

From Reflection to Reflexivity: Challenging Students' Conceptions of Writing, Self, and  
Society in the Community Writing Classroom

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# **From Reflection to Reflexivity: Challenging Students' Conceptions of Writing, Self, and Society in the Community Writing Classroom**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation, “From Reflection to Reflexivity: Challenging Students’ Conceptions of Writing, Self, and Society in the Community Writing Classroom,” examines the disconnect that characterizes much of the discussion of reflective writing in community writing studies and argues for the potential of reflexivity as a concept to further develop the kinds of reflective writing assigned in community writing classrooms. Many practitioners and scholars view reflective writing as a potentially powerful tool that may help students learn challenging or abstract theories and practices from their own community writing experiences. With such potential, it can be disappointing when student reflective writing does not achieve teacher expectations of critical thinking and analysis, stopping before critical engagement and understanding is achieved. Instead, it often centers on students’ personal feelings and motivations that shape or arise from their community experiences. This dissertation argues that one reason for such a disconnect between teacher expectations and actual student writing, comes from the word “reflection” itself. While a traditional understanding of reflective writing asks students to look back on their experiences, observations, feelings, and opinions, community writing teachers use the term “reflection” with qualifiers like “critical,” “sustained,” or “intellectually rich.” In qualifying their expectations for reflective writing, teachers are in fact asking for something very different from reflection, namely, reflexivity. When reflexive thinking is presented to students as “qualified reflection” it loses the considerable theoretical grounding that makes it a particularly unique way of using experiences as the foundation for inquiry. Building on theories of epistemological reflexivity for researchers in the social sciences, this dissertation highlights the methodological reflexivity theorized and practiced by feminist researchers. Feminist reflexivity specifically affords researchers more nuanced ways of looking at issues of positonality, social transformation, and agency. Such strategies have the potential for moving student reflections from private writings toward writings that impact students’ understandings of the rhetorical and theoretical issues that community writing hopes to illustrate. This combination of feminist reflexivity and community writing reflections can provide community writing theorists and practitioners with alternative ways to solve reflective writing’s challenges.

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*Introduction*  
**“What was the prompt for that?”**  
**The Reflective Challenges of Community Writing**

As a writing teacher and a feminist, my research and teaching has often centered on ways to encourage students to connect classroom writing and learning with a sense of civic and social responsibility. My belief in the value of experiential learning and community involvement has led me to incorporate community literacy projects into my writing courses; while I found that some of these projects enhanced my course curricula, others seemed to add confusion and chaos to the semester. Indeed, I was continually frustrated by both student and community partner perceptions that our class was performing glorified community service.

After team-teaching a professional writing course that centered on partner projects within a framework of community engagement, I conducted some preliminary, qualitative interviews with students who had taken the course. Most notably, I found that issues of reciprocity were central to students’ perceptions of the course’s value. While some students felt that their purpose was to “actually work with and actually help people” or that the coursework was “for more than just a grade,” many students still had trouble with projects having both personal and public value. That is, unlike community writing projects, most classroom work has a clearer audience (the teacher) and a clearer purpose (follow instructions to receive a good grade). Community writing scholars have referred to this type of writing as “private” and forms of writing that have extra audiences and multiple purposes as “public” (Shultz and Ruggles Gere 1998, Bacon 1997, Watters 1995, Mansfield 1993). For example, one student told me of how, after completing her initial research, she felt that her community partner’s proposed project was not the organization’s most pressing need. When I asked her how that had affected her motivation, she said that she had had trouble working hard because she felt she had a better idea of what to do than her

partner. Of the whole experience, she offered, “What if there is something else I want to do? What if there are better causes?” I read this scenario as a disconnect between the student’s standard expectations of traditional, private classroom writing, where the student’s perspective carries considerable weight and drives project motivation, with the more unconventional expectations of public writing in a new environment. This different type of writing asked her to work within a new value system where it might have seemed as though her own perspective carried less weight. It was clear that this student, and others, had difficulty understanding the value of working with someone who’s goals were not her own.

Similarly, my co-teacher and I found that students reported difficulties negotiating relationships and priorities with their community partners. Some students felt disconnected and out of place within their partner organizations and expressed dissatisfaction with their working relationships. Even a student who was continually invested in the course project offered that she found it hard to stay interested in the work when her partner was “not passionate.” I had asked for students to identify and internalize the missions and values of their partner non-profit organizations. By learning about how the organization worked, what its focus and goals were, as well as who the organization hoped to reach, we had hoped students would come to understand how and why an organization made the decisions it did. Instead, the prompt did not always result in stronger or clearer student-partner relationships. Students were still confused by the non-hierarchical organizational models, as well as by the collaborative nature of decision-making and the prioritization of resources. This disconnect between what students expected and what they found led them to question the organization, rather than their own perceptions, which then led to strained and often unsatisfying interactions with their community partners.

Students' difficulty in understanding both their role and the role of the community partner in an academic setting effected both their perceptions of the work they did for the partner and the work they did specifically for the course. When asked more directly about their final, reflective essay, a place where they could overtly negotiate their feelings of agency and social transformation, almost all students needed to be reminded of the assignment. One student said, "I can't really remember it, I'm not going to lie," while another said, "what was the prompt for that?" When reminded, students noted that while they didn't really remember writing the essay, they knew to rearticulate the goals for the course. One student even posited that reflection was more helpful to the teacher than to the students, and that she's sure she "laid it on pretty thick" in the essay itself. Even a student who was preparing for a future career in teaching noted that while she knew "academically" the value of reflective practices for students, the essay was not a valuable part of her learning experience nor did it help her understand why she enjoyed some parts of the project more than others. It is clear that the essay did not serve its intended purpose. The reflective prompt, alone or even coupled with the course content explicitly aimed at expanding students' understanding of diverse working models, relationships, and roles, was not enough to move students away from rote reflection and toward critical analysis and recursive thinking. Instead, even dedicated, thoughtful students fell back on the tried and true forms of course reflection, writing, "what I liked most was..." "what was most challenging was..." or "this experience taught me... ."

At the time, I read these interviews as representative of my own limitations in teaching community writing projects. I was relatively new to community writing curricula and was unaware of the amount of front end and management work an instructor must put into creating a successful community writing course. With that in mind, these responses have been particularly

useful in problematizing and shaping the standard reflective writing components of these courses, helping me question the reliability of a single end-of-term reflection. In response, I have implemented “fieldwork journals” where students are continuously asked to reflect on their activities, writings, and relationships. Additionally, I’ve begun to reconceive how my role as instructor can facilitate stronger understandings of the different cultures students experience outside of the classroom. These changes to the course structure and writing assignments have helped students begin to work through their expectations of public and private writing and unique partner relationships, but they have not affected students’ understandings of their own agency, positionality, and role in social transformation the way I had hoped they would. While their reflective responses are now certainly more detailed and nuanced, they still read like diaries, not critical engagements of their projects, roles, and relationships. Interestingly, I observed that the more challenging a student found a community writing project, the more simplistic and standard her reflective writing became; a literal balance to the undefined nature of community writing projects.

I find it illuminating that a review of recent literature shows that it is not only novice community writing teachers who face students’ difficulty in navigating the challenges of reflection in community writing projects. Many notable scholars in rhetoric and composition posit certain limitations of community writing curricula even as they embrace its potential for change. Much of this research is done by examining service-learning coursework, the major branch of community writing that involves student work (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters 1997, Bridwell-Bowles 1997, Dean 2006, Eyler and Giles 1996). At its most basic level, service-learning is a form of experiential learning that combines volunteer service and education. In Combining Service and Learning in Higher Education authors Gray et al. highlight three

perceived inadequacies in higher education that initially gave rise to service-learning programs: (1) the inability of American education to give students the skills and knowledge necessary to compete with their global counterparts; (2) the increasing concern over American youths' abilities to meet the responsibilities of living in a participatory democracy; and (3) the lack of public funding for social and environmental services (1). For many public and professional organizations, including the Education Commission of the States (Campus Compact) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the appeal of service-learning is that it holds the potential to effect these educational and social concerns. For students specifically, service-learning is a way they can explore the relationships between their academic learning and social and civic experiences. Commonly defined as having three axes—learning, serving, and reflecting—service-learning pedagogies are more comprehensive than experiential learning; they are a “spiraling process of knowledge acquisition, informed action, and personal and social reflection” that is not found in other looser combinations of coursework and community service (Sapp and Crabtree 411). This spiral or reciprocal relationship between service and learning is the link between theory and practice, and it promotes connections between the academy and community and inquiry and social action.

At the same time, many writing researchers and teachers, most notably Ellen Cushman and Bruce Herzberg, problematize existing understandings of the philosophies of community writing. These scholars question whether service-learning alone can create a social consciousness, and whether community writing curricula are enough to enact citizenship (Cushman, “The Public Intellectual” and Herzberg, “Community Service and Critical Teaching”). For both Cushman and Herzberg, problems in community writing pedagogies often lie in the unarticulated yet inherent relationships among stakeholders (students, faculty, and

community members). These problems manifest themselves in discussions of the benefits of community writing. After reading his students' reflective essays, Herzberg notes that his students were not linking their service-learning experiences to issues of community structures and civic and social justice like he had asked. Instead, their responses were personal, focusing on perceptions and emotions stimulated by their experiences with "the other<sup>1</sup>." Cushman, too, emphasizes this limitation of service-learning and argues that the value of community writing needs to lie in the creation of reciprocal and dialogic relationships between students and community members. Aaron Schutz and Anne Ruggles Gere characterize this disconnect between Herzberg's and Cushman's goals and student experiences as an issue of the "private" versus the "public" in community writing. If community writing's value lies only in the realm of the private (what individual students learned from their unique experiences and share in reflective writing), then community writing fails to meet its public potential for civic and community change (Schutz and Gere 131).

These critiques deal largely with the theoretical and practical relationships between the service-learning axes and how an unbalance can detract from community writing's goals as well as student learning and satisfaction. These broad concepts are further and more specifically developed in the literature focusing on community writing and professional and technical writing. J. Blake Scott argues that an emphasis on community-based audiences, context, discourse communities, and modes of collaboration make community writing coursework extremely attractive to many technical and professional writing teachers (289). Scott acknowledges community writing's potential for real civic engagement and change, yet he

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<sup>1</sup> Herzberg shares a conversation his colleague overheard regarding a service-learning assignment: "we're going to some shelter tomorrow and we have to write about it." "No sweat. Write that before you went, you had no sympathy for the homeless, but the visit to the shelter opened your eyes. Easy A" (309).

identifies a “hyperpragmatist” ideology that pervades most community writing coursework. Scott’s conception of hyperpragmatism highlights competing ideas of who should benefit from community writing. For many practitioners, the main goal of this type of pedagogy is to ensure students’ practical and professional success in workplace-like environments. For Scott, like Cushman and Herzberg, community writing pedagogies fail if they privilege the student experience over student-community reciprocity.

