CHAPTER 21.

THE UNHEARD VOICES OF DISSATISFIED CLIENTS: LISTENING TO COMMUNITY PARTNERS AS FEMINIST PRAXIS

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Williams draws on her recent experience teaching first-year digital writing to examine the benefits of community-based multimodal student projects for community partners. Readers learn how the involvement of volunteer community partners as evaluators of student video projects revealed "the complex and multivalent nature of 'success' in publicly-shared community-based writing projects." Examination of their evaluation processes and narratives tell the story of how community partners brought different values to the project. By listening to these different perspectives, Williams suggests interventions that feminist teachers can make to improve future projects.

> A wheel turns because of its encounter with the surface of the road; spinning in the air gets it nowhere. Rubbing two sticks together produces heat and light; one stick alone is just a stick.
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> - Anna Tsing, *Friction*

Initially, I was pleased with what my first-year writing students had accomplished after completing a multimodal community-based writing project in which they composed videos about the General Education Development (GED) test for members of the local Waco community. Students had learned how to compose in multiple modes; actively engaged in the composing process; demonstrated rhetorical skill and new media competencies; and connected with needs in the local community. Imagine my surprise, then, when my victory lap was interrupted by an email from another community partner: "Before I vote on the videos, I would really like to talk with you. I have some concerns. Is that OK?" When I distributed a questionnaire to all of the community partners involved

in the project, I learned an uncomfortable truth: this concerned community partner was not an outlier. I made it my goal as a feminist teacher-researcher to figure out how so many different people could be involved in the same project, view the same videos, and come to such radically different conclusions about the success, or failure, of the project as a whole.

In this chapter, I foreground community partner perspectives—typically underrepresented points of view that Randy Stoecker and Elizabeth A. Tryon (2009) call the "unheard voices" of service learning (p. vii)—in order to identify points in which feminist teachers can intervene to structure community-based writing projects that benefit all stakeholders. I begin by discussing the concepts of "rhetorical listening" and "strategic contemplation" to frame the recursive process of feminist praxis. I then describe a community-based writing project in which community members provided different feedback about their understanding of the project's goals, their understanding of their roles as community partners, and their definitions of what would make a multimodal community-based writing project "successful." These points of contradiction, I argue, provide ongoing opportunities for feminist teachers to learn from these differences and, in turn, to model a process of reflexive self-critique for students. I conclude with recommendations for structuring student learning and for designing community-based writing projects that challenge, complicate, or nuance our definitions of success.

THE NEED FOR MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES IN COMMUNITY-BASED WRITING PROJECTS

Scholars in composition and rhetoric have deepened our field's understanding of the wider potential of community-based writing initiatives by describing the benefits of student engagement (Deans, 2000; Mathieu, 2005), service learning as citizen formation (Dubinsky, 2002; Cushman, 1996), community literacies (Flower, 2008; Knochel & Selfe, 2012), and feminist approaches to community engagement (Nickoson & Blair, 2014; Sheridan & Jacobi, 2014; Bowdon, Pigg, & Mansfield, 2014). The pedagogical and social benefits of community-based writing projects for students are well documented, yet less is known about the affordances of these projects for other stakeholders.

The perspective of community partners is often overlooked in the literature (see Mathieu, 2005, pp. 93-95), but truly feminist praxis requires more than just cursory inclusion or, "merely adding voices" (Sheridan & Jacobi, 2014, p. 144). We need to add these voices, to be sure, but we also need to create "new architectures of participation" (Sheridan & Jacobi, 2014, p. 144) that result in reciprocal partnerships that share the burden of assessing a project's ultimate value for the

community. Formal measures of assessment in composition and rhetoric typically focus on student learning, but, as Mathieu (2005) argues, "The stakes of public work are broader than classroom concerns. As such, our means for evaluating this kind of public work should go beyond traditional markers of student achievement and evaluation" (p. 93). Instead of limiting our assessment of a community-based writing project to the students, we need to listen to formative feedback from a range of stakeholders and then turn the assessment back on ourselves—the teachers and designers of the project—so that we can adapt what we are currently doing and chart a new course for what we will do in the future.

