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A Convergence of Expectations: Literacy Studies and the Student Perspective in Community Partnerships

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Why, if service learning has "come a long way," has it not had the impact on the university or on the community that proponents expected? This article details interviews with eight teachers at Virginia Tech who use service learning in their classrooms, with particular attention to the convergence of literacies that occurs when teachers, communities, and students all attempt to work together. While these eight teachers seemed to have a good grasp of the expectations faculty and communities bring to this three-way relationship, they seemed unable to define the expectations students bring to the experience. This mirrors the current scholarship on service learning, which highlights faculty and communities but downplays the role of students. As we continue to work toward sustainable, reflective community partnerships, literacy studies like Barton and Hamilton's *Local Literacies* can help us further examine the expectations students bring to service learning projects.

John Dewey, who is generally credited with the first theory of service learning, argues that education is a social process and therefore "a process of living and not a preparation for future living" (16). For Dewey, the natural response to this realization was the integration of education and society, the collaboration of the university and the rest of the world. For many teachers across the country, service learning has become one way to accomplish this integration. One teacher at Virginia Tech explains, "I really felt that I was falling flat with just sort of the case study... so I really felt that I needed them doing something more hands on.... I really wanted to get my students out of the classroom." This sense of falling flat has now resulted in half a century of increasingly visible service learning practice and theory.

Although service learning has "come a long way," an assertion with which most of us would nod our heads, Ira Harkavy notes in the foreword to the 2003 collection *Building Partnerships for Service-Learning* that it has not had the impact on the university or on the community that proponents expected. One of the reasons Harkavy offers for this disappointment is the lack of "community-focused service-learning partnerships" included in

service learning practices. Instead of merely performing volunteer work and reflecting upon that work, *Building Partnerships for Service-Learning* calls for "strong, democratic partnerships" between the university and the community, involving "the provision of genuine service to the community, as well as the development of democratic, respectful relationships between students and the community members with whom they work," and an "attempt to solve, not merely address or learn from, community problems" (xiv). Though it would be a few years before she applied these ideas to service learning, Ellen Cushman offers a similar call in her 1996 *CCC*'s article "The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change." Discussing and critiquing culture from the classroom isn't enough, she argues. Instead, we need to "empower people in our communities, establish networks of reciprocity with them, and create solidarity with them" (7). Reciprocity suggests a two-way relationship. And in "Differences in Faculty and Community Partners' Theories of Learning," Nora Bacon explores "two worlds" between which she imagines service learning happening: faculty and communities.

The study I present here suggests that in order to create a full theory of this relationship, students need to be part of this equation as well. Instead of proposing a reciprocal relationship of two, my findings reveal competing literacy expectations of three parties involved in service learning: teachers, communities, and students. These expectations often seem to be in tension, if not direct conflict, with each other. Though I began this study questioning the relationship between service learning and writing assignments, I ended up asking questions that interrogate the literacy expectations involved in service learning, literacy expectations that stem from three distinct but always related positions: teacher, service learning community, and student. Understanding the convergence of expectations involved in this three-way relationship, I have discovered, is essential for service learning to be successful, both in the space of a semester and as a long-term relationship-building tool between universities and communities. The spirit of reciprocity suggests that successful service learning should attempt to benefit all parties involved. This article details the responses that led me to this conclusion, offers a call for further research on the kinds of literacy practices and expectations involved in this three-way relationship—particularly from the perspective of students—and proposes ways that recent scholarship on literacy studies might help us with this task.

Study Overview and Participant Demographics

Many service learning partnerships involve some type of writing in response to the service learning: for the community, for the class, or both. In an attempt to better understand service learning's frequent claim to provide students with a more genuine impetus to write than case studies

offer, I interviewed eight teachers in 2008 at Virginia Tech, where I worked as a graduate teaching assistant in the English department. Because of Virginia Tech's status as a land-grant institution, the university has a unique relationship with the community. The university service learning center, created in 1994, is one way this relationship is played out. The question I began the interviews asking is this: How do the teachers of service learning classes understand the relationship between the service learning and the writing assignments in their courses?

To begin, I met with the director of the Service-Learning Center at Virginia Tech and then emailed every teacher related to the Center. Eight teachers responded to this email and agreed to be interviewed. Although the participants were not chosen for their diversity, they are diverse in many ways. Represented among them are faculty in English, Human Development, Management, International Studies, Political Science, Sociology, and Urban Affairs and Planning (Architecture). They teach a broad range of classes including Business and Technical Writing, Sociology of Aging, Ethical Leadership and Corporate Social Responsibility, Gender Relations, Social Problems, Professional Writing, Grant Writing, and Infancy and Early Childhood. These classes are involved in an array of community organizations such as the YMCA, animal shelters, daycares, retirement homes, and various city and university programs.