This emphasis on the relationships between community writing stakeholders is echoed in Lee-Ann M. Kastman Breuch’s “The Overruled Dust Mite: Preparing Technical Communication Students to Interact with Clients (2001).” In this study, Kastman Breuch identifies specific communication problems between students and clients including “overruled requests,” “unheard requests,” and “need for affirmation,” and she argues that the perceived pseudotransactionality of certain forms of community writing (writing that is intended to meet teacher expectations only) negates the complex and important issues that client and partner writing projects could address: authority, ownership, and reciprocity (198). Similarly, Robert W. McEachern (2001) identifies difficulties that can arise when students interact with nonprofit organizations whose management structures differ from traditional business or educational models. For McEachern, community writing pedagogies’ value is greatly limited if the relationships between students and clients are not explicitly addressed.

The overarching thread that links these critiques of community writing scholars is community writing’s inability to reach its potential for both student and community transformation. Even if the final “product” of a community writing partnership is successful (i.e. a well-written grant proposal or an effective public relations document) most students are not moving beyond a basic, formal reflective stance to a more critical, recursive, and challenging

stance that allows them to create their own understanding of how and why the project was successful, what its explicit and implicit values were, and how communication strategies were successfully or unsuccessfully deployed. This is particularly clear by looking at these courses' reflective writing assignments. In its current iteration, the traditional reflective writing prompt is not enough to bridge the disconnects both students and teachers identify between the student perceptions of community writing coursework's value and teachers' perceptions of the coursework possible added value. What are these prompts lacking and why do students respond to them in such a limited way?

In "Facing Up to the 'Stranger' in Community Service," Margaret Himley makes explicit the limitations of traditional concepts of reflection in community writing courses. In this piece, Himley argues that many students in her service-learning class:

didn't take the time to engage deeply or reflexively with their sites or roles, found all their beliefs about the poor confirmed, or with missionary zeal believed that "[a]rmed with a point of light, they [would] lead just one person, often a very cute child, out of the darkness her parents willfully cast her into. (Stanley 60, quoted in Himley 417)

Himley's issues with reflective writing are phrased for dramatic effect, but the meaning is clear: that reflection is a one-way process, a process where communities move from need to less need, and where students move from being good people to being better people, from not knowing to knowing. This is the standard model of "banking" education and students expect it, look for it, and know how to present it. While I did not experience quite the same reaction among my students, Himley does draw critical attention to the disconnect I experienced between student perceptions and the goals of community writing. It was, just like Himley and Herzberg describe,

a one-way street that students easily navigated based on their own previously reinforced expectations with both community service and reflective writing.

For Himley, these problems of agency, positionality, and social transformation should be critiqued and analyzed using feminist ethnographic theories, as “Feminist ethnography [...] has come a long ways toward understanding more clearly the problems of entering sites, knowing strangers, writing up the experience, and gaining professionally from the encounters” (419).

Himley uses feminist research practices as a way to help her understand and analyze these issues, yet I would argue that it is just as important for students to understand their own positive and negative responses to community writing projects. At its best, reflective writing is a place where students can act like researchers, engaging in their sites of inquiry, asking themselves challenging questions, and working through problems. My experiences, combined with existing contemporary community writing research, shows that reflective assignments can help students work through the practical and theoretical challenges inherent in the flexible and undefined nature of community writing projects, but for this to happen we need to give students the tools to both embrace and interrogate these challenges, particularly the problems that can arise when students encounter situations that upset real or perceived notions of agency, reciprocity, and social transformation. Himley’s explicit articulation of the interpretative value of reading her own responses to community writing’s challenges through the lens of feminist research offers interesting ways of theorizing students’ challenges with community writing reflection.

Feminist researchers have been addressing similar issues within scholarly research. In fact, many prominent feminist scholars, including Nancy Naples and Gesa Kirsch, argue that a feminist theoretical framework helps researchers negotiate issues of positionality and reflexivity (Naples 2003, Kirsch 1999). These scholars support research methodologies that emphasize

disruptions to traditional research power structures, changes to participant agency, and continuous self-critique. How might this type of thinking shape the reflective writing of community writing courses? That is, would exposing students to feminist research methodologies change the way they respond to reflective writing prompts?

My own experiences with student writers have shown that when given the proper tools and opportunities students are not only able to articulate the feelings and motivations that shape their work, they are also able to make thoughtful and critical connections between their individual responses and course goals. If reflective writing is to be used as such a tool in community writing courses, then we must rethink the thinking and writing strategies that support it and develop new ways of encouraging students to recursively analyze and critique their experiences.

This dissertation will combine an analysis of community writing's reflective challenges with an understanding of how researchers, particularly those who identify with feminist research strategies, navigate similar challenges in their own work through reflexive thinking and writing. Reflexivity provides feminist scholars with more nuanced ways of looking at issues of positionality, social transformation, and agency. Such strategies have the potential for moving student reflections from private writings toward writings that impact students' understandings of the rhetorical and theoretical issues that community writing hopes to illustrate. This combination of feminist reflexivity and community writing reflections can provide community writing theorist and practitioners with alternative ways to solve reflective writing's challenges.

*Chapter One*

*Creating Truths: Defining, Revising, and Problematizing Reflective Writing*

Chapter one examines the history of reflective writing in both writing studies and community writing scholarship. Beginning with a discussion of the rhetorical nature of reflective writing activities, their different forms, and their theoretical foundations, chapter one uses Kathleen Blake Yancey's Portfolios in the Writing Classroom: An Introduction and selected chapters from Linda Adler-Kassner's, Robert Crooks's, and Ann Watters's Writing the community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition to illustrate how the challenges of using reflective writing as a tool for critical analysis and social critique stem from reflective writing's theoretical underpinnings—how it is both framed and invoked for students. This chapter argues that the disconnect found in reflective writing scholarship between instructors' cognitive goals and students' interpretations of these goals develops from a broader issue: the articulation of what we want reflective writing to do.

*Chapter Two*

*Diverging from Reflection: Reflexivity as Theory and Method*

Chapter two illustrates how reflexivity and reflection diverge in the scholarship of the natural and social sciences and in contemporary critical pedagogy. Building off of Bourdeau's and Harding's critiques of epistemological reflexivity, chapter two discusses social science strategies for engaging in reflexive research and the subtle difference between strategies for reflection and strategies for reflexivity. It highlights multiplicity of definitions of reflexivity as well as the truly unique dimensions of reflexive thinking. Chapter two argues that by understanding the ways that the social sciences and critical

pedagogy perceive reflexivity we can better understand how reflection as unarticulated reflexivity may challenge teachers and students of community writing.

### *Chapter Three*

#### *What's in a Name? How Feminist Research Methodologies Shape Reflexivity*

Chapter three argues that feminist research methodologies offer a unique way of understanding reflexivity, separate from its relationship to reflection. The chapter highlights how Harding's foundational principles of a feminist standpoint—fragmented identities or positonalities as a resource for research, a nuanced understanding of the goals for social change and transformation, and a critique of the researcher's motives and values through a politics of location—create a methodological reflexivity grounded in the personal and the political. By illustrating the central characteristics of activist and feminist methodologies, chapter three presents feminist reflexivity as a form of recursive, personal analysis that builds off of feminist standpoint theory's emphasis on difference and experience.

### *Chapter Four*

#### *The Challenges of Reflection in Community Writing Models: The Case for Feminist Reflexivity*

Chapter four will illustrate how reflective writing functions in a variety of different ways in community writing courses: as loosely structured places for students to thoughtfully consider the genesis, practice, and implications of their writing. In a detailed discussion of Deans' *Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning for Composition*, this chapter will describe the foundations of three different models for community writing—"writing for," "writing about," and "writing with"—and will explicate the articulated and unarticulated goals for each form, including their explicit or implicit use of reflection to meet those goals. BY highlighting how each form of community writing exposes the challenges

inherent in using reflective writing to reach reflexive thinking and writing, the chapter will show how incorporation of specific feminist strategies for reflexivity can enhance students' abilities to meet academic course goals and to make their experienced reality central to meeting those goals.

### *Chapter Five* *Pedagogy of Reflexivity and Reflection in Community Writing*

Chapter five develops the feminist strategies for reflexivity illustrated in chapter four into a rationale and structure for a reflexive pedagogy of community writing. Situating this pedagogy with the current movements in community writing research, this chapter argues for specific writing assignments that integrates reflexive thinking and writing into the a general community writing curriculum in overt and continuous ways. Additionally, chapter five suggests ways to assess both reflexive student writing individually and a reflexive community writing pedagogy more generally.

### *Conclusion* *Reflexivity and Community Writing: A Case for Empirical Research*

This concluding section will argue that the theoretical and practical work undertaken by this dissertation represents a valuable and logical extension to contemporary discussions of the futures of feminist research, community writing, and reflection studies. It will suggest empirical research as an avenue for further exploration of a pedagogy of feminist reflexivity for community writing.

*Chapter One*  
**Creating Truths: Defining, Revising, and Problematizing Reflective Writing**

*Well, I did feel better about this paper than my other ones until I got it back. I didn't predict how you would react to my paper very well at all... You did agree that my sources were good, but I still didn't give enough illustration of my points. I agree with you, though, that examples and quotes from Julie Hill [a professional source] would improve the paper. I knew that you don't agree with my position (what happened to truth?) but I do think that if I had put quotes and examples from my interview with Julie that it would have made my point stronger. I guess what I might ask you is "Whose truth?" That may be the point that I will want to bring up in the paper. To me, public relations is like law: the both DO have "party lines," take stands that they try to illustrate as truths. As far as my pronoun reference goes.... .*

Susan's Refection (Yancey 42)

Reflection and teaching have been linked in a variety of ways in the contemporary discourses of writing studies. Scholars have identified reflective practice as a valuable tool for teacher training and program administration, and have articulated self-reflection as one key to professional growth and success (Bishop 1999, Ede 2002, Howard 1994, Straub 2002). At the same time, very little is written about reflective writing by students in the composition classroom. In fact, in the last 15 years only one major rhetoric and writing text has been published that defines student reflective writing, its goals, and its processes. This text, Kathleen Blake Yancey's *Reflection in the Writing Classroom* (1998) begins by invoking this scholarly gap, stating, "reflection has played but a small role in the history of composing. A single article links reflection and the composing process, Shannon Pianko's 'Reflection: A Critical Component

on the Composition Process,’ published in 1979.” Pianko’s work, as described by Yancey, defines reflection as the moments where students pause, reflect back over their work, and revise and continue, a habit of more advanced and successful writers. Since Yancey assertion, additional work has addressed self-reflections role in the writing classroom (Emmons 2003, Kameen 1999, Kyburz 2002), but Yancey’s claim that student reflective writing has been undertheorized remains true.