PRACTICING RHETORICAL LISTENING AND STRATEGIC CONTEMPLATION IN COMMUNITY-BASED WRITING PROJECTS

In order to understand and honor the different perspectives at work in a campus-community partnership, we need to listen to a range of stakeholders as well as to our own evolving responses over time. Feminist community-based researchers can create these new architectures of participation by systematically collecting data from community partners and "look[ing] again and again and again at rhetorical situations and events with the deliberate intention of positioning and repositioning ourselves to notice what we may not have noticed on first, second, third or next view" (Royster & Kirsch, 2012, p. 135). Krista Ratcliffe (2005) offers "rhetorical listening" as one possibility for communicating across different perspectives. Ratcliffe defines "rhetorical listening" "as a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture; its purpose is to cultivate conscious identifications in ways that promote productive communication, especially but not solely cross-culturally" (p. 25). This approach to communication is a key element of feminist praxis. Instead of deciding who gets to speak or privileging one voice over another (e.g., among community partners, between campus-community priorities, etc.), rhetorical listening can be used in community-based writing projects as a strategy to hear multiple perspectives that might clash or contradict with each other or with our own beliefs (Iverson & James, 2014; Butin, 2014). While Ratcliffe focuses on the cultural categories of race and gender, her strategies for listening across difference are valuable for addressing the contradictions that emerge between the different community partners involved in this project.

To that end, this study aims to listen to and continue to learn from the voices of community partners in order to disrupt traditional power dynamics in campus-community partnerships (Iverson & James, 2014). No feminist teacher, no matter the sincerity of their intentions, is capable of making the final call on

a community-based writing project's success or failure. Instead, as Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch (2012) argue, we need to

> [use] robust inquiry strategies . . . to gather symphonic and polylogical data that function dialectically (referring to the gathering of multiple viewpoints); dialogically (referring to the commitment to balance multiple interpretations); reflectively (considering the intersections of internal and external effects); and reflexively (deliberately unsettling observations and conclusions in order to resist coming to conclusions too quickly). (p. 134)

Listening, after all, is not just a matter of considering differing opinions; listening is an ongoing process that creates space for silence and reflection as well as creates opportunities for others to speak. Royster and Kirsch specifically refer to this posture of openness as "strategic contemplation." Strategic contemplation "entails creating a space where we can see and hold contradictions without rushing to immediate closure, neat resolutions, or to cozy hierarchies and binaries" (Royster & Kirsch, 2012, pp. 21-22). Practicing strategic contemplation in response to community-based writing projects gives us permission to pause, to acknowledge tensions, and to continue to learn from "a recursive process of thinking, writing, thinking, writing, thinking as the research spirals toward ever more fully rendered understandings and intellectual insights" (Royster & Kirsch, 2012, p. 86). Conducting this study and hearing the various perspectives of the community partners and their assessments of the project's goals and outcomes has been a continual process of discovery for me. Rhetorical listening and strategic contemplation allow me to move inward and outward—back and forth between my experiences, the community partners' responses, and existing research—to practice a dialectical, dialogical, reflective, and reflexive form of feminist praxis.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CLASS PROJECT AND METHODS

This study offers an examination of differences and what can be learned from them by presenting the results of a case study of a campus-community partnership in a first-year digital writing class I taught at Baylor University during the fall 2013 semester.[1] The videos my students created for this community writing project were 1-2-minute multimodal arguments related to some aspect of the General Education Development (GED) test. The prompt for this project

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1   This study has been approved by the Baylor University Institutional Review Board (#390505-6).

was designed in collaboration with a member of the community who runs a community resource website and distributes an online newsletter. She selected "community experts"—people she knew who worked with individuals at various stages in the GED process. Students then chose community experts to interview and composed videos based on what they discovered through various forms of research. The videos were posted on a central YouTube channel and community partners were asked to vote to identify a video that would be featured on the local community website. The videos were also freely available under Creative Commons licenses for any of the community partners to use for their own organizations or purposes.