The participants include two full professors, three associate professors, one assistant professor, and two instructors. One of the associate professors is also the chair of a department, another associate professor is the director of a program, and one of the instructors is the assistant director of a program. Five of the participants are female; three are male. One is from another country. Most of the participants might be considered mid- or late-career. Two of the participants are currently using service learning for the first time, and three have used service learning for more than twenty years. The rest fall somewhere between.

Methods and Methodology

Each participant was interviewed once, and each interview lasted one hour or less. Some participants gave me syllabi, assignment sheets, and program outcomes, but most of my information comes directly from the interviews. I met with the participants in their respective offices on campus, and I recorded the conversations using a digital audio recorder. In the interviews, I asked the participants to discuss three main topics: the service learning in their courses, the writing assignments in their courses, and the relationship between the two. I also asked participants to discuss issues like community selection, service learning goals, problems they have encountered, student response to service learning, and assessment criteria. Once the interviews were completed, I selectively transcribed each conversation, paying

particular attention to comments that seemed to highlight the goals, problems, and inner-workings of service learning projects. The resulting transcriptions were then coded into categories similar to the interview questions. These findings, then, are the results of what I deemed important at the time, and not necessarily a complete representation of everything the participants said.

I understand my interviews as qualitative interviews and my methods as similar to those Robert Weiss describes in *Learning from Strangers*. Most of the participants knew nothing of my research interests other than the general topic, which left them free to explore their own opinions and experiences without trying to make them fit a research agenda. My research is exploratory and outside a general interest in writing and literacy; I had no definitive agenda. In the interviews, my role was small: I posed questions, and occasionally, follow-up questions. Also in the spirit of Weiss, I do not include in this essay terms that were introduced into the discussion by me in an attempt to clarify the participant's ideas during an interview, but only those terms and ideas that were offered by the teachers themselves: with one exception.

Although the term "literacy expectations" was never used by me or any other participant during interviews, it seems useful in framing my findings. Discussing "literacy" instead of writing assignments—my original interest—allows a broader discussion of the types of practices involved in service learning partnerships: writing, speaking, and any other form of communication. Though the main focus of my interview questions was writing, the participants mentioned other literacy practices, such as presentations and group work. "Expectations," on the other hand, was a term used by study participants. Many of the teachers I interviewed referred to their own expectations, the expectations of their students, or the expectations of the communities. This word was most often invoked in discussing conflicting expectations, which I discuss in detail below. When I use the term "literacy expectations," then, I refer to spoken or unspoken beliefs about what "good work" means in each context, and which literacies constitute this work, whether the work is practical, theoretical, acted, planned, spoken, or written.

On one level, these interviews can be described as a PhD student's interviews of faculty. Though I see this mentoring relationship largely as an advantage in soliciting information from my participants—the interviewee teaching interviewer was a natural position and not a forced one—it is a relationship that nonetheless colored my interactions with and analysis of these interviews. Because I was not on the "high" side of the hierarchy in my participant relationships, reciprocity was not something I intentionally emphasized in my methods. Despite this, a number of participants

mentioned finding value in sharing their theories and teaching practices with me.

Although one valuable treatment of my interview responses might consider these classes by discipline, I have chosen here to consider them together in order to focus on the convergence of literacy expectations involved with service learning in general, and not in any one field.

Teacher Expectations: What Is "Success" in the Classroom?

The teachers I interviewed expect students to demonstrate literacy in two main areas. First, participants expect their students to investigate the relationship between course content and the service learning experience. One participant's syllabus reads: "These [service learning] experiences enable students to apply things they learn in the classroom to a real-world setting." Another teacher hopes "to give [students] exposure to the issues that we are talking about in class, in a real experiential way." Most of the participants see service learning as a way for their students to see the course material in play outside the classroom. For some of them, though, this is only the first step and not the end goal. For these teachers, service learning needs to make a circle, ultimately informing the course theory, in order to be successful. One participant uses service learning only in courses where it helps the students meet course goals. If improved course knowledge wasn't the goal, she explains, service learning would function as a mere "plug-in." Another teacher asks students to "use their course concepts to talk about things they've observed at their site." These literacy expectations are visible in the more traditional assignments, like research reports, essays, or case studies that combine course material and service learning experience.