Appearing early in Yancey’s work, this description is key to understanding the evolving role of reflection in writing studies and Yancey’s purpose for writing this particular text. First, the moment, coupled with later discussions of Dewey’s and Vygotsky’s theories of learning, frames early discussions of reflection as a behavior, generally including projection, retrospection, and revision. That is, first we set goals for learning, second, we identify strategies for reaching these goals, and third, we evaluate whether or not our method succeeded. Reflection, defined this way, is a habit of mind that supports problem definition, learning, and knowing.

Additionally, Yancey’s decision to begin her study with cognitive and physiological definitions of reflection highlights how little work had been done on theorizing reflection as an artifact of the writing classroom—a product, not just a process. True, reflection had been acknowledged as a rhetorical process that can be linked to theories of writing (Shön 1983, Hillocks 1995), but Yancey’s invocation of Pianko’s work and the noted subsequent lack of engagement in academic publishing in writing studies makes a clear statement: reflective writing itself is the byproduct of reflective thinking. By teaching a behavior or process we can create successful writing.

It is important to note that while Yancey identifies a dearth of published works on reflective writing it still plays a considerable part in what happens in actual writing classrooms.

As of 1997, Yancey identified four ways in which reflection was a valued process and product in writing courses: one, reflection as part of the narration of writing portfolios; two, reflection as part of writing teacher development; three, reflection as a necessary part of curriculum assessment; and four, reflection as a method for systemic programmatic change (7). Clearly then, reflection, the process and the product, are a valuable part of writing studies for students, teachers, and administrators, which makes the lack of academic discussion all the more curious.

It is in this moment that Yancey writes her text, still the only monograph on reflection as a writing process and a writing product. In fact, as she notes early in the book, her goal is two-fold: to foster reflective writing, produced by reflective writers (33). The distinction between writer and writing, process and product, is key to understanding how Yancey reshapes the discussion of reflective writing, moving away from a single behavioral model and towards a cyclical process of thought, action, writing, and revising.

One way Yancey does this is by framing her own experiences and assignments from the writing classroom through the educational concepts of Donald Schön. In particular, Yancey highlights Schön's concepts of reflection-in-action from his works *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) and *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1987). Schön's original texts are not about students in a formal classroom setting. These texts focus on how individuals can learn from their own professional experiences once they leave a classroom. Today, Schön's work is often invoked as a cornerstone of professional development, as Schön's focus is how one can best learn through critical analysis of one's experiences and through the connections between theories and practices.

Schön, expanding and interpreting the work of other scholars who examining how and why people learn, such as Dewey (1915), Piaget (1971), and Vygotsky (1987), introduces the

concepts “reflection-in-action”—the process of thinking on one’s feet and reflecting on a situation and previous similar experiences as they happen, and “reflection-on-action”—an analysis of one’s reaction and response to a situation that has passed. Schön’s work, and that of others who argue for reflective professional practice, highlights the concept of continuous learning throughout one’s life, outside the classroom. It is an independently motivated process of personal objectives and is highly self-regulated. Two fields where reflective practice has been embraced are in education and healthcare. In these fields, practitioners experience ever-changing contexts and must problem solve on their feet, and they must seamlessly integrate both theory and practice into their work.

With this history and context of reflective practice, one could argue that there is not necessarily a clear connection between professional development and reflective writing in the classroom. In fact, reading Schön’s work from the perspective of a writing teacher raises two key questions: one, in what ways are reflective professionals like student writers; and two, if reflective practice is self-motivated and self-monitored, how can one develop writing assignments that foster it? In answering these two questions, Yancey’s text offers a nuanced and useful understanding of reflection and reflective writing for the writing studies field. First, Yancey argues that like the professionals described by Schön, student writers confront many situations that could call for, or as she notes, even encourage a routine, normalized response (23). Within the healthcare field, this could be a provider witnessing a collection of symptoms and giving a standard diagnosis. As Schön notes, this type of response is “tacit, spontaneously delivered without conscious deliberation; and it works, yielding intended outcomes as long as the situation falls within the boundaries of what we have learned to treat as normal” (qtd. in Yancey 28). Within the writing classroom it could be a student encountering a “movie review”

assignment or a short “self-evaluation.” These are assignments students have encountered before, where their responses can come from their known experiences with similar documents, rather than from situated and current reflection and analysis.

The majority of Yancey’s text is devoted to the second question: how can writing assignments support this kind of recursive and generative thinking and writing? Yancey presents three types of reflection, a primary frame taken from Schön and re-theorized for a writing classroom:

*Reflection-in-action*, the process of reviewing, projecting, and revising, which takes place within a composing event;

*Constructive reflection*, the process of developing a cumulative, multi-selved, multi-voiced identity, which takes place between and among composing events; and

*Reflection-in-presentation*, the process of articulating the relationships between and among the multiple variables of writing and the writer in a specific context for a specific audience. (200)

Within her chapters devoted to reworking professional reflection for the writing classroom, Yancey creates a history and a future for each of her categories. Again, while little past work has centered on reflective writing as a product, Yancey weaves contemporary writing theory into the discussion of reflection. For example, in her chapter “Reflection-in-Action” she illustrates the ways Schön’s work can be read as composing process research—linking Schön’s process of “reviewing and monitoring” to Sondra Perls’s (1980) “introspection and projection,” and Nancy Sommers’s (1980) work on the relationship between writers, readers, and the text (25). This explicit linking proves Yancey’s central premise: that well-theorized reflective writing has an

important place in the writing classroom regardless of how little overt attention “reflection” has received in the field.

Yancey’s additional premise is that the rhetorical nature of reflection and the types of writing assignments she features can foster well-theorized reflections. She argues that the re-theorization and implementation of traditional writing assignments such as the writer’s memo or writer’s companion piece offer students valuable opportunities to write and think reflectively. These accounts of individual writing processes hold reflective potential because, as Yancey points out, writers cannot reflect on what they do not know, and these assignments provide clear and useful starting places for students to become knowledgeable of their own writing. This is Schön’s reflection-in-action, encouraging students to articulate their own tacit understandings of their writing, assess their own texts, and synthesize and judge their own writing across assignments (Yancey 33). Again, these goals match nicely to movements in traditional writing theory and practice that emphasize self-assessment and multiple writing contexts (Anson, *Writing*, 1989; Yancey, *Portfolios*, 1992, Elbow 1991). By composing these “companion pieces,” or texts that are written after a primary text is completed, students write *about* writing. These activities help students move beyond seeing their texts as good or bad, right or wrong, and towards a more complex and relative perspective on specific pieces of writing and their writing as a whole. Importantly, this reflection-in-action is not just a form of writing assessment, but a mode of thinking meta-discursively.

Reflection-in-action is clearly a useful way of thinking and writing about texts. At the same time, its practice could seemingly become a one-way process of creating texts and companion texts. To counter this, Yancey argues for reflection-in-presentation, again connecting

her framework for reflection in the writing classroom, Schön's work, and writing theory. Yancey revisits Schön to describe the importance of reflection-in-presentation, quoting:

Clearly, it is one thing to be able to reflect-in-action and quite another to be able to reflect on our reflection in action so as to produce a good verbal description of it; and it is another thing to be able to reflect on the resulting description. (71)

Building off of this concept, Yancey argues that reflection-in-presentation is the most rhetorical aspect of her framework, as it must satisfy both the writer and the reader. Because of this, Yancey sees distinct similarities between reflection-in-presentation and autobiography, noting that in both texts, writers must work through tensions between the actual self and the represented self—a tension that is shaped, constructed, contingent, and transitory (72-73).

Yancey's designation of the different types of reflection, its history in writing studies, and its theoretical grounding is a valuable addition to writing studies as it links theory and practice in a way that allows students access to both the content of their writing and the practice of writing itself. Reflective thinking and writing helps students see how some practices could both succeed and not succeed simultaneously, a thinking pattern that is useful for writers at all stages. At the same time, Yancey does not hesitate to highlight some of the more challenging features of reflective writing. Importantly, Yancey links these challenges not to individual assignments, students, or teachers, but to the theoretical underpinnings of reflective writing itself—how it is framed and invoked, rather than how it might function in a vacuum. An excellent example of this type of thinking is in her discussion of reflection-in-action, student agency, and textual authority. In the chapter “Refection-in-Action” Yancey uses examples from student texts to illustrate how the “talk-back” assignment helps students participate in an on-going conversation about a text they have written (see the example of Susan’s “talk back” in the

chapter's beginning). In this assignment, students respond to their own writing and then respond to their instructors' comments with additional reflection. This activity gives students reflective practice and practice interpreting the responses of readers, helping them to learn a new language to use when talking about texts—"the language of composing"—" detect, diagnose, and correct (Yancey 39). We can see this move at work in Susan's "talk-back", as she writes about sources, examples and quotes. Importantly, Yancey notes that this type of reflective activity also raises questions of writer and student authority. She writes that in a successful "talk-back" students are not passive, but that:

when writers are treated as writers, they will need to be awarded the authority that comes with writing. They make decisions that run counter to our recommendations, and if they do so for reasons that are rhetorically sound, then we will need to defer. (41)

For Yancey, the negotiations involved with student reflections can fundamentally change teacher response practices. What Yancey is highlighting here is the issue of student agency and authority, and she notes that reflective writing will challenge many teachers' concepts of writing studies, even those who espouse a liberatory, negotiated pedagogy. At some point, no matter how flexible or liberatory one's pedagogy is, the reality exists in most higher education settings that writing must be evaluated. Reflective writing, particularly when it calls attention to audience expectations and student agency, fundamentally changes how writing teachers assign, respond, and grade texts. No matter how progressive one's pedagogy, reflective writing asks teachers to negotiate how students construct their own meaning within traditional writing value systems. Reflection creates a dialogue, which problematizes notions of classroom and teacher writing authority, as well as asks "whose opinion matters most? How and why?"

Another issue brought to light by Yancey's work is the rhetorical nature of reflective writing. At its most reductive form, a reflection is nothing more than a retelling of how someone thought or what someone did; the kind of writing that encourages rote responses, as Yancey noted. The type of reflective thinking and writing highlighted in these chapters is rhetorical and contextual. It is rhetorical because it provides a venue for dialogue (between audience and writer, or text and writer) and it is contextual because it asks writers to create and describe the situation in which they were writing and thinking. Again, this is visible in Susan's selected "talk-back." In that brief excerpt she simultaneously validates and challenges her instructor's comments, as well as creates her own unique context that explains her writing and her argument (public relations). What Yancey's text illustrates is that reflective writing has rhetorical moves—valuable ones for students and teachers. By bringing this aspect of reflection to the forefront, Yancey sets up reflection as a viable form of writing theory, worthy of rhetorical study.