After the semester ended, questionnaires were distributed and interviews were conducted to see how students, community partners, and the project's designers evaluated the success of the community video project. Of the ten community partners invited to participate in this study, five completed the online community partner questionnaire, which consisted of multiple-choice questions, open-ended questions, and Likert-type scales on their experiences working with students during the community video project. The community partner participants were affiliated with the local school district, the technical college, and a nonprofit women's organization. Of the five community partner participants, four were female and one was male. Two female community partners were selected to participate in 30-minute follow-up interviews based on the contradictions that emerged between their questionnaire responses.

GOAL-SETTING WITH THE COMMUNITY PARTNERS

During the initial planning meeting with the community partners, two broad goals were discussed: (1) to end up with videos that could be used on local websites to promote the GED, and (2) to connect the Baylor students with needs in the Waco community. These two goals are similar, but the primary difference is significant. The first goal is "product-focused": this view of the project defines the main purpose of the multimodal community-based writing project to be the creation of a quality product that will raise awareness about the GED. The second goal is "process-focused." Instead of stressing the composing process itself, this conception of the project focused on the learning process and inner transformation of the student-composers themselves. The five community partners who completed the questionnaire placed different emphases on these goals. When asked to describe their understanding of the goals of the GED Community Video Project, two community partners stressed the success of the end project while three community partners also mentioned the learning process of the students.

Table 21.1. Community partners' understanding of the goals of the GED Community Video Project

Product-Focused	Product- and Process-Focused
"I understood that the students would attempt to create videos that could be used as PSAs in the Waco community that would raise the awareness and the availability of local GED programs." "To raise awareness for the need to get an education."	"I hoped the videos would be created an [sic] reach a new audience of individuals that would be served by the GED services available in our community. A second goal, was for the Baylor student's [sic] themselves to see possibly a different side of the Waco community and how they could serve and become more involved." "I was hopeful to broaden the understanding of why many people take the GED and what they are able to achieve upon earning their GED." "I was hoping the students would hear the stories of the GED candidates and translate what they learned into a video that would inspire other GED candidates."

Table 21.1 shows the community partners' individual perspectives on what they understood to be the goals of project and what they hoped the project would ultimately achieve. While two of the community partners surveyed understood the overall objective of the project to be the final products that the students created, three of the community partner respondents were hoping that the project would benefit both the community and the students. The differences between these goals are subtle, but they underscore two different orientations towards the project.

Soliciting this feedback from the community partners about their initial expectations can be an important method of feminist intervention in community-based writing projects. By doing so, we can listen to and take stock of different interpretations at various points during the project. For instance, in response to the statement, "I left the initial planning meeting in August feeling like I could express my concerns about the GED Community Video Project," two of the community partners surveyed "strongly agreed" and three "agreed." These responses indicate that the planning meeting was perceived as a collaborative experience for the community partners. This kind of information can help us identify the points in which communication might be breaking down so that we can recalibrate our approach in future projects by checking in with community partners more frequently or using multiple methods (e.g., additional surveys, emails, one-on-one meetings, brief written reflections, etc.). As Ames Hawkins and Joan Giroux observe (Chapter 18, this collection), effective collaboration—

as a class or with community partners—requires opportunities to express dissent so that we can reexamine our goals and "move together."

A DIFFERENCE IN ROLES: THE CLIENT AND THE MENTOR

Though I did not provide concrete guidelines for how the community partners should relate to students aside from being available to participate in at least one interview, the community partners defined roles for themselves according to their own objectives and anticipated outcomes. Community partners who were more interested in the usability of the final products approached the project as "clients," whereas community partners who also stressed the learning process of the students adopted roles as "mentors." A key difference between these two orientations to the project is how each community partner ranked the most important qualities (e.g., honesty, openness, patience, listening, relevant skills, transparency, empathy, tact, and knowledge) that a student could bring to a multimodal community-based writing project.