Second, participants ask students to develop awareness of what exists outside the classroom. Most of the participants expressed a desire for students to realize how organizations really work outside of textbooks. Two participants hope their students become aware of the diversity that exists in their fields. "Many of them are operating from a mindset of their own really narrow frame or view," one teacher says. "They really start to see things from a different perspective." Another teacher explains that the service learning is designed "to give them an idea of what's actually going on... They really are, for the most part, some really privileged kids who just don't think there's any poverty out there... it's real." These expectations are usually expressed in the form of reflective writing, writing *about* the service learning. Among the teachers who assign reflective writing, two ask students to keep reflective journals, and four require an end-of-semester reflective essay. One teacher's end-of-semester essay asks students to recount moments such as the "ah-hah! moment" and the "yikes!" moment in service learning.

These expectations are not surprising given the description of the Service-Learning Center when it was created: "The program was designed

to encourage student participation in the community through volunteer service for which students would receive academic credit. Students would not merely perform volunteer work within the community but would return to the classroom to integrate their volunteer experiences with academic theory and research" ("Service-Learning Center Created"). In order to meet the literacy expectations of these teachers, then, students must demonstrate competence in two theoretical tasks: first, informing course content with service learning experiences, and second, reflecting on the student's particular experience with service learning.

Community Expectations: What is "Success" in Community Work?

Although early service learning practice and theory were concerned with what the students "got" out of the experience, the turn of the century offered a marked turn toward what the community wants and needs, with articles like Cushman's "Sustainable Service Learning Programs," Margaret Himley's "Facing (Up to) 'the Stranger' in Community Service Learning," and Flower and Heath's "Drawing on the Local: Collaboration and Community Expertise." Community partnerships have become an important part of service learning theory and practice in the last ten years as well, demonstrated by studies like Thomas Deans's *Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning in Composition*, Tammy Lewis's "Service Learning for Social Change? Lessons from a Liberal Arts College," and the earlier mentioned *Building Partnerships for Service-Learning* (Jacoby and Associates).

Most of the participants agreed that a strong relationship with the community is essential. However, in classrooms where the students are mostly writing reflective or academic writing, this relationship didn't seem as important, whereas in classes where the students are engaged in community-based writing, this relationship seemed essential. My conclusions about this three-way relationship, then, seem more applicable to community partnerships—where the teacher or university has an ongoing relationship with the community and the service is designed to help identify and engage community needs as well as benefit the student—than the come-and-go-as-you-please volunteer model of service learning, although the latter could certainly be improved by attending to this relationship. In 1997, the Service-Learning Center at Virginia Tech launched a Community Partnerships Program, which, according to Director Michele James-Deramo, has a "large vision of revitalized public life." While some classes at Virginia Tech participate in the volunteerism model of service learning, others have created long-standing relationships with the community in this model.

In a program directed by one of the participants, the service learning and the writing assignments together are designed to inform the outcomes for each year of the program. For instance, one of the program's objectives

is learning the language of the discipline. In service learning, students are able both to read and write in this language and see the language at work in a non-academic context. In order for this learning objective to be realized, a three-way relationship must be developed. This participant believes that the relationship between students and communities is important not just for the students but for the communities. Her experience demonstrates that students can speak into communities in ways that staff can't. "[Students] can step way off center," she says. "And the community has the opportunity to say, 'Well, that was nice. That was students.' You know, if they, if it's too far off center, and they just want to ignore it, they're welcome to ignore it. But sometimes taking them off center makes [the community] say, Oh, well, maybe..." She describes a situation years ago when a student in Chattanooga proposed an aquarium downtown, and everyone said, "Oh yeah, that's nice." Years later, though, the community remembered the proposal, dug it up, and accepted it. Today, the aquarium is a prominent part of downtown Chattanooga.

> In order to provide this accountability for communities, this teacher takes full responsibility for all work done by her classes. If her students slack or don't finish the work, she must.

Another participant explains that the communities need to get used to working with students on a semester-long basis. For instance, if a student is slacking, community members who are used to working with students might send that student an email, while new communities might wait until the end of the semester to complain. Working with the same community over a period of time also allows the community to learn what to expect from a class of a particular size. This teacher's students have been working with one community since 1999. Now, she says, the community knows what the students can do, and she knows what the community needs. Students also get to see what happens with their projects after they are finished if community and classroom maintain the relationship.