### *Reflection and Community Writing Courses*

At the same time as the publication of Yancey's book, one of the first collections on community writing, *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition*, was published in cooperation with the National Council of Teachers of English (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, Watters, eds. 1997). Within the broader field of rhetoric and writing, discussions of the power of diverse curricula to shape students' personal and intellectual growth have been central to writing scholarship. This book is one of the first to discuss the role of service-learning within specific academic disciplines. The goal of the series is to show how community writing practices can cross-disciplinary boundaries, and illuminate to faculty

members, often only trained in their home discipline, how service can be of value in their classrooms. Simultaneously, the publication of this particular text signaled the mainstream movement of community writing into writing courses, and its acceptance as a legitimate writing pedagogy. Researchers and teachers like James Berlin, Peter Elbow, Linda Flower, and Paul Heilker have all asked what kinds of literacies should be valued in our writing courses, or as Tom Deans re-states, “what particular type of writer do we hope to encourage” (*Writing Partnerships* 25).

Community writing practitioners find answers to Deans’s question as far back as the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.. In “Service-Learning as a Path to Virtue” James M. Dubinsky notes classical rhetoric’s attention to curricula that were both “useful” and “had a moral purpose” (Aristotle qtd. in Dubinsky 257). Isocrates and Cicero built upon this understanding of education by defining rhetoric as the ability to shape political life through language. Quintilian expands this idea further, extending rhetoric’s purpose, and that of education in general, to “produce speakers and writers who had their community’s best aims at heart” (257). In this conversation on the nature of a rhetorical education, community writing practitioners see the genesis of community writing’s goals and a theory of rhetoric that answers Deans’s question of value.

Other scholars find a rationale for linking service-learning to writing in the educational philosophy of John Dewey. As Linda Flower summarizes well, Dewey’s educational pragmatism is the logic of active inquiry and experiential ways of knowing. For Dewey, the meaning and value of an idea lies in the actual conditions of its existence and in its ultimate outcome (Flower “Partners in Inquiry” 101-103). This pragmatism supports Dewey’s primary educational goals: to help students become good citizens through civic participation, open communication, and social interaction. Dewey’s emphasis on situated continuous investigation

resonates with community writing practitioners who hope to promote student growth through active, reflective thought and action, while focusing on the interests of a community (Deans, *Writing Partnerships*, 2010; Eyler and Giles 1996; Morton 2010).

An additional foundational rationale for community writing pedagogies is the work of Paulo Freire. Advocates find value in Freire's radical goals of transformation—political and personal—through education, critical reflection, and collective social action (Deans, *Writing Partnerships*, 39). Freire argues that knowing is a constructive, experiential process that involves, “action, critical reflection, curiosity, demanding inquiry, uneasiness, [and] uncertainty” (Shor and Freire 8). While this type of critical pedagogy can be done within the confines of the classroom, community writing advocates argue that Freire's liberatory pedagogy hinges on translating this critical awareness into effective social action, or as Shor defines it, pairing critical consciousness with grounded community based action (Shor and Freire 39). Just as linking community writing to Dewey affords it serious academic potential, highlighting community writing's relationship to Freire and Shor provides the program with a different form, an extra-institutional form, of academic legitimacy.

Clearly, these three foundational theories offer compelling rationales for a pedagogy that encourages civic or public participation, personal intellectual and emotional growth, and a critical awareness of social issues and local concerns. At the same time, these theories of education do differ in some substantial ways. In particular, Freire's experience working with adults in unindustrialized areas shapes a pedagogy that draws explicit attention to issues of power and oppression, something absent from both Dewey's and the classical rhetoricians' theories. Additionally, both Dewey and the classical rhetoricians see education as positioning learners for future civic participation, while Freire argues that education *is* political participation.

These differences arise from the theorists' political locations; the classical rhetoricians' and Dewey's work within traditional power structures, as opposed to Freire's work outside of them. This difference in theoretical orientation can affect community writing pedagogies, as teachers or programs determine their relationships with institutions.

It is this initial context, the burgeoning movement toward service-learning's academic legitimization, that shapes the essays included in *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition*. Here, early adopters of community writing in composition outline the practical aspects of community writing pedagogies, as well as theorize rationales for creating community writing courses. Additionally, there is considerable emphasis on community writing best practices, exemplified by Nora Bacon's "Community Service Writing: Problems, Challenges, Questions." This piece, and others in the collection (Herzberg, Stock and Swenson), follows the model of presenting community writing stories with the intent to show how service-learning pedagogies and writing pedagogies can work together, as well as practical problems and successes of a specific community writing initiative. In Bacon's description of Stanford's *Esperanza* writing program, she provides readers with specific program goals and projects, as well as ways to evaluate service-learning writing using collaborative grading practices with site leaders and teachers. Interestingly, Bacon's piece does more than just highlight strategies and plans. At the end of her essay she begins to problematize what community writing courses say about the aims and motives of teaching. She posits several questions for future research regarding the relationship between textual forms and organization, or what the relationship is between community writing and academic discourse, such as how the genres students encounter outside of the classroom might shift their understandings of in-classroom writing, and how the

terms used to describe writing inside of a classroom (development, clarity, organization) may not resonate in other outside settings (Bacon 53).

Bacon's piece provides an example of how early community writing theories would soon give way to a wave of scholarship focused on a more explicit understanding of the relationship between community writing theory and practice. As Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters argue in their introduction, *Writing the Community* as a whole marks a "critical juncture" in service-learning and writing studies, where issues of establishing a theory or a practice of community writing give way to better understanding how the theories and practices work together to structure writing instruction. For the introduction's authors, as well as others (Bacon, Bridwell-Bowles, Herzberg) community writing scholarship should now turn to legitimizing itself as a valuable *writing* pedagogy.

One of the most interesting pieces in the collection makes just such a turn by linking community writing pedagogies explicitly to reflective writing. In his essay "On Reflection: The Role of Logs and Journals in Service-Learning Courses" Chris M. Anson writes:

theories of service-learning value reflection for helping to create the connection between academic coursework and the immediate social, political and interpersonal experiences of community-based activities. Reflection is supposed to encourage a movement between observation and intellectual analysis or consciousness-raising, and conversely apply abstract concepts (such as citizenship, public ethics, or social justice) to contexts beyond the classroom. (167)

Anson argues that the purpose of his piece is to examine just such theoretical movements in writing courses while providing practical advice for community writing teachers using reflection. He does this by using sample student reflective journal entries from his community writing

courses. Some of these entries show considerable growth over time of students' writing skills and contextual, critical thinking, while other examples show little such growth, but still meet the needs of the courses' reflective assignments. Anson's point is that in both iterations, reflective writing is a valuable aspect of the community writing course and experience, but that different examples show students learn very different things through reflective writing.

Anson's central argument is important because in a practical, teacher-centered way, it highlights the main theme that surrounds most discussions of reflective writing in community writing classes: what exactly do we want it to do? As Yancey and Deans illustrate, both service-learning and reflective writing have similar origins and goals, leading to the assumption that they easily mesh together, highlighting each pedagogies' strengths. As Anson argues, this is not necessarily correct. In fact, there is little consensus on the general properties or specific features of either. Brookfield points this confusion out as he describes how the terms "reflection" and "reflective thinking" are so overused that they have become buzzwords, devoid of any real meaning. Because of this, "sophisticated" reflection can only be achieved through significant intervention, modeling, and response on the part of the community writing teacher (Anson 169-171).

It is this "sophistication" that is the central theme in *Writing the Community*'s additional works that discuss reflective writing, and these essays do so by highlighting the problems and challenges that are often central to community writing studies. For example, in Herzberg's essay "Community Service and Critical Thinking," which discusses how and if community writing courses automatically raise issues of social structures, ideology, and social justice for students, he positions reflective writing as an important aspect of community writing courses, but not enough to raise students' critical or cultural consciousness. Students are adept at providing rote

responses and even when students do gain a new perspective on a situation or group, it is on an individual level, not an institutional one. Reflective writing is not the tool for systemic student change, he argues. Because of this, Herzberg feels that reflective writing should not be the primary work in a community writing course; work should instead be on topics that illuminate the communities that students interact with. In Herzberg's courses, this often means studying and writing about literacy and schooling, while working with literacy tutoring projects in Chicago shelters. Herzberg's problem is not with reflective writing itself. In fact, he writes that it is an incredibly important part of how students process and learn from community writing projects. His point is that reflective writing often becomes so personal that it distracts or moves students away from understanding the issues raised by community writing on an institutional level. Herzberg's assertion echoes what I have observed in my own classes. Rather than use their reflective writing assignment to engage in discussions of one of our class themes—how they understood their role in our local community (student, transient, local)—students wrote about the emotions they felt volunteering. They were often thoughtful, well-written reflections, but they stopped considerably short of critiquing their personal roles and responsibilities, as well as the roles and responsibilities of a large university in a small rural town. This version of reflective writing was separate from my, as well as Herzberg's, goals and purposes of our community writing classes.

This disconnect is echoed in Paul Heilker's "Rhetoric Made Real: Civic Discourse and Writing Beyond the Curriculum," again published in the collection. In this essay on the role of writing in courses with community service connections, Heilker outlines the ways that service-learning has been constructed in relation to writing studies in general. He quotes Crooks, who argues that writing teachers be aware of "the danger that community service and learning may

remain separate, though perhaps equally rewarding, activities for students, connected only superficially by some writing assignment—a journal entry or reaction paper where students tell their own “conversion narrative” or “epiphany of sympathy” (73). In this essay, like Herzberg’s, Heilker’s major issue with reflective writing is, that while important, it may fail to result in students’ critical analysis of themselves, their community, or the systemic inequities that require community work in the first place.

Central to both Herzberg’s and Heilker’s critique of reflective writing in community writing courses is the assumption that this type of writing can be easily “faked” and does not really move students to a higher level of thinking. Interestingly, a similar characterization of reflective writing is used by Rosemary Arca in “Systems Thinking, Symbiosis, and Service: The Road to Authority for Basic Writers (1997),” albeit to a much different effect. In this piece, reflective writing’s initially simplistic form and process is emphasized as a value to writers who may have received minimal or inadequate support and feedback in previous writing courses. Here, Arca outlines the benefits and challenges of including community writing and reflective writing in basic or developmental writing classrooms. She writes that while community writing is usually viewed as an upper level course activity, “community service writing can be a powerful change agent in basic writers’ thinking, writing, and interactions with their communities” (133). It is precisely because of reflective writing’s purpose and inherent thought patterns that she sees it as an example of the notion that students, including basic writers, are already knowers and thinkers, a cornerstone argument of both community writing pedagogy and basic writing pedagogy. Reflective writing in connection with community writing coursework helps basic writers because it mixes their academic needs with their social and personal needs. When writing about their experiences in community service environments, students are engaged

in the analysis and expression of those communities, something they may not have been encouraged to do before.

