectives (i.e., the end results) were already determined by the university's writing program. The CRDT did play a major role, however, in determining the course activities that would best facilitate the learning goals, particularly in an ASL course context. In short, the goals of the CRDT were to

1) provide a forum to enhance our campus-community partnership, i.e., the relationships and communication among students, faculty, and community partners,

2) make time and space for each participant to voice and critically reflect on learning and service experiences and,

3) collaborate as pedagogical co-inquirers, working to re-conceptualize and enhance course assignments and policies in need of change.

The CRDT project worked from the premise that each participant brought a unique expertise, set of experiences, and standpoint to the course re-design process. As Orbe summarizes, "The first principle of standpoint theory is the conviction that research must begin from one's concrete lived experiences" (27). The work of the CRDT certainly began with the "lived experiences" of its participants; the narratives students and the community partner shared in the first meeting served as a foundation for the group's pedagogical investigation in future meetings.

Considering each participant's unique standpoint, not all CRDT members needed to be experts in how to teach writing; my position as a scholar in composition studies was one of the standpoints from which I contributed to the group's work. Furthermore, the three students brought the expertise of having completed the service-learning composition course activities and assignments—leading to a unique positioning from which they might critique traditionalist curriculum structures within the academy. Similarly, the community partner held a unique standpoint having worked with Elon service-learning courses in the past, with my course and the CRDT students in particular, and in the surrounding community for years. An essential objective of the CRDT was to include the "less-well-positioned voices" of our students and community partners to re-envision the course and to specifically break from the "older schemes" of the academy (Harding, *Whose Science?* 152).

The course re-design project provided a forum for a multiplicity of standpoints to be voiced, particularly the voices of students and community that are often left out of curricular decisions. However, the forum's success required democratic give and take, voicing and listening. Harding argues, "Listening carefully to different voices and attending thoughtfully to others' values and interests can enlarge our vision and begin to correct for inevitable enthnocentrisms [*sic*]" (*Whose Science?* 152). As with intercultural inquiry, here again standpoint theory has connections to rhetorical listening. Krista Ratcliffe supports "rhetorical listening as a trope for interpretive invention" that 1) "promote[s] an understanding of self and other," 2) proceeds within a "*responsibility* logic," 3) identifies "commonalities and differences," and 4) "accentuate[s] commonalities and differences not only in *claims* but in *cultural logics*" (11). Certainly one goal of the CRDT was to move toward an understanding of each other's standpoints. However, the larger goal of the project was to provoke change, both in the curriculum and in the quality of the campus-community partnership. Ratcliffe posits "*understanding* as an end of rhetorical listening," whereas standpoint theory and the work of the CRDT sought

both understanding and change. By inviting members with multiple standpoints to contribute to re-designing course materials, teaching was no longer a single-handed effort; it truly became a partnership among students, communities, and academics.

Standpoint Theory in Practice

Over the course of the CRDT meetings, many of the tenets of standpoint theory came to fruition in the group's praxis. In sum, these critical developments are as follows (1) participants became co-inquirers, brainstorming pedagogical issues and negotiating resulting assignments; (2) through reflection and narratives of lived experiences, participants helped construct new course paradigms; (3) participants gained a new understanding of the others' standpoint; and (4) building on this shared understanding we worked to change specific course policies and assignments. Viewing these experiences through the lens of standpoint theory, we can see the potential for pedagogical inquiry to be enhanced with multiple standpoints being represented.

First, a critical turning point in the CRDT meetings was the result of a negotiation about course policy and procedure. The turning point happened during the third CRDT meeting, and it proved to be essential in legitimizing the standpoints of all CRDT participants in the course re-design process. In the previous two meetings issues related to the required number of service hours kept re-emerging, specifically punishments and rewards for completing or not completing those hours. I prompted the CRDT to brainstorm ways to re-frame the service requirements for the course in the syllabus. The team worked through a series of negotiations to move toward a final conclusion. First, one student member asserted that twenty hours was a fair minimum requirement, and she thought forty hours was too many. Then, a second student added that though twenty was a good minimum requirement, some students may want to complete more hours and they should be rewarded for that time. This student's first suggestion was that if a

student completes "forty hours, then give them extra credit of an 'A' on a paper grade…like the equivalency of an extra paper grade. I mean it has to be big to get up to forty."