Although writing assignments done "for the class" seem designed to meet the teacher's literacy expectations, other teachers encourage their students to meet the writing expectations of the community instead of the class. Community-based writing involves writing *for* the community. The emphasis is on community needs, and in these classes, the writing is often completed in small groups. One participant's class works together to write whatever the community needs written. For instance, one group might work as a design team, another group might organize the document, and a

third group might edit the final draft. In another class's attempt to cater to community needs, small groups of students write "best practices" reports for cities and organizations, offering recommendations based on research into other cities or organizations. These students also create plans, reports, press releases, legal ads, and maps. They attend community meetings, and they help design meeting agendas, minutes, and handouts.

While the completion of these projects is part of teachers' expectations, the projects themselves must meet the literacy expectations of the community in order to be successful. In fact, nearly every participant named the relationship with the community as an important element of service learning. When I inquired about community literacy expectations, one participant recounted a state planning meeting that involved many of the communities her students had worked with for years. She had asked the communities to report on how the service learning was going. Here was the response, in her words:

> They basically said, Okay, here's the deal: You turn out really good writers. They write really, really well. But everything they write sounds like a term paper. And we don't write term papers. We need students who can write memos and plans and reports and all of those sorts of things, and we don't want footnotes, and we don't want references... We don't do those sorts of things.

The communities also noted that the students were "really good at presentations" as long as they had plenty of preparation time and no one interrupted or asked questions. Students were "fine at managing a project," the communities said, when they were only given one project at a time. But when they were asked to work on several complicated projects at once, they were unable to manage them all. In contrast to the university, which values term papers, references, and respectful silence during presentations, these communities wanted students who could handle literacy activities outside the university: memos, plans, reports, and multi-voiced conversations.

According to another participant, communities value reliability in ways that universities don't. Students know they are *supposed* to turn their assignments in on time, but the penalties are usually small if they don't. Service learning, on the other hand, requires accountability, someone to blame when things don't go well. If an advertisement needs to go in the paper by Monday at noon and a student slacks on her work, much more than her grade is at stake. Trust is an issue with some community partners on campus, this teacher explained to me, because not all professors take responsibility for whether or not their students show up or do the work. Students are used to being able to let things go and still get by, but that doesn't work when a community is counting on you. This teacher also noted that communities can be overloaded by students if community needs aren't

consulted before sending students sauntering into the communities en masse. In order to provide this accountability for communities, this teacher takes full responsibility for all work done by her classes. If her students slack or don't finish the work, she must.

Finally, nearly every teacher named flexibility as an essential feature of working with organizations. Service learning is messy, complicated work that involves many factors and many people. Deadlines shift. People change their minds. Contexts are reworked. In one case, a first-time client gave the class instructions for a project and left town for the remainder of the semester. When the client returned, she told the class they "didn't do it right." What had happened, according to the teacher, is the client had changed her mind without telling the class. The teacher has since added a client review before the end of the semester, in which the client responds to and approves the product. Another community ran out of funding partway through the semester and had to cancel the project, leaving the group project-less. More than one participant told me this element of the unexpected frustrates students, who are used to having clear, compartmentalized assignments. Learning to function within these expectations is a different sort of relationship for students to navigate, as teachers don't usually move a due date up at the last minute.

My study takes one step toward understanding community expectations—documenting these perspectives through faculty experience—while other scholarship suggests that we need to spend more time on the "community-focused" part of Harkavy's call, learning more fully how communities actually understand what happens during service learning projects. For instance, Lewis's "Service Learning for Social Change? Lessons from a Liberal Arts College" describes Denison University's attempts to move from charity-based service learning efforts to collaborative partnerships. According to Lewis, the program's "critical flaw" was not spending enough time building relationships with the community. And in "School-University Partnerships and Professional Development Schools," Richard Clark explains that "mistrust appears to be the 'natural state' of relationships involving university, school, and community members." He believes that service learning partnerships only work when extended conversations among participants result in a shared understanding of the collaboration's purpose. Relying on faculty to understand the expectations of communities isn't enough.

However, like this study, most scholarship that discusses the perspective of the community does so through the experience of the university, usually the faculty member. One exception to this rule is Nora Bacon's study, which uses focus groups of faculty and communities to compare their views of knowledge and learning. Another is Flower's and Heath's "Drawing on the Local: Collaboration and Community Expertise,"

which calls for more research, making communities experts on their own practices and problems instead of objects for scholars to study. Two years later, in "Community Agency Perspectives in Higher Education: Service-Learning and Volunteerism," Vernon and Foster interview 15 different service learning communities in an attempt to get the "community's perspective on… the perceived impacts that college students have on the needs they are trying to address in the community." Vernon and Foster are particularly concerned with the "lack of attention paid to the community" by researchers (155). Their findings are taken directly from what the communities say. However, in one short article they are unable to show us in detail how to replicate such a study successfully.