This description of the value of reflective writing is much different than Herzberg's and Heilker's. Arca writes "the very demographics of my basic writing classes create subtle confrontations between those who have done service work and those who have experienced it" (135). I argue that this exact difference is central to these competing descriptions of reflective writing's value. Herzberg and Heilker structure their community writing courses so that traditional college students may understand the ideological and institutional pressures that shape the lives of those outside the university. Arca's basic writers *are* outside of the traditional university. As their reflective writing personalizes communities and experiences, it allows them to rethink their own role in the community and the classroom. Arca writes, "whatever the pedagogical impact of community service on the writing of the students in my class, I am convinced that it is the personal impact that most profoundly changes them" (141). Reflective writing assignments linked to community writing courses gives these students authority over their own writing and over their own previous experiences in communities and in service, perhaps seeing writing, learning, and service from a new vantage point. As Herzberg's and Heilker's students more often occupy a traditionally dominant vantage point to begin with, reflective writing's authority seems less transformational, less revolutionary. This dichotomy between reflective writing's impact on traditional and non-traditional writers should lead us to ask: does reflective writing need to be revolutionary? What would make it so to a broader group of students? Additionally, how would that change shape community writing projects, their participants, and the writing that arises from them?

Read together, the essays in *Writing the Community* offer a compelling rationale for the continued study of reflective writing in community writing courses. First, these essays, along with the important broader work by Yancey, all illustrate the known value of reflection in a community writing course. All authors agree that reflective writing provides students with a valuable opportunity to think through their experiences, locate themselves in a specific context, and share such locations, experiences, and emotions. This basic self-awareness, and the practice of writing such a narrative, is a significant experience linked to community writing coursework. Additionally, these texts, explicitly or more subtly, all identify the potential in reflective writing to concretely shape students' perceptions of their own authority and autonomy, student/community relationships, and what "social transformation" means. Just as Bacon argued that community writing provides a critical link for students between classroom theory and real world practice, Anson highlights how reflective writing is the cornerstone for that link, offering students a location for discussion of abstract concepts like citizenship, ethics, and justice. Similarly, Herzberg and Heilker identify reflective writing as a mode of thinking that encourages broader understandings of ideology and social structures. Yet, again, these authors all note the disconnect that characterizes the discussion of reflection in community writing, one of a writing pedagogy that hold great potential, but always seems to fall short.

If we return to Anson's piece, we may begin to see why this disconnect exists. Just as Yancey notes the slippery nature of the term "reflection," Anson struggles to define optimal reflective writing without the use of a qualifier. He writes that our goals should be "consciousness-raising reflection" (169). In other places he calls it "intellectually rich reflection" or "critical reflection" (169, 177). While his terms change, what he is referring to is the same: sustained, thoughtful writing by students that examines how and why and individual or

group (themselves, community members, society, their teachers) make choices and experience those choices. It seems that the word reflection alone does not mean all of this. Even Yancey notes this challenge. She writes that her support of reflective writing is not wholesale, and that we as educators should “mark the possible dangers that [the word] reflection brings with it. Some will find the term too slippery” (Yancey 202). Why does the term “reflection” on its own not provide Yancey, Anson, and the others in *Writing in the Community*, the correct connotation or denotation for what they are asking students to do? Where is the disconnect between what we are saying and what students are hearing? Perhaps because we are not really asking for reflection at all.

In the next chapter, I will discuss how what we are really asking for when we look for “critical” or “consciousness-raising” reflection is, in fact, *reflexivity*. Centering in the scholarship of the natural and social sciences and contemporary critical pedagogy, chapter two will illustrate how reflexivity and reflection diverge in theory and practice, and the subtle differences between strategies for reflection and strategies for reflexivity.

*Chapter Two*  
**Diverging from Reflection: Reflexivity as Theory and Method**

In the 2010 *College Composition and Communication* article “Feminist Rhetorical Practices: In Search of Excellence” Gesa Kirsch and Jacqueline J. Royster ask how we might conduct more systemic and sustained research in rhetoric and writing, and the role of feminist scholars in such an endeavor. They argue that methodological reflexivity, or the methodological practices that allow researchers to uncover different perspectives inherent in their work, should be one of the core foci of future rhetoric and writing research. They write that traditional knowledge paradigms, grounded in Western patriarchal values, have “constituted operational paradigms that have become highly entrenched, powerful, and culturally persuasive in setting the terms of engagement in rhetorical theory and criticism and in establishing criteria for worthiness” (Kirsch and Royster 641). While there is considerable value to the field being well-versed in our primary research and critique paradigms, our adherence to such Westernized traditions can limit the kinds of work we value, the questions we ask, and the methods we use. For Kirsch and Royster, understanding the reflexive nature of scholarship is one specific way to challenge these entrenched frameworks, embracing the variety of methodological options available and the types of inquiry they afford. They argue that normalizing methodological reflexivity is one way scholars can participate in the trajectory and growth of feminist rhetorical studies, but also for reflexive inquiry as an innovative addition to general best practices in rhetoric and writing research.

As we saw in chapter one, uncovering the different perspectives that can shape research and writing is not just valuable to those theorizing and critiquing the epistemic and methodological frameworks of our field. Yancey’s detailed and critical work on why and how to

assign reflective writing about writing also functions under the basic premise that there is something valuable to be gained from understanding how work may be shaped by unarticulated values and assumptions. In her reflective writing assignments Yancey is asking for rhetorical moves similar to those called for by Kirsch and Royster. Also similar is how Kirsch and Royster define reflexivity and how writing teachers problematize reflective writing assignments. This similarity is especially clear in the works of writing teachers who use reflective writing as a learning and assessment tool for community writing classes. What the teachers highlighted in chapter one are asking for when they describe “critical” or “consciousness-raising” reflection is more akin to critiques of the hierarchy of knowledge creation or the self-referential examination of actions or relationships than traditional notions of reflective writing as a linear recounting of an activity or assignment. Occasionally, the term reflexive is used to describe how teachers want students to approach a text in context, but it is usually used as a synonym for reflection, or to signify a more systematic and sustained form of reflective thinking or writing (Emig 1971; Yinger and Clark 1981; Sturbek, Eunhye, and Moyer 1991). Unfortunately, this narrow use of the term signifies a limited knowledge of the epistemological and methodological history of reflexivity. Using the term reflection to mean reflexivity creates a disconnect between the writing that teachers explicitly ask for and what expectations these teachers have for the subsequently created student texts. This disconnect in expectations and a lack of understanding the epistemological differences between reflection and reflexivity have powerful implications. Understanding how reflection and reflexivity diverge, and the epistemological and methodological ramifications of such a divergence to student writing provides considerable insight into the “slippery” (Yancey 202) challenges of student reflective writing highlighted earlier in chapter one.

Therefore, in order to reconnect teacher expectations of reflective writing to the actual assignments given to students, particularly those in community writing classes that seek to change students and communities through reflective writing, I argue that we reconceive reflection as reflexivity. In this chapter I will discuss the traditions of epistemological reflexivity in the social sciences and illustrate the ways in which reflexivity is characterized through reflection. I will then show how the concepts of reflexivity appear in the discourses of critical pedagogy. After identifying the ways that reflexivity is overtly invoked or implied in these two related but disparate discourses I will illustrate how these discussions of reflexivity may create significant limitations for teachers of reflective writing.

### *Foundations of Reflexivity*

As recently as 2010 Greek sociologist Charalambos Tskekeris notes in “Reflections on Reflexivity: Sociological Issues and Perspectives” that reflexivity has become both a key term and a buzzword in the dramatic changes confronting the social and human sciences in the last half century. The term has been used in so many ways that while generally, it can be said to characterize the self-conscious researcher, it “is used in so many different senses that it often sustained confusion rather than clarifying any underlying issues” (Holland qtd. by Tskekeris 28). This multiplicity of definitions stems from its philosophical origins, its use in a variety of disciplines, and the diverse implications on both the study of knowledge creation in general and on individual fields of study specifically.

In her 1980 essay “Reflexivity: Definitions and Discriminations” critical theorist Barbara A. Babcock posits that the genesis of epistemological reflexivity, or reflexivity in the study of how knowledge is created, lies in the idea of the self as a semiotic construct. If the self is a

social structure, she argues, then any work or research created by such a self arises from social experiences, and thus should be subjected to the same form of semiotic analysis and critique. She writes, “all systems of signification are inherently and necessarily reflexive, so too are our interpretations of those other signs [...] but rarely do we turn the mirror back on ourselves” (Babcock 11). Here, Babcock is establishing the primacy of reflexive thinking in understanding the perceived world around us. Contemporary anthropologists and sociologists study reflexivity in their research environments and participants, observing an individual’s capacity to “understand and adjust to the social process, to modify his future behavior, and to modify the social process itself” (Babcock 2). It is standard practice to study others being or becoming reflexive. Babcock’s statement “turning the mirror on ourselves” articulates the distinct difference between reflexivity as an ethnographic methodology to analyze others and epistemological reflexivity as an understanding of the signification and construction of the self as “researcher.” For Babcock, the next logical step for those who believe in the semiotic construction of society is to apply the same lens to the construction of knowledge and truth through research and researchers.

While Babcock’s epistemological reflexivity draws from the traditions of critical theory, Steve Woolgar and Malcolm Ashmore see the exploration of epistemological reflexivity as the next natural development in the relativist/ social constructivist movement in their field, the sociology of scientific knowledge (Bloor 1976, Gouldner 1970). As the perspectives that shape the sociology of scientific knowledge evolve, epistemology has moved from a foundation of realism to a foundation of relativism (see Table 1). Scholars embracing this evolution have begun to ask what significance should be granted to the fact that producing knowledge is itself a social activity.

Table 1: Evolution of Perspectives in the Social Study of Science

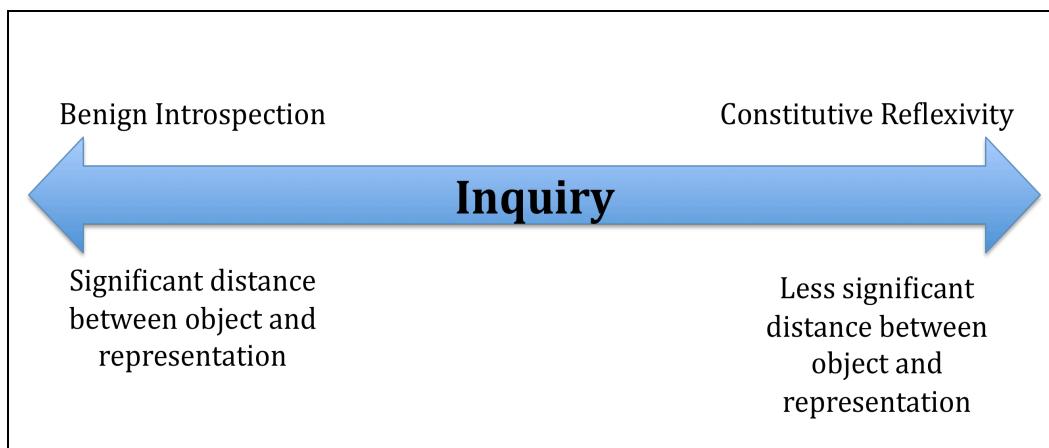
Epistemological Preconceptions	Character of Study
<i>Movement 1</i> Science: realist Social Study: realist	Sociology of science= Sociology of scientists Content of science is ignored Analysis is partial and asymmetric Social factors most apparent in cases of erroneous science Mertonianism
<i>Movement 2</i> Science: relativized Social Study: realist	Sociology of scientific knowledge Strong Programme (impartiality and symmetry) Empirical program of relativism First generation of ethnography of science practice Scientists as managers of the epistemological horrors
<i>Movement 3</i> Science: relativized Social Study: relativized	Reflexivity: new literary forms Second generation ethnography: uncertainty (the constitution of the other) Writers as managers of the epistemological horrors

In “Reflexivity is the Ethnographer of the Text,” (1988) social scientist Woolgar argues that while the social construction of knowledge was originally viewed as a problem to overcome through an emphasis on “objectivity,” contemporary scholars view epistemological reflexivity as a new way to explore longstanding issues in the sociology of scientific knowledge. To use reflexivity this way, Woolgar proposes thinking of reflexivity along a continuum-- ranging from what he calls radical constitutive reflexivity to benign introspection (see Table 2).