Community Partner as Client

While community partners who interpret their roles in a community-based writing project as "clients" do not devalue the students' learning process, this outcome does not take precedence over their immediate material needs. Service-learning projects differ from other kinds of client-based projects in the sense that they incorporate reflection and a deeper analysis of systemic issues (Chappell, 2005, p. 38). Even so, community partners in service-learning projects are indeed clients who share their needs with university classes with the expectation that they will end up with a final product that they can use. In this conception of the community partner role, the success or failure of the project primarily rests upon the students' ability to deliver a usable product.

Kim[2] does not explicitly tell me that she saw her role in the multimodal community-based writing project as a client, but it is clear that her disappointment with the videos stems from her expectations of what she thought the final products should have been. For Kim, the purpose of this multimodal community-based writing assignment is to create videos that would appeal to the specific demographic with which she works at the GED testing center: people who are taking the GED. What she sees, instead, are videos that reflect narrow-minded stereotypes. Kim clearly expects students to have a more sophisticated understanding of the complex reasons that cause people to drop out of high school. In

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2   Names have been changed to protect the identities of the participants.

response to a question on the community partner survey that asked participants to rank the most important qualities that a student can bring to a community-based writing project, Kim ranks "knowledge" first (out of eight qualities). When I later ask Kim to explain this choice, she explains that students need to know what they are talking about in order to be effective.

Kim is the community partner who contacted me to express her concerns about the videos before voting. When I later meet with Kim to discuss her thoughts, she references videos that she found offensive or inappropriate because they featured single mothers or young people with drug addiction issues. She shakes her head and laughs loudly, awkwardly. She is quick to affirm that some of the videos were not "that bad," but her overall assessment is negative. In hindsight, there is no way that these videos can meet Kim's needs as a client, but my initial analysis of the data simply notes that the videos were lacking audience awareness. If these students had been hired as consultants or freelancers, people "with special skills who will provide requested services" (Chappell, 2005, p. 40), they would not be hired again.

Broadly speaking, the community partners who privilege the production of the videos are dissatisfied with the set of videos; however, they observe that some of the final products are successful. Various community partners refer to at least some of the videos as "really well thought out and well done," "a great youthful approach to media and social media messaging," and "overall, good." However, the concerns that Kim raises are legitimate. Some of the videos do not accurately represent the people who earn the GED. In fact, Kim feels so strongly about some of the videos that she says she would never show them to any of the test-takers she works with because she does not want anyone to think, "Is that what people really think of me?" And, in some cases, the answer is, unfortunately, "yes." The final products that the students create reveal this tension and overall lack of understanding.

Listening to this assumption about a community partner's role as a "client" has important implications for students and instructors. When a community partner views her role as a client, students need to prepare themselves to be treated, first, as a consultant or a freelancer and, second, as a learner-in-process. Additionally, students need to be aware of—and, to a certain extent, adopt—the "social motives" that correspond with working with a community partner that values productivity and efficiency over the individual learning processes of students (Deans, 2010, p. 457). Failing to step into the role that has been created for the student can be "trouble" when a student "holds fast to school motives, which keep the student focused on . . . individual learning rather than on the collective contribution to the community partner" (Deans, 2010, p. 459). This type of campus-community configuration also affects how feminist instructors prepare students to compose videos in response to sensitive issues.

One way that we can intervene is by designing specific assignments that prepare students to meet with community partners who view their roles as clients. While service-learning projects ought to be scaffolded with texts and discussions of readings that facilitate student knowledge and sensitivity, these community partners' expectations necessitate a higher level of engagement with these topics in order to ensure that students have mastered this knowledge prior to meeting with the community partner. In this model, the informative interview might not be not as much of a fact-finding mission as it is an opportunity to nuance or complicate what a student has already discovered through earlier forms of research. By reflecting on the needs of these community partners and making students aware of expectations beyond a facilitated learning experience, feminist teachers can better prepare students to create a high-quality product that meets their client's needs.