Student Expectations: "What About Empowering Democracy for the Students?"

The teachers I interviewed considered themselves knowledgeable about community literacy expectations. However tentatively I report the above findings on community literacy expectations—as they came only indirectly from the communities—the teachers I interviewed were able to confidently articulate their own beliefs about the expectations of the communities with which they worked. But when I asked participants about students' literacy expectations and responses to service learning, they seemed unable to give clear answers. Most of them instead told me how much their students enjoyed the service learning experience.

"My students *love* service learning, you know," said one teacher. "They love it… They say it's a valuable experience." This teacher believes that in seven years, only one group's service learning experience was unsuccessful, and this had everything to do with a new agency being unable to identify their needs. One participant said her students leave class with an entirely new understanding and appreciation of non-profit organizations; some even leave wanting to work for one. Another recounts students later being hired by their service learning communities or adopting pets from the agencies they worked with. A few students, this participant told me, even adopted children from their service learning adoption agencies. The clearest response I received to my question about student expectations was that some students find "the work they have been assigned is being illuminated by the work they are doing for their service learning." Yet I question whether this response came from the student herself or whether this narrative was created by the teacher, who had previously asked the students to connect their service learning experiences back to their coursework.

What contributes to this inability to provide a nuanced account of student literacy expectations? This is one of the questions I left these interviews asking. Have we bought into the narrative of the service learning success story, having read one too many reflective essay identifying that

life-changing moment to consider students' real reactions? We are starting to accumulate archives of both successful and unsuccessful service learning experiences (Clark, Flower, Flower and Heath, Lewis, Underwood et. al.). Most of these works provide a detailed description of the service learning experience, often including reports from students. However, these reports are nearly always from the perspective of the teacher or university administrator, and the data taken from student reflective writing and course evaluations at the *end* of the semester.

If we believe that students should be allowed to have their own expectations for the service learning classroom, and if we believe that these expectations should matter, more research needs to be performed with students themselves. This is not an easy task. Student expectations are a tricky matter, as students are placed in the middle of often-conflicting literacies, trying to please both teacher and community. Students are also navigating competing priorities of their own. We have taught them to value grades, yet in service-learning classrooms we ask them to instead appreciate the learning experience. Many of them view college as career preparation, yet we want them to develop as people and as citizens. Where is the space in service learning for the student to speak? As Ira Shor asks, "What about empowering democracy for the students?" (31) While I don't want to get caught up in the question of whether or not our classrooms should be democratic, the point is this: we have created the idea of service learning, based on the ideas of John Dewey and others, that students should be involved in their own education, and yet it seems that in some cases, they are not. In our attempts to better our communities, have students become assembly lines for community improvement? Could this be one of the reasons service learning has caught on but not yet changed the university?

One participant noted the difficulty of understanding student expectations. On one hand, service learning differs from client-based projects in that the communities are also expected to help the students. For instance, this participant expects communities to be part of teaching students the genre of grant proposals in his Grant Writing course. But are the communities meeting student expectations or teacher expectations for the students? It is hard to tell. As the teacher of the Grant Writing course notes, students may very well have expectations that differ from those expressed in the course documents, yet they may not have the language or experience necessary to articulate those expectations.

Considering Literacy Studies: A Call for Further Research

Although many studies have been written documenting various community partnerships and service learning experiences, few focus entirely on the student's perspective. These findings make visible a large research gap in investigating student literacy hopes and expectations in service learning

situations, *with the particular challenge of separating these expectations from those of their teachers.* One way we might begin this research is by asking students to write and talk about their literacy expectations at the beginning of the semester, before they have time to get tangled with the specific course expectations. Of course, many students will still consider what their teacher might want them to say, which is why involving communities in the investigative process is essential. We could then trace student response to this question throughout the semester, as they begin to navigate the expectations of their teachers and the communities. Another interesting study might follow a student from one service learning experience to the next, watching the progression of that student's expectations. I offer these suggestions as a starting point for more research to be done in this scarce area of investigation. Teachers of writing and communities involved in literacy need to come together in hopes of constructing a clearer picture of student expectations in service learning experiences. Teachers can offer communities insight into college students, and communities can present writing teachers with information on students outside the classroom.