Woolgar defines constitutive reflexivity as when the process of knowing is turned on the knower, who becomes self-conscious even of the reflexive process of knowing (Davies 7). This could theoretically be a never ending or destructive process, breaking meaning making down into

pieces so small as to be rendered useless to inquiry. On the other side of the continuum is benign introspection: nonsystematic “thinking about what we are doing” (Woolgar 22).

Table 2: Woolgar’s Continuum of Reflexive Inquiry



This process could take the form of fieldwork journals or stories about how and why work was created. Introspection and constitutive reflexivity are related—one may come to reflexivity through introspection—but they are not the same thing and they value contrasting processes: reflexivity is systemic and focused, while reflection is a looser, more narrative process. For Woolgar, the concept of work in the sociology of knowledge being perceived as on a continuum is important to the tensions that arise “because social science is attracted by constructivist undertones of constructivist reflexivity in its literary mood, but repelled by the implications for its own pretensions to produce a ‘scientific’ social study (22). Regardless of where work falls on this continuum, social scientists like Woolgar see reflexivity as a sort of anti-objectivist conception that researchers must understand themselves as “historically located social agents,” a direct contrast to the classical epistemological view of a researcher’s objectivity and detached observation (Tsekeris 29). It is more nuanced than simply understanding researcher subjectivity,

and it is more than just a recounting of individual experiences or the self-contained, isolated internal conversation of the researcher.

Pierre Bourdieu (1992) is particularly clear that epistemological reflexivity is more than just researcher subjectivity. In his description of what he calls “epistemic reflexivity” Bourdieu sharply critiques the idea that reflexivity is the self-analysis of the sociologist’s consciousness; instead, it is the critique and analysis of the institutionalized consciousness of a discipline and its values. Bourdieu’s definition of epistemological reflexivity draws from traditional definitions, including self-reference, self-awareness, or “the constitutive circularity of account or texts” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 37). Where Bourdieu’s reflexivity diverges from these traditions, argues Loic Wacquant, is that its primary object of inquiry is not the individual researcher or analyst, but the social and intellectual unconsciousness that supports researchers’ analytic tools and operations (36).

This form of epistemological reflexivity cannot be the job of the lone academic or researcher; it must be a collective enterprise by all of those involved in validating and using such tools. This notion stems from Bourdieu’s assertion that the individual’s sociological gaze is inherently skewed. Bourdieu describes three biases that may blur the gaze of the sociologist. The first is the social origins of the researcher (class, race, gender, etc.). This bias is one that is identified by proponents of traditional concepts of reflexivity as subjectivity. The other two biases are more unique to Bourdieu’s conceptions of epistemic reflexivity. The second is the bias of the broader social structures in which the work is done. Bourdieu does not mean this in a traditional social constructivist way; he does not mean this to be “society” or “culture” broadly, but an academic field where work is defined and valued in terms of its specific relationships to other work. The third bias is the intellectual bias, or the idea that researchers see the world as “a

spectacle, as a set of significations to be interpreted rather than as concrete problems to be solved practically” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 39). The existence of these last two biases means that epistemological reflexivity requires movement beyond the concepts of the individual and towards a collective model. That is, reflexivity must not just uncover the individual researchers’ perspectives, biases, and subjectivities. It must also interrogate the collective scientific unconscious.

Clearly, Bourdieu’s critiques of traditional conceptions of reflexivity as subjectivity offer substantial reasons why researchers and theorists should hesitate before invoking the reflexive turn in their own work. Bourdieu’s perspective requires us as researchers to ask if, as we examine our own subject positions and biases, are we really being reflexive. Are our goals for our own reflexive inquiry to understand ourselves better, or is it to understand how our selves are created disciplinarily and the effects such a creation can have on our work and the work of others? Bourdieu’s explicit attention to the differences in the goals of reflexivity highlights his warning that as reflexivity becomes normalized as part of post-modern, post-positivist thinking, its meaning may become diluted to mean little more than the critique of the inherent biases of the social scientist. This critique can be a valuable step towards understanding both the subjective process of self-conscious inquiry and how knowledge creation shapes and is shaped by social behavior, but it can also be used, as Bourdieu writes, “cynically” (qtd. in Tskekeris 29). For Bourdieu, to use reflexivity cynically is to use it as the buzzword critique of research and researchers that are “outdated.” One would charge work as un-reflexive the same way one might have previously charged a researcher’s work as positivist.

Bourdieu’s idea of a cynical use of reflexivity crystallizes the challenges of encouraging epistemological reflexivity. If we are to use “un-reflexive” as a buzzword critique there are

powerful implications. First, if we use “un-reflexive” as a weapon, rather than encouraging researchers to value reflexivity, we are encouraging them to “cover their bases” by including reflexive inquiry in a cursory, less purposeful manner. By paying lip service to reflexivity, work will not become more reflexive. In fact, it will more likely become less reflexive as researchers move to include “reflexive” on their checklist. This situation will too easily lead to thinking of reflexivity as a one-time process of describing the social construction of the researcher, illustrating the problems of conflating reflexivity with reflection on social context.

A second important implication of using reflexivity as a blanket critique is that it overtly implies that all work should be reflexive and that all research questions would benefit from the types of inquiry that epistemological reflexivity affords. This is clearly not true. If a researcher values reflexivity then they value the multiplicity of perspectives and understand how context and situation structure not just the questions we ask but the methods we use and the answers we come to. By requiring a researcher to be reflexive we set artificial parameters for research, as well as artificial value systems. This type of structure seems far away from the type of purposeful analysis and critique of a researcher’s self-conscious process of knowing that reflexivity encourages.

The implications of using the term reflexivity uncritically, or of valuing epistemological reflexivity without understanding how it builds off of and departs from social construction or semiotics, highlights the challenges facing those who value reflexive inquiry. It also illuminates the multiple ways reflexivity is defined and invoked. In the next section I will illustrate how, while theoretically, reflexivity is described in opposition to positivist, objectivist approaches to research, practically, reflexivity is often defined in opposition or difference to reflection.

### *Reflexivity's Relationship to Reflection*

As Barbara Babcock introduces her history of reflexivity through critical theory she draws upon the story of Narcissus. She writes:

Narcissus's tragedy then is that he is not narcissistic enough, or rather that he does not reflect long enough to effect a transformation from identity to identity with difference.

He is reflective, but he is not reflexive—that is, he is conscious of himself as an other, but he is not conscious of being self-conscious of himself as an other. (Babcock 2)

What Babcock is articulating here is the primacy of the urge to relate reflexive thinking to reflection, even among those who challenge reflection's epistemological value while embracing reflexivity's. If reflexivity is such a difficult concept to define or pin down, then linking it to a *practice* that seems straightforward (reflection) can help make sense of how to theorize and practice reflexivity. Understanding the relationship between reflection and reflexivity is important because it shows us how to *do* reflexivity.

For sociologist Allyson Lipp, the challenges of *doing* reflexive inquiry stem directly from the complexity of the term and its multiple interpretations and applications. Lipp defines reflexivity as an “approach to aiding the production of knowledge from experience by examining the impact of one’s positions and actions” (19). The first step to identifying these experiences, positions, and actions is reflection. This first step is particularly important because reflexivity as a process or event lacks instruction on how to achieve it, argues Lipp. In “Developing the Reflexive Dimensions of Reflection: A Framework for Debate” (2007) Lipp argues that reflexivity is a deeper and broader dimension of reflection, and proposes a framework for encouraging the reflector to move towards reflexivity. Lipp’s framework is a set of questions

that move a reflector through three stages: the individual level, the meso level, and the macro level (see Table 3).

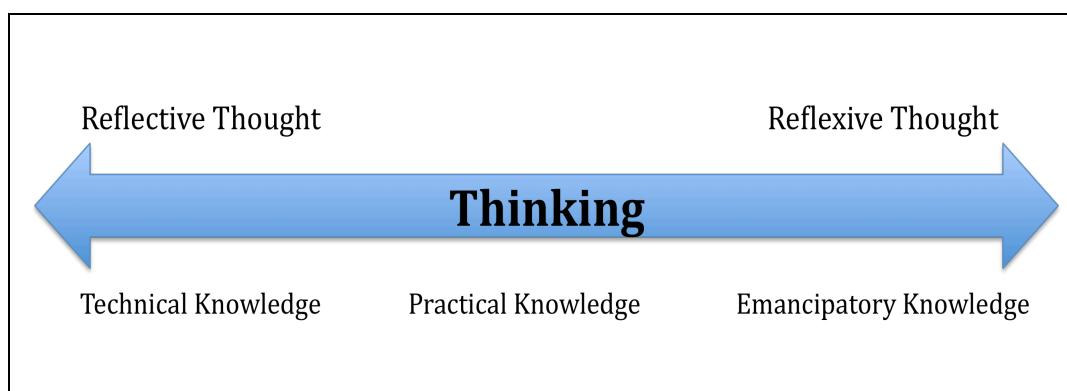
Table 3: Lipp's Levels of Reflexive Thinking and Corresponding Questions

<b>Level</b>	<b>Reflexive Prompts</b>	<b>Finlay &amp; Gough's Stages</b>
<i>Micro</i> Individual Level	What impact am I having on the process? What impact is the process having on me? What are my personal responses? What are my motivations? What are my biases?	Self critique and personal quest
<i>Meso</i> Organizational/Project Level	What impact has the process, methods, and outcomes had on the topic? What has arisen from my reflexive narration of the project? Who/what is the local oppressor? What is the local source of power? What are the challenges to organizational emancipation?	Objective reflexivity as a methodological tool
<i>Macro</i> Society Level	Who/what is the global oppressor? Who is globally oppressed? What is the global source of power? What has been done to facilitate societal emancipation? What are the challenges to societal emancipation?	Reflectivity as the politics of location

While Lipp does not mention Bourdieu's work, her levels and reflexive typology call to mind Bourdieu's "biases" that can distort a sociologist's gaze. Both Lipp and Bourdieu advocate the

removal of these distortions, and Lipp's questions are her concrete strategies for doing so. To create these strategies Lipp draws on Finlay and Gough's (2003) description of reflexive thinking as a process of self-critique and personal quest, objective reflexivity as a methodological tool, and reflexivity as the politics of location (20). The third column of Table 3 shows how these stages match with Lipp's levels of reflexive thinking. These levels exist on a continuum, and given the proper tools, one can move from reflective thought to reflexive thought (see Table 4). Lipp's tools for this movement are her questions, scaffolded by Habermas's three categories of knowledge: technical, practical, and emancipatory (Young 1990).