Community Partner as Mentor

These community partners typically see themselves as responsible for managing the students' learning experiences in addition to seeing to their own service needs. Deans (2010) reflects that these partnerships tend to be more successful because the teacher and the community partner prioritize the same motive (i.e., student learning), viewing students as "learners-in-development rather than as miniature professionals" (p. 458). Though students may not explicitly articulate this belief, this service-learning relationship is what many students expect from community-based writing experiences. Traditional schooling leads them to believe that every learning experience will be "facilitated" by an experienced teacher (Freedman & Adam, 1996). Students carry this expectation to service-learning contexts and assume that the community partner will fill this role. While this kind of mentor-mentee relationship can tax an already-overworked staff at a service organization, some community partners naturally adopt a stance towards students that places them in the role of co-teacher, or mentor.

At the time of this study, Cassie is the Community Resource Coordinator for the local K-12 school district. Her experiences with people in the community who might need to take the GED are mostly restricted to the parents of the children in the district. Like Kim, Cassie does not consciously identify her role in the project, but she demonstrates her commitment to the "mentor" role through her thoughtful ideas about structuring student learning in future community-based writing projects and her belief that "openness" is the most important quality that students can bring to projects like this. In fact, Cassie lists "knowledge" as the least important quality that a student could bring to a community-based writing project, a position that stands in contrast to Kim's perspective. When I ask Cas-

sie to explain why she privileges openness, she reflects that, "sometimes coming in with this preconceived notion that you already know the topic or know what's going on isn't the most important thing . . . that doesn't mean that [you're] open to putting [yourself] in that person's life." According to Cassie, students should be cognizant of their lack of knowledge and open to learning.

The community partners who prioritized student growth and transformation were satisfied with the project and feel that their goals were mostly met. Cassie, for example, notices that the students cared about the work that they completed. She notes, "You could tell that the students not only wanted to complete the assignment for credit, but were emotionally invested in the project and the outcomes. Their heart made the difference." This element, heart, is impossible to quantify and has little bearing on the quality or effectiveness of the final products. However, through her interaction with students, Cassie is able to assess that they possessed an additional element that made the project successful. Thus, for some community members, success is marked by change in the individual instead of what the individual can produce as a result of a 15-week college course.

When feminist teachers are aware of this community partner orientation towards service-learning projects, they can intervene in different ways during the assignment design stage. Since these community partners are typically more invested in the students' intellectual and emotional development over time, they are often more willing to meet with students multiple times. In fact, Cassie tells me meeting more frequently would have benefits beyond a strong partnership between individuals because the secondary outcome would likely be a stronger final product that the community partner could use. Additionally, community partners who take on a mentoring role might also have ideas for more focused readings or assignments that might complement what is being done in the classroom. To that end, knowing that a community partner saw her role as a mentor from the earliest stages of the project would likely enhance the student's learning process as well as the end product.

In sum, listening to the community partners' assumptions about their roles is a critical piece of feminist praxis. These assumptions affected how we all approached the project and have implications for how feminist teachers should design community-based writing projects that address different partner's expectations. For one, these various conceptions of community partner roles create additional roles that students must inhabit (e.g., "mentee/novice" or "consultant/freelancer") that I had not initially considered or prepared for. Second, these different understandings of their roles as community partners affect how they determine their desired outcomes and, ultimately, how they will evaluate the success of the project. Third, understanding the qualities that different community partners value affects how we ought to design assignments and pre-

pare students for their interactions with community members. And, lastly, these questions about the value of "knowledge" and "openness" can cause us to think more deeply about the context within which each community partner is working and which factors might motivate such strong and diametrically opposite responses. This information has implications for teachers, as well. For example, what do I assume about what my students know or do not know or about what they see or do not see? And at which points in my teaching do I want students to be knowledgeable or open and malleable? The only way that we can identify different orientations to the project is by seeking feedback from individual participants, listening to their different conceptions of the project, and forestalling our assessment of which perspective is "right" or more in line with our own pedagogical goals and expectations.