The community partner, Deborah Meridith, also agreed with the student team members, stating, "In general…I think [the students] should get extra [credit]." My initial response to the team was "I don't really do extra credit." I thought that it was unfair to weigh extra hours as heavily as a major course assignment. The standpoint I contributed to the group considered the goals and assignments from the course at a broad level. As I discussed the suggested change from my standpoint, I asserted that one hour of service was not equivalent to the amount of time, effort, and course-based skills required of obtaining an "A" on an essay. However, in order for the team members' suggestions to be legitimately valued, I listened and worked toward finding a compromise. Responding to my concerns, the students suggested the option of dropping a lowest quiz grade or skipping a homework assignment in exchange for extra service hours, which the team agreed was a fair reward. As this example shows, listening to the standpoints of students and community did not mean abandoning my beliefs about sound pedagogy. However, it did require that I critically reflect, reconsider, and ultimately change some of those beliefs.

I also asked the CRDT to consider how students who did not meet the 20 hours of service requirement would be penalized. One student team member then made the following suggestion:

> I think it should be kind of like if you…were supposed to get 20, and you got…18, okay, you didn't get all of them, but you obviously tried, so there's…a deduction off your grade…If you did all your hours you get a 100…if you get 18, say you get a couple points off, and once you drop down to 15, you get more points off…and if you're under 12 or 15 then you shouldn't get any, but I think if you're kind of close…

After some discussion, the CRDT agreed that the basic premise of this policy seemed fair and, as the instructor, I worked to frame the CRDT's suggestion into the language of course policy as stated on the syllabus. This student made an important contribution and I needed to change the policies. When I taught the course again in the Spring, the syllabus outlined the policy that students would lose points for earning less than 20 service hours, including an "F" in participation if less than 15—the suggestion quoted by the student above. Additionally, I included the statement that "for every set of 3 hours you complete beyond the required 20 hours, I will allow you to either: a) drop your lowest quiz grade or b) skip a homework assignment that you have approved with me in advance," again taking the exact suggestions of students in the CRDT. Had I ignored the suggestions of the CRDT members made from their unique standpoints, I would be continuing the practices of the academy that have traditionally silenced student and community voices in course design.

Second, an original purpose of the CRDT's work was to enhance course experiences for future students. However, through extended reflection and narrative descriptions of our experiences, all CRDT participants benefitted tremendously from being part of the re-design process. The CRDT meeting offered a forum for extended, deep reflection on our experiences with service, learning, teaching, writing, and partnerships. The students benefitted from prompts that invited them to recall course content and experiences. They told personal stories and communicated their learning in ways that they may never have done without participating in the course re-design project. All too often the learning for our courses stops at the end of the semester; the CRDT meetings prompted the students—albeit only the three participants—to recall what they learned about rhetoric, audience, the writing process, etc. In the words of the students at our final meeting: "I don't think I would have realized everything I learned" without the experience of the CRDT meetings; and, as a result of these meetings, another student added, "We just realized how much we learned." This

extended reflection gave us each the time and space to critique the course structure, policies, and assignments and express critical insight from each of our unique standpoints.

An important component of this extended reflection was its foundation in narration and the lived experiences of participants. In her work with community partnerships, Linda Flower also notes how important it is to "start in narration that gives everyone a place at the table" (110). At the first CRDT meeting, I planned a list of questions to prompt discussion that would analyze and evaluate the course materials from the previous spring and employ Wiggins and McTighe's "backwards design" to begin re-designing content. However, the participants interjecting to share their memories soon shifted my position as the prompter. The three students and the community partner told stories, reminisced, and shared memories of service experiences from the previous semester. The voices of the CRDT members overlapped in a series of stories, interspersed with great laughter: "Remember when…," and "My most memorable experience at Kopper Top was …," and "Do you remember the little girl and her dad at the carnival?" Interestingly, from my standpoint as the instructor, I often felt like the odd woman out and occasionally one of the group members would have to break from her story to give me, "the outsider," context for the narrative situation. Since I was not with my students during their service experiences and Meridith was, I could not share in these narrative exchanges. By the end of the session, I realized how important this storytelling was for building a sense of community among those present and for breaking the ice for the first session.