Table 4: Lipp's Continuum of Reflection and Reflexivity



Lipp describes this movement through categories as a journey. A practitioner or researcher begins with technical knowledge. This type of knowledge focuses on explaining things through facts and observations (asking questions about *what*). Understanding how technical knowledge works demands practical knowledge, which Lipp describes as interpreting our lived experiences within our own contexts. A researcher or practitioner can gain technical and practical knowledge through reflection, and once they have done so they can progress to the emancipatory category of knowledge via reflexivity. Emancipatory knowledge is based on the insight and self-awareness generated through earlier reflection, but adds the understanding that

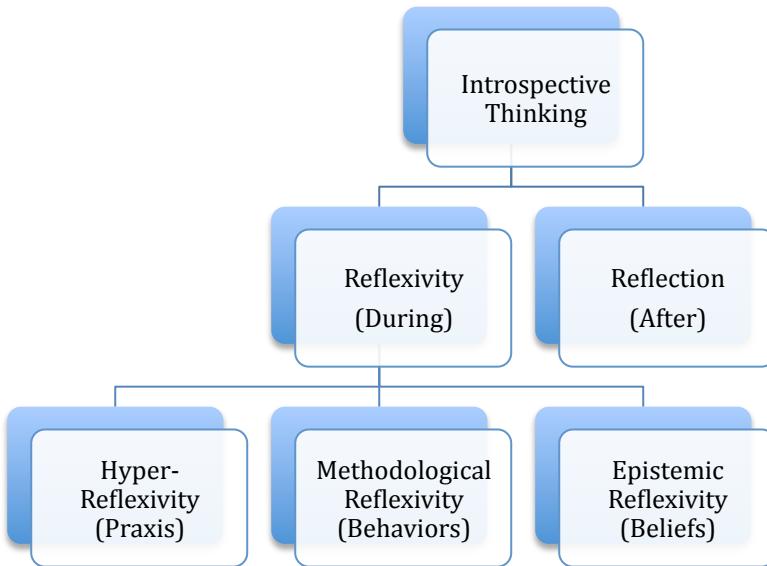
technical and practical knowledge is shaped by sources of domination and oppression in the form of hegemony (Lipp 23). Reflexivity encourages emancipatory thinking by illuminating the construction of power and inequities in specific inquiry situations. As an individual's knowledge on inquiry becomes more reflective on the continuum it becomes reflexive. Lipp's idea of a continuum of reflection and reflexivity, and the questions that support movement on that continuum, is important because it provides strategies for *doing* reflexivity. Again, the multiplicity of definitions of reflexivity, while theoretically rich, does not help a researcher or practitioner actually achieve it. Here, Lipp presents us with one way of practicing reflexivity through preexisting understandings of reflection.

Educational theorist Thomas Ryan also uses reflexivity's relationship to reflection to help practically guide reflexive thinking. Ryan approaches reflexivity from a practitioner's perspective; as an educator he was interested in improving his practices in the classroom. In "When You Reflect Are You Being Reflexive?" (2005) Ryan recounts how after he taught, he would reflect on his actions and their effects on the classroom. He writes, "the recursive process did improve my comprehension and understanding of self, the events, and the context" (Ryan 1). Much like Dewey and Schön, Ryan views reflection as a means of self-development; yet, he continues to look for ways to improve his interactions and study his own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Ryan argues that the best practice is to be both reflective and reflexive, the difference in practice being less about how we are thinking and more about when we are doing the thinking. For Ryan, reflection can only occur after the fact—it is the recursive process of looking back. Reflexivity, on the other hand, is being introspective in the moment. Additionally, Ryan adds a directional element to his definition. While reflection asks people to turn their gaze inward, reflectivity is "the ability to reflect inward towards oneself as the inquirer [and] outward to the

cultural, historical, linguistic, political, and other forces that shape everything about inquiry” (Sandelowski and Barroso qtd. in Ryan 222).

For Ryan, there is one type of reflection, an after-the-fact consideration of one’s experiences, but there are three types of reflexivity: hyper, methodological, and epistemic (see Table 5).

Table 5: Ryan’s Organization of Reflection and Reflexivity



First, hyper-reflexivity is the deconstruction of praxis that comes from continuous introspection (or reflection) during an event. The goal of hyper-reflexivity is to identify the unique parts that make up a practice. The second form, methodological reflexivity, like hyper-reflexivity, also involves the practice of introspection (reflection). Methodological reflexivity asks researchers and practitioners to reflect on their individual behaviors, while hoping to improve their methods. Both of these forms of reflexivity use reflection, or “looking back” as their practice. What Ryan feels makes them reflexive is applying these reflections to current or future situations. Ryan’s third category of reflexivity, epistemic, most closely resembles Lipp’s and Bourdieu’s conceptions, and clearly moves reflexive inquiry away from standard reflective practices. Ryan

defines epistemic reflexivity as the analysis of lived experiences as well as the theoretical and methodological presuppositions that shape ideas, research, questions, and practices. That is, epistemic reflexivity asks researchers and practitioners to identify the assumptions about knowledge and the world that shape research and practice broadly. To practice this type of thinking Ryan proposes we ask questions like:

How has the research question defined and limited what can be found?

How has the design of the study and the methods of analysis ‘constructed’ the data and the findings?

How could the research question been investigated differently?

To what extent would this have given rise to different understandings of the phenomena under investigation? (Ryan 3)

These questions are structured, much like Lipp’s, to mirror the types of thinking we do when we reflect, but to direct this type of thinking outward, rather than inward. Ryan’s conception of reflexivity as it relates to reflection allows researchers and practitioners to develop a skill set to *do* reflexivity.

Both Ryan’s and Lipp’s work show us how practical definitions of reflexivity, while based on the detailed theoretical work of sociologists of knowledge and critical theorists (Bourdieu, Woolgar, Babcock, etc.), are often defined in relationship to reflection. Lipp’s continuum and Ryan’s hierarchy both begin with the assumption that knowing how to reflect is the first step towards reflexive thinking. This chapter emphasizes that this relationship is not the same as conflating the terms and that it is the subtlety of difference that is important. Each theorist highlighted here is careful to note that reflection and reflexivity are not terms that can be used interchangeably, nor is reflexivity nothing more than an “academic” form of reflection (a

non-academic practice supported tangentially by academic theory). This is an important point because while understanding how reflection and reflexivity can work separately or in tandem with one another is valuable, defining reflexivity through an inherent understanding of how reflection works is problematic. It is a definition in the negative.

As highlighted in chapter one, reflection can be a challenge for students, creating rote, normalized responses to questions that could lead to unique understandings of students' agency, their social location, and the exigencies for social transformation. If what we are really asking for is reflexivity, how useful is it for us to continue to use standard reflections move students there? If, as Kirsch and Royster argue, reflexivity is central to how research and writing can be *re-conceived*, then what are the truly unique dimensions of reflexive thinking and writing, and what practical strategies, other than reflection, can we use to become reflexive?

One theorist who does frame reflexivity without using reflection as a touchstone is sociologist Sandra Harding. Harding, a philosopher and social science theorist, defines the basis of reflexivity as the scrutiny of the relationship between the researcher and the object of the research. Harding does not use reflection as the starting point for understanding reflexivity, theoretically or practically. Instead, she grounds her discussion of reflexivity in the theory and practice of "strong objectivity"—a methodology used to avoid positivist notions of research objectivity (Harding's specific methodology will be further discussed in chapter 3). Positivist conceptions of researcher objectivity argue that researchers must strive to limit the effects of personal biases and emotional involvement on their research in order to achieve a truer understanding of the natural and scientific world. Harding and others (Kuhn 1962, Latour 1987, Harraway 1988) argue that problems arise from not understanding the limitations of objectivity, and that rather remove such biases (something that many philosophers deem impossible due to

the inherent fact that perception is relative) these biases should instead be systematically interrogated. For Harding, her process of “strong objectivity” is her suggestion for such systematic inquiry.

In her discussion of how to practice strong objectivity Harding uses the terms reflexivity, objectivity, and method. Practically, reflexivity as critical self-scrutiny defines objectivity, which then controls a researcher’s methods. Harding argues that reflexivity of subject positions and prejudices helps researchers “intervene in the momentum and direction of ideologies that surround us” (*Whose Science* 1991 206). In being reflexive, researchers acknowledge their situated location or their position within political, personal, and cultural assumptions. Harding’s use of reflexive thinking as the initial step towards strong objectivity is valuable because it provides an alternate use of reflexivity from the ones shown earlier in this chapter. In Harding’s version, researchers are asked to be reflexive not so that they can better reflect on their situation or biases but so that they can become more objective in their research. In fact, Harding does not mention reflection, or the types of thinking encouraged by reflective prompts, as a part of strong objectivity at all, and she makes no reference to reflection’s relationship to reflexivity.

What Harding’s work does is to begin to illuminate just what Kirsch and Royster call for: the truly unique dimensions of reflexivity. Strong objectivity is nothing like reflection. Of strong objectivity, Harding writes:

If the goal is to make available for critical scrutiny *all* the evidence marshaled for or against a scientific hypothesis, then this evidence too requires critical examination *within* scientific research processes. In other words, we can think of strong objectivity as extending the notion of scientific research to include systematic examination of such powerful background beliefs (emphasis original). (149)

While reflexivity plays a central role in this systematic examination of background beliefs, reflection plays no role. In fact, Harding critiques what she calls “weak reflexivity” or the tendency for researchers to desire to become aware of their own cultural biases and to talk about their relationships with or to their subjects or objects of inquiry. Harding notes, “weak reflexivity has no possible operationalization, or no competency standard, for success” (163). Here, weak reflexivity looks a lot like traditional definitions or enactments of reflective thinking. Instead, Harding’s reflexivity, a “strong” reflexivity, is centered on concrete theory and practice that is developed from the perspective of the lives of “others”, and it is a reliable guide to understanding societal and scientific phenomena in ways that intuitive experience is not. Harding’s grounding theory for this practice, standpoint theory, and the strategies for reflexivity that arise from it, will be discussed in greater detail in chapter three.