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I want to suggest that literacy studies, with its endeavor to understand literacies outside the university, can help us direct our attention in this matter. Scholarship like Brian Street's work, James Gee's "Social Linguistics and Literacies," Shirley Brice Heath's *Ways With Words*, Barton and Hamilton's *Local Literacies*, Deborah Brandt's *Literacy in American Lives*, Mike Rose's *Lives on the Boundary*, Ellen Cushman et. al.'s *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook*, and Katherine Kelleher Sohn's *Whistlin' and Crowin' Women of Appalachia: Literacy Practices Since College* all attempt to highlight the complexity of literacies we might otherwise consider less intelligent than those of the researchers. For example, Heath's study considers the literacy practices of two communities she describes as "working-class." Sohn's book explores the literacy practices of Appalachian mountain women. And so on. This field is ripe in advice for how to best examine literacies when the participants seem to be less educated than the researchers. Barton and Hamilton's attention to sharing their research methods in *Local Literacies* makes it one of the most useful studies for us.

This study can serve as one model of how we might frame an investigation of student literacy expectations.

Barton and Hamilton's research examines the literacies of townspeople in Lancaster, England who, on the whole, mistrust academics. Particularly, Barton and Hamilton's emphasis on a "network" of literacies instead of individual literacies is a concept we might consider helpful in the task I have called us to: examining student expectations. They set out, in the early 90s, to describe the literacy practices of residents in a working-class town within Lancaster, England. Barton and Hamilton understand literacy as a social act, so they seek to contextualize their participants' practices within their community. Though Barton and Hamilton consider their interviews "semi-structured," they let the participants direct the interviews. For instance, one of their interviewees, "Harry," is not able to identify very many literacy practices in his life. Instead, the researchers ask Harry to talk about the details of his life. From these transcripts, they create a detailed portrait of Harry's literacy practices. Other participants are able to list practices, sometimes making observations Barton and Hamilton would not have considered. Our examinations, then, might entail interviews with students, asking participants to name and describe their expectations for community work. But our research might also involve a deeper look at the behavior and reactions of these students as they engage in the community work itself.

Barton and Hamilton also engage in document analysis. Because of their belief that literacy is a social practice, they argue that document analysis cannot take place outside of the document's context. The documents they examined, then, were analyzed in the context of their interviews, observations, and general understanding of the community in which the documents were produced. Analyzing documents produced by service learning communities is another productive way to identify their values and practices, and Barton and Hamilton's practice is a good reminder for those of us in this type of research. We might collect documents from teachers throughout the semester—syllabi, assignment sheets, feedback to students—to get an idea of the expectations of the teachers. We might then interrogate student expectations later in the semester that seem to match the expectations of the teachers, keeping in mind that most college students have spent twelve years fulfilling the expectations of teachers and may be unable to separate their own expectations from what they anticipate their teacher expecting.

Barton and Hamilton remind us that even after participant-centered interviews, observation, and document analysis, we are still filtering student expectations through our own eyes. One way they deal with this is by asking the participants to be as involved as they can in the process of documenting and interpreting their own practices. Their interviewees write descriptions of themselves and their literacies, they read and respond to

Barton and Hamilton's assessments of their practices, and they speak in their own words throughout the book in boxes that Barton and Hamilton call "asides." For service learning research, this might mean that students, along with representatives of the communities, are involved in the research itself. This type of research might meet Ellen Cushman's definition of reciprocal research, for the results of the study could be as beneficial to the students as to the researcher and the community.

One question these ideas raise is whether our enhanced awareness of the competing literacies involved in service learning is enough, or whether a change in service learning practice is ultimately required in response to our discoveries. Here is another way to ask this question: will simply recognizing that we—faculty, communities, students—come into service learning with different purposes and different understandings of what constitutes "good work" allow us to better navigate the spaces where these expectations clash, or will this amplified recognition lead us to a state of dissatisfaction with each other that can only be remedied by changing the entire structure of the way we relate to each other? This is a question that we need to consider as we move toward a more nuanced understanding of the complexities and challenges that sustained, reflective service learning partnerships present. Looking at the literacy expectations of individual faculty, communities, or students is interesting, but what Barton and Hamilton might suggest we need to understand is how these literacies interact together. Individual portraits of literacy, though useful on their own, cannot be the end goal if the sustainability and success of service learning partnerships is at stake. But until we develop a greater understanding of the nuances of student expectations in service learning relationships, considering the intricacies of a three-way web of literacy expectations will remain a distant prospect.

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