Third, by participating in the CRDT, each member listened to and gained a new understanding and appreciation of the others' social standpoints. For instance, when one student shared her story of getting lost the first time driving to the service site, it helped me as the instructor better understand her position of having to negotiate the course service experiences. Furthermore, when I too became lost on

my first drive to the service site for a CRDT meeting, I gained an even greater understanding of the adversities my students face. Additionally, when Meridith, the community partner, shared stories of her frustration when Elon students from other courses failed to show for their set service hours, I—as well as the student participants—gained a new appreciation for the sacrifices our community members make when they agree to partner in service-learning with the university. Finally, in explaining the work involved in planning for class and grading student writing, as well as the additional workload of designing and teaching first-year composition as a service-learning course, the students and the community partner gained a greater understanding of the work of professors in the academy. This improved understanding of each participant's standpoint was an important contribution to an improved campus-community partnership. However, participants were empowered by having their voiced standpoints result in actuated changes to the course in the Spring 2008 semester.

By the end of the CRDT's meetings, there were several changes made to the ASL composition course taught again in Spring 2008. First, students in the re-designed course were placed among two—instead of six in the previous year—community organizations for service. Contributing my standpoint from the previous semester, I expressed how I felt overwhelmed working with so many agencies, and I believed the communication between me as the instructor and the community partners suffered because of my divided attention. The CRDT agreed that fewer agencies would allow us to build stronger partnerships, and we moved forward with that change for Spring 2008. Second, the CRDT identified a new textbook for use that was specifically designed for a service-learning composition course, providing support for the new assignments that asked students to write "about" and "for" the community (Deans). Third, student CRDT participants suggested that we implement measures throughout the semester to hold students accountable for ongoing, weekly completion of hours, and to discourage sporadic site visits or cramming twenty hours into the final

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weeks of the semester. One solution agreed upon by the CRDT was for students in the re-designed course to submit weekly journal reflections on their service experiences, which allowed the instructor to track who missed service hours that week. This improved the previous system whereby students submitted three to four journal entries each month, often resulting in sporadic site visits rather than weekly visits.

I made a final set of changes to the four major writing assignments of the course. Of the four major writing projects, the CRDT suggested that two assignments remain the same, one project be revised, and one assignment be removed and replaced with a new assignment. The newly added project asked students to compose brochures, flyers, and other public materials for the agency's potential use. In the re-designed course this new "writing for the community" assignment resulted in three student projects that directly affected Kopper Top Life Learning Center, Meridith's organization: 1) implementation of a survey of current volunteers and a report of the results delivered to the director, 2) compilation of materials and a draft application for an *Extreme Home Makeover* of Kopper Top's farm and facilities, and 3) creation of a student authored newsletter for Kopper Top, with approximately 100 color copies printed using remaining grant funds. Each CRDT participant, voicing her experiences, critiques, and suggestions resulted in this and other enhanced course assignments and policies.

Conclusion

Inviting a multiplicity of standpoints to contribute to the design and re-design of curriculum for ASL courses is essential for forging stronger, more engaged partnerships among students, the community, and faculty. I have offered a rationale for including community and student voices in the process of planning our courses, and a methodology—backwards design—guiding that process. Standpoint theory offers a significant critical framework community writing researchers might utilize as an analytical tool. Though the CRDT project represents only

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one model, I believe that employing standpoint theory has the potential to continue building and strengthening the often rickety bridges between the work of academics and the work of those in the community with which we partner. If we ignore or choose not to listen to persons situated in social standpoints that differ from our own, we run the risk of alienating the community and implementing pedagogies that disconnect with our students' learning. We must continue challenging ourselves to invite the community, students, and other partners to the table. From Meridith's standpoint as the community partner, the CRDT meetings enhanced the partnership by offering stronger connections and more open communication: "I really felt more connected. I think it was more beneficial. If other professors hear that, then maybe they would be more receptive to it. Just the communication; that was a major issue…" As the interest and practice of service-learning and other community outreach projects continue to grow in the field of rhetoric and composition, researchers should continue the search for other potential models and theories that make time and space for including community and student standpoints in the work we do as academics.

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