"HEARING WHAT WE CANNOT SEE": THE ONGOING PROJECT OF FEMINIST PRAXIS

Practicing rhetorical listening and strategic contemplation is a crucial form of feminist praxis not only because it allows us to hear conflicting reports but also because it gives us space to return to the data again and again to "[hear] what we cannot see," (Ratcliffe, 2005, p. 29). These points of disagreement about community partner roles and the most valuable qualities that a student can bring to a community-based writing project are fertile ground for further exploration. What I would like to emphasize here, however, are the limitations in my embodied perspective as a White feminist teacher at a four-year private university, which I have come to recognize by sitting with these multiple viewpoints and resisting the urge to force them to come to a neat resolution (Royster & Kirsch, 2012, p. 141). I am hopeful that I can transform what I learned from this process to design mutually beneficial community-based writing projects and to use this reflexive experience as a model for other feminist teachers and for my future students.

Kim's response to the videos as a dissatisfied client challenged me far beyond the conclusion of the class and the decision I ultimately made not to publicize any of the videos. On some level, I knew that her disappointment with the final product was grounded in more than her expectations as a client in a community-based writing project. And though I believed at the time that I was practicing rhetorical listening, the spaces for reflective and reflexive thinking encouraged by strategic contemplation allow me to see the ways in which I had truly failed to analyze my self and my lived experience in relation to what she was telling me (Royster & Kirsch, 2012, p. 149). While Kim does not cite my students' misunderstanding of race or social status in the videos, she is clearly uncomfortable

with the assumptions that some of my students are making about people who take the GED. And these assumptions reflect a deeply embedded "absent presence," an "ingrained sensibility" (Prendergast, 1998, p. 37) that reveals my own assumptions for not noticing these problems with the videos sooner.

Initially, I assume that my commitment to feminism and gender equality makes me sensitive to unfair power dynamics, to privilege, to issues of difference. I assume that I am aware of my own blind spots. I am wrong. What I discover, through the process of listening to these stakeholders and as I have continually returned to the results, is that I am all too often blind to expressions of race and class. I realize I do not always recognize some of the stereotypes of GED test-takers in my students' videos as mere stereotypes until I meet with Kim and begin to "[attend] to the complexities of embodied-ness" (Royster & Kirsch, 2012, p. 149). Furthermore, I do not always notice the lack of diversity in the students' videos because seeing "whiteness [as] the unexamined norm" (Tatum, 1997) is a problem many of my students and I unfortunately share. In fact, instead of confronting this issue directly, I had been telling myself that a different community partner, incidentally a White male, had specifically requested a video that would "scare kids straight" and steered some students in the direction of these stereotypes—particularly the stereotype of drug use. Some of the final drafts of the videos actually contain what could be considered racial microaggressions, or "the brief, commonplace, and daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental slights and indignities directed towards Black Americans, often automatically and unintentionally" (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008, p. 329), in the form of these stereotypes.

The absent presence of race in these videos is made even more palpable since one of the videos that offends Kim is a video titled "Why are These White Boys Punch Dancing? And How Does it Relate to Pie?" The reference to the boys' "whiteness" is not even an absent presence in this case, yet we did not see race in this video even as we were referencing it. Sam's video was celebrated by his peers in class and, later, during interviews months after the class ended. The primarily White class voted his video "Most Entertaining," and many of the students shared a link to his video through social media. In part, the success of Sam's video for this audience is grounded in the fact that he does not look beyond himself and his own embodied experiences. After analyzing videos on YouTube, Sam concludes that humor is an essential key to success, so he composes and stars in a video of guys "punch dancing." Punch dancing typically refers to young men dancing out their feelings, usually anger, à la the classic *Footloose*. This dance style is typically sincere and only incidentally funny.

