Introduction: Discourse on Diversity

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T his special issue opens a dialogue among scholars from across the disciplines who are grappling with the theoretical, ethical and practical issues inherent in negotiating difference when interacting with the "Other" in their work in community-based literacy programs. The contributors to this issue help shape a conversation long overdue in service-learning. Given its intentionally interdisciplinary scope and the refreshing range of theories, rhetorical styles, methods of analysis, settings and populations considered in its pages, this issue is, well, diverse.

Arranged in two sections and focusing mainly on theoretical and pedagogical issues, the articles describe many different innovative courses and programs. While all integrate theory and praxis, those in the first section are concerned more with macro-level issues such as theory building and program administration, while those in the latter section ground their discussions within a particular course or setting.

We begin with a provocative creative-nonfiction essay, Steve Zimmer's "The Art of Knowing Your Place: White Service Learning Leaders and Urban Community Organizations." Zimmer considers the role Whites should adopt while working in minority-majority organizations and communities, and reflects on the sometimes blurry line between professional and personal identities that the ally must nevertheless honor. Paul Butler's article, "The GED as Transgender Literacy: Performing in the Learning/ Acquisition Borderland," also describes a dynamic tension between professional and personal identities, created in this case within the socially defined and institutionally enforced categories of educated White/incarcerated Black or heterosexual/homosexual/transsexual, categories that are as rigid and permeable as the detention center where Butler locates his narrative. Drawing on the work of Judith Butler and James Gee, Butler proposes a transgender literacy that shows how the confluence of "distance" and "similarity" can offer us a useful way of rereading literacy. Next, in "Exploring Difference in the Service-Learning Classroom: Three Teachers Write about Anger, Sexuality, and Social Justice," Angelique Davi, Michelle Dunlap, and Ann E. Green reread their classrooms and curricular choices as they engage students in dialogues

on difference. Perhaps more explicitly than any other contributors in this issue, these three authors investigate the complexity that characterizes familiar categories and terminology used to describe diverse populations in multicultural settings and societies. Marilyn Boyle-Baise, in "Learning Service: Reading Service as Text," advocates for a form of "multicultural service learning" and questions the extent to which different service-learning models benefit the various stakeholders engaged. It is a question that the authors of the next four articles take up in different ways.

In "Writing Across Communities: Diversity, Deliberation, and the Discursive Possibilities of WAC," Michelle Hall Kells draws upon Ecocomposition, New Literacy Studies, and Sociolinguistics to develop a theoretical framework for the writing program at the University of New Mexico. Kells advocates a version of WAC, "Writing Across Communities," that foregrounds dimensions of ethnolinguistic diversity and civic engagement. Similarly, Aileen Hale describes an ambitious K-8th grade elementary school program that develops cross-cultural partnerships between Anglo and Latino communities in Idaho and Mexico, while Susan Loudermilk Garza's and Isabel Baca's articles consider how university-level Professional and Technical writing programs can build upon the multiple literacies that students and community members possess. By tapping into home, school, and community discourse conventions and funds of knowledge, Kells, Hale, Garza, and Baca extend the pioneering work of such sociolinguists as Shirley Brice Heath and Susan Philips, scholars who first pointed to the need to bridge home and school languages. Together, these four authors argue that service-learning programs working with diverse populations can enhance students' agency and identities as members of multiple language and discourse communities by valuing their "ways with words."

The final two articles in this issue raise different questions about negotiating difference in community-based writing programs. In "Community-Based Critique: No Walk in the Park," Caroline Gottschalk-Druschke, Nadya Pittendrigh, and Diane Chin discuss the challenges all teachers face when asking students to question core values and beliefs, while Mary Kay Mulvaney reminds us in her article, "Academic and Affective Benefits of an Intergenerational Exploration of Memoir," that age is a salient but often overlooked factor in discussions of diversity.

It is a challenge to find common ground across the different forms of diversity considered in this volume. As Beverly Tatum argues in *"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?"* the problems of racism, sexism, classism, and linguistic

profiling all result from those in power—the dominant society— defining others as different, with the implication that they are also deficient:

> The relationship of the dominants to the subordinates is often one in which the targeted group is labeled as defective or substandard in significant ways. For example, Blacks have historically been characterized as less intelligent than Whites, and women have been viewed as less emotionally stable than men. The dominant group assigns roles to the subordinates that reflect the latter's devalued status, reserving the most highly valued roles in society for themselves. Subordinates are usually said to be innately capable of being able to perform the preferred roles. To the extent that the targeted group internalizes the images that the dominant group reflects back to them, they may find it difficult to believe in their own ability. (23)

Much of Tatum's book describes the processes by which individuals develop their own sense of racial identity. Typically, a multi-stage process of racial identity development evolves from an uncritical racial identity in which ethnicity is not particularly salient for the individual, to one in which race is both a salient and a positive aspect of one's self image. Tatum argues "that an achieved identity develops over time in a predictable fashion and that encounter experiences often lead to the exploration, examination, and eventual internalization of a positive, self-defined sense of one's own racial or ethnic identity" (132). Service-learning assignments that provide carefully structured immersion experiences in culturally diverse settings provide the opportunities for such encounter experiences.

One way to view such encounter experiences is to see them as "counter-texts" to the stereotypes created by the dominant discourse that can interrupt systems of oppression (Pietrykowski 93; Wurr). In "Community-Based Critique: No Walk in the Park," for example, Gottschalk-Druschke, Pittendrigh, and Chin reflect on the need to provide their students with counter-texts to help them unpack some of the underlying assumptions glossed over in an uncritical embrace of the dominant democratic ideology. While there are many challenges to helping students interrogate common cultural and ideological biases in society, there is also, as Steve Zimmer concludes, "learning in the search, even if the search provides few answers." We need to continue to dialogue on difference. And we need to engage in what Paula Mathieu refers to in her book on civic literacy as the "tactics of hope," by discovering and using our "Funds of Knowledge" to create a more inclusive discourse and society for all.

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