Sam's video is effective on one level because it is memorable; however, the video ultimately prioritizes humor over sensitivity to his audience. The video

begins with a young man dancing, his rubbery limbs hypnotically swaying to a laidback techno track. An overlay of alphabetic text reads "Why are these white boys dancing?" Later text reveals "These horrible dancers finally decided to get their G.E.D." and the celebratory dancing-out-of-feelings continues until the video ends. The basic message is that earning the GED is "easy as pie," and the video aims to motivate viewers to sign up to take the test because then you can also celebrate by eating pie.

Sam's video is catchy, weird, and creative. However, his video also presents a troubled perspective on race, class, and gender. While he seems to be drawing on a comedic stereotype that "white men can't [insert verb here]" by making fun of how badly he and his friends are dancing, he also frames the issue of the GED in ways that could alienate his intended audience in multiple ways. For instance, he does not analyze how his odd brand of humor might play to diverse audiences or how people outside of Baylor might perceive young White men wearing Baylor shirts dancing in front of buildings at Baylor. Moreover, Kim mentions that she does not like how Sam quips that the process of earning a GED is "as easy as pie." For many GED test-takers, earning the GED is an achievement that takes considerable effort and sacrifice. Saying that the GED is as easy as pie might be catchy, but Kim observes that this description diminishes the achievement. As a result, Sam inadvertently offends a community partner who thinks that he is making light of a serious issue.

Looking back, I can see countless points in which I could have intervened to ensure that Sam and his peers better understood the community audience and context. For one, I could have designed the project from the outset to encourage more accurate GED stories and more fair representations of diversity in the videos. The critique about a lack of diversity was brought up during a mid-process workshop in which members of the community were invited to share their feedback, but students felt that they did not have enough time to re-shoot their videos. And though students conducted secondary research on issues related to race and social status, I could have structured more opportunities for students to understand the context of the GED test-taking process by asking students to tour the facility or to meet with recent test-takers. Lastly, after the project ended, I could have listened to the cues Kim was offering that misrepresentations of race or class played a role in her assessment of the final products instead of just accepting that the top five videos—as ranked by the students, the two community partners who voted, and myself—did not accurately represent the people who actually take the GED.

Despite my inclination to critique social structures that privilege one group over another, I am stunned to realize how frequently I do not see—that I am only immediately critical when I am not the one on the "right" side of the power

dynamic. This truth is hard to accept, but it is also what makes listening to other perspectives and practicing strategic contemplation so important. I wish I could go back in time and confront these issues of race and class directly, a teaching moment Beth Godbee skillfully models in her essay "Pedagogical 'Too-Much-ness': A Feminist Approach to Community-Based Learning, Multi-Modal Composition, Social Justice Education, and More" (Chapter 17, this collection). Instead, I missed a significant opportunity to listen to tensions, intervene at crucial moments, and provide Kim with useful videos. And, consequently, my students missed learning an important lesson about how we need to "reflect on what we are seeing or not seeing" when we compose products for community audiences (Royster & Kirsch, 2012, p. 17). While Cassie might have recognized my students' "heart" and good intentions, their growth and development was stunted by my lack of vision about the role that our embodied experiences should have played in the research and composition of these videos.

Ratcliffe (2005) exposes similar blind spots surrounding her "(in)visible whiteness;" and I echo her questions: "What lessons am I (un)consciously sending to my students, my readers, my neighbors, my daughter, myself?" (p. 3). And in what ways did I unconsciously contribute to my students' "failures" in this multimodal community-based writing project because I first failed to see how race and class are represented in these videos? Ratcliffe proposes an alternative to feeling guilt in the form of accountability, which requires us to pay attention and listen to our daily lives (p. 7). As we lay our stories next to each other, we can begin to "expose troubled identifications with gender and whiteness . . . and to conceptualize tactics for negotiating such troubled identifications" (Ratcliffe, 2005, p. 8). Like Ratcliffe, I am committed to this project of hearing what we cannot see so that we can learn from our mistakes. We can model this reflective and reflexive process of strategic contemplation for our students; we can show them our missteps and identify what we have learned; and we can, as Jess Tess, Trixie G. Smith, & Katie Manthey advocate (Chapter 19, this collection), "come out" ourselves as vulnerable individuals who do not always have the right or definitive answer. And then we can begin to structure community-based writing projects in ways that fully consider the rhetorical, ethical, and feminist implications of our work.

IMPLICATIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Rhetorical listening and strategic contemplation are strategies of feminist praxis that can help us build important feedback into new architectures of participation for community partners in community-based writing projects. These strategies have important implications for how we interact with community partners

at various stages during the project; how we design course assignments; how we prepare students to interact with and reflect on their relationships with community partners; how we analyze our embodied experiences in relation to community issues; how we assess the final products; and how we revise future projects. I conclude this essay with recommendations for teachers as we compose new methods of feminist interventions in community-based writing projects. These recommendations are intended to encourage teacher-researchers who have been reluctant to collect data from stakeholders beyond the classroom during or after community-based writing projects.

First, I urge feminist teachers to solicit feedback from community partners involved in community-based writing projects. It is not enough to assess a project's success or failure based on our own or our students' impressions of learning outcomes. In particular, we need to listen to community partner perspectives in order to understand how they interpret our collaborative goals, adopt unique roles to accomplish these goals, and assess a project's usefulness for the community. We can also gain insight into the kinds of qualities (e.g., knowledge/openness) that students ought to bring to these projects and how our teaching styles might confirm or contradict these values. This information will assist us in designing even more agile community-based projects that respond to situated and context-specific needs.

We must also consider what we will do with conflicting or contradictory approaches to the same project. I have offered rhetorical listening and strategic contemplation as two strategies of feminist praxis that create space for us to listen across difference and resist too-neat resolution. The challenge, however, is to decide how to handle impasses that require immediate action, such as "Which video should we select to feature on this website?" We must create an environment in which public sharing is not the default *telos* of a video assignment. Risks should be evaluated, and all stakeholders should be consulted before accelerating the process of digital delivery (Adsanatham, Garrett, & Matzke, 2013; Porter, 2009).

Another suggestion is to include community stakeholders at more regular intervals. Community partners should be informed prior to the initial meeting what the levels of commitment could be. They should also be invited to participate on community expert panels and give feedback as often as they are available or willing. Even if the students are only composing videos for one "client," multiple community partners from different sectors should be invited so that we enact a logic of accountability and continue to grapple with different perspectives (Ratcliffe, 2005, p. 31-32). Additionally, projects like this would be vastly improved by including the perspectives of other stakeholders in the community such as the GED test-takers themselves. Community partners should be consulted to recom-

mend additional community members who might interested in participating in a focus group interview and/or providing feedback at later stages.

Lastly, we can design more opportunities for students to practice their own forms of rhetorical listening and strategic contemplation as they interact with and compose videos for community partners. One practical suggestion is to make the due date for the final project well in advance of the last day of class so that students have time to listen to and reflect on different responses to their videos. By creating space for discordant notes, we can demonstrate the productive potential of actually hearing each other and nuancing our understanding of what is or is not a successful video. We should also design opportunities for students to reflect on their embodied experiences and examine how these elements might affect their ability to reach their intended audiences. Furthermore, we should share with our students our own mistakes while practicing rhetorical listening and strategic contemplation so that we can serve as self-reflexive models. By implementing these strategies, we can expand our empathy, our sensitivity, and our ability to communicate across different perspectives.

Community-based writing is not without its critics, but each of the community partners who took this questionnaire made comments like this "idea is a good one" and "projects like this are great." These final assessments belie the sense that projects like this might not be worth doing. Following Mathieu (2005), I would argue that we persist in participating in community-based writing even, or perhaps especially, when we disagree because we are ever hopeful that we can and will improve (p. 19). This orientation towards revision—re-vision, re-seeing, and trying again—is feminist praxis that drives us onward in community-based writing projects, inspiring us to intervene so that we may create new structures in which we can all participate more equitably. Listening and being open to different responses and evolving ideas is just the first step toward creating more successful community-based writing projects that enact an ethics of hope and care for the benefit of ourselves and our communities.

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