Another sociologist who describes reflexivity without linking it to the reflective process is sociologist Charalambos Tsekeris. Tsekeris proposes a conception of reflexivity that seems almost counter to Harding’s focused and systemic analysis. He argues for a radically different, non-western perspective on reflexive thinking, one that moves away from the rational discussions of a reflective/reflexive continuum, and towards a more fluid process of self-awareness, self-experience, and self-identity within post-modernism (Tsekeris 32). This process, named apophatic reflexivity, is:

an elaborate and systematic way to comprehensively challenge and extend ‘received’ or ‘conventional’ conceptions of reflexivity, as well as to perceptively escape from severe limitations on the possible modes of individual reflexive responses to contemporary post-traditional and post-modern settings. (Tsekeris 32-33)

This type of reflexivity thus challenges the notion that reflexivity is solely a cognitive process, and instead focuses on the more contemplative, existential, and even spiritual aspects of knowledge and identity creation. For Tsekeris, the end goal of researcher reflexivity is not necessarily stronger or more objective research, but a universal historical self-consciousness similar to a “sociological imagination.”

Tsekeris’s apophatic reflexivity is very uncharacteristic of how the term is most often used in the social sciences. At the same time, it is important to be clear about the delineation of these terms. I am not arguing that apophatic reflexivity is key to understanding how students write reflexivity, or even that it is an appropriate resources for practicing reflexivity. I am positing that understanding apophatic reflexivity as an epistemological position is just one way of responding to the normative notions of reflexivity as social construction or reflexivity as reflection’s opposite. Tsekeris’s apophatic reflexivity highlights how definitions of reflexivity can illustrate vastly different perspectives on knowledge, learning, and writing. It exemplifies the uniqueness of reflexivity that Kirsch and Royster call for. If, instead of asking for clearly problematic reflections, we ask our students to be reflexive, it is important to understand what exactly we are asking for. Tsekeris’s reflexivity provides us with another example of how reflexivity’s diversity, and how it can be used to promote alternative concepts of self and social awareness without drawing upon the tropes of reflection.

In the next section, I will continue to describe the variety of ways reflexivity is invoked. In particular, I will examine how the concept of reflexivity is seen, but not heard, in a field closely related to writing instruction, critical pedagogy. This examination will highlight the disconnect between what kinds of thinking and writing teachers ask for and what types of text they inevitable receive.

### *Reflexivity in Critical Pedagogy*

As the earlier part of this chapter illustrates, a lack of understanding of the history of reflexivity and its diversity of definitions can create dissonance between the writing that teachers ask for and what they ultimately receive from students. Often, teachers are asking for reflections, yet expecting types of thinking more akin to the reflexive thinking of Lipp or Ryan. This disconnect can have powerful implications for both the student's learning and the teacher's perceptions of the course's effectiveness in meeting its goals. In addition to its multiple definitions, reflexivity is also a concept that is implied, if not overtly invoked, in the teaching theories that support many writing classrooms, the theories of critical pedagogy. By understanding the ways critical pedagogy perceives reflexivity, we can more fully understand the additional ways that the concept of reflexivity may challenge teachers and students.

While Harding was overtly grappling with theories of objectivity and defining reflexive thinking and action in the research process, critical pedagogy theorists were not explicitly discussing reflexivity in the same central way. Rarely is the term used in the discourse surrounding critical pedagogy, even in its “social construction” or “self-awareness” sense. Interestingly though, while the term reflexivity is not a keyword in the field of critical pedagogy, the ideas it represents are. That is, while critical pedagogy might not call for reflexivity, there is an explicit emphasis on the types of thinking that reflexive practices encourage. For example, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1982) and the later *Pedagogy of Freedom* (2001) Freire outlines a pedagogy of ethics and democracy and uses the term “conscientization” to mean a critical self-consciousness. This critical self-consciousness is an active process that occurs during learning and is much like Ryan’s epistemic reflexivity, in that requires turning an originally inward gaze

outward. Freire sees this process as a recognition of one's conditioning—material, social, political, cultural, and ideological—which constructs one's experiences and ideas (*Pedagogy of Freedom* 55). Conscientization is a necessary part of education. For Freire, it is the teacher's job to take the role of the “other” and provide an environment where students can present multiple views, which are then valued and interrogated. This strategy, while not called reflexivity, is the cornerstone of Freire's critical pedagogy.

The similarities between conscientization and reflexivity are numerous. While conscientization asks students to break through the layers of “myth,” reflexivity ask students to identify the social and political powers that construct them. Both reflexivity and conscientization use experience as a starting point for inquiry, and both see participation in a continuous dialogue as a valuable method for the process. Additionally, conscientization ask students to both reflect and participate in their education, much like reflexivity asks practitioners to engage in the recursive process of analysis and critique. While Freire does not use the term reflexivity, it is clear that he values reflexive practice as a cornerstone of ethical and democratic education.

Not only is reflexivity a central feature of critical pedagogical strategies, it also plays a methodological role in critiquing ideology. The critique of ideology outside of the classroom, in order to better understand what happens inside the classroom, is one of critical pedagogy's central objectives. In this discussion, Peter McLaren (1989) uses the term reflexivity to mean a dialectical approach to understanding ideology. McLaren builds off of Aronowitz's (1988) work in scientific methods, which argues that a reflexive stance helps researchers because knowledge can never exist independently of the social processes which generates it. Research itself is an intervention that must be examined. To do this, McLaren supports the necessity of ideological inquiry, but notes that a study of only the negative functions of ideology is incomplete. A

reflexive stance on ideology allows a researcher to restore ideology to its ability to “position the subject within a multiplicity of discursive formations” (McLaren 158). Here McLaren is not just talking about research broadly, he is talking about research about teaching specifically. McLaren is drawing distinct parallels between the value of epistemological reflexivity in the social sciences and the value of reflexivity to the scholarship of teaching. Through this discussion of reflexive thinking and ideological inquiry McLaren is validating reflexivity as a methodology for teachers themselves.

The idea that reflexivity provides perspective to the critical study of research or pedagogy is elaborated in Becky Flores’s “Sheep in Wolf’s Clothing: The Paradox of Critical Pedagogy” (2004). In this article published in *Radical Pedagogy*, Flores passionately argues that critical pedagogy is not always critical, nor does it always allow for changes in practice or individual transformation. When critical pedagogy becomes normalized, it can just become a set of “moves” practiced by liberal thinking teachers that stop within the classroom’s walls. If critical pedagogy is practiced without reflexivity, or an openness to all options found through an analysis of one’s self, Flores argues, it can become oppressive and replicate the value systems it hopes to critique. Flores offers reflexivity as a way to thoroughly interrogate existing truths and to consider things in alternate ways from the “us vs. them” binary she sees as pervasive in un-reflexive critical pedagogies.

Again, Flores is noting that reflexivity can be a powerful tool for teachers, and her argument, particularly her attention to how easily radical notions can become oppressive in a classroom setting, is extraordinarily valuable. Unfortunately, Flores’s insistence on practicing reflexivity correctly is not accompanied by an explanation of how exactly to do so. If, as Flores argues, reflexivity can move teachers away from replicating the “us vs. them” binary in the

classroom and provide alternate perspectives, then what are those perspectives? Flores's piece highlights one of the major limitations of the discussion of reflexivity in critical pedagogy: that no matter how well articulated the rationales for reflexivity in teaching are, the strategies for reflexivity in the classroom remain focused on what the teacher can do to encourage reflexive thinking, rather than what students can do in their own writing assignments.

Freire, Flores, and McLaren all describe a reflexive stance as a methodology that supports critical pedagogy's goal of an education that encourages students looking outside of the classroom at issues of power, context, and ideology. They argue that teacher reflexivity is critical to creating a progressive learning environment and that by practicing reflexivity, teachers can address issues of power and inequity in their own classrooms, and later beyond. Alternately, Henry Giroux's "Critical Pedagogy and the Modern/Postmodern Divide" (2004) explicitly links critical pedagogy's success to critical reflexivity, or a bridging of the gaps between learning and everyday life, as well as an understanding of the connections between knowledge and power. Here it is not just teachers being reflexive, it is the discipline itself. Giroux writes, "critical pedagogy must be self-reflexive about its aims and practices, conscious of its ongoing project of democratic transformation, but openly committed to a politic that does not offer any guarantees" (43). By being self-reflexive, critical pedagogy is open to constant revision and consistent dialogue with its own assumptions.

Understanding Giroux's conception of reflexivity's role in critical pedagogy is important because his concepts are central to how many writing teachers perceive their own classes, particularly those teachers who use community writing projects to expose students to broader perspectives on communities and to the power structures that shape them. Giroux, as one of the founders of critical pedagogy, supports the recursive practices of reflexivity and therefore, I

would argue, reflexivity has become an unspoken tenet of critical pedagogy's practice. Like Flores, Giroux provides compelling reasons for reflexivity's centrality, but again, little structure is provided to translating reflexivity as a teaching practice into reflexivity as a student writing practice.

Three things are notably missing from the discussion of reflexivity in critical pedagogy. First, there is limited discussion of the role of the student in reflexive critical pedagogy. Freire does argues that the goal of critical pedagogy is to create reflexive students, but the conversation mostly centers around how teachers of critical pedagogy can be reflexive themselves and create environments that promote reflexivity. Second, as previously mentioned, there is little discussion of exactly how a student might go about interrogating her own subject position or ideology. The texts seem to assume that those in education or research already have the methodological tools to do so and will transfer this knowledge to their students. Third, and importantly, this discussion is not always explicitly labeled as "reflexive." Again, the idea of a continuous dialogue with one's self and one's practices that illuminates the systems that shape people and institutions is clearly present, but it is not called reflexivity. This matters because in naming this type of thinking and writing as reflexive, critical pedagogy can link the issues that reflexive thinking highlights to the direct epistemological perspectives that inform this type of pedagogy. That is, by calling this work reflexive, critical pedagogy gives itself access to the framing and scaffolding of reflexive thinking and writing developed by social scientists like Harding, Lipp, and Ryan. If those social science strategies became part of critical pedagogy, they may eventually become part of pedagogy more generally.

Through this brief discussion of reflexivity's spoken and unspoken roles in critical pedagogy we can see that reflexive thinking is not limited to the social sciences, nor is it limited

to abstract conceptions of epistemology that, while invaluable to understanding why we might ask our students to do certain assignments, are not always accessible to the average practitioner. A reflexive stance is central to critical pedagogy, both as an understanding of why critical pedagogy is important and as a practitioner strategy for meeting its goals. Even when they do not use the term explicitly, critical pedagogy theorists are incorporating the idea of reflexivity into their theorizations and practices critical pedagogy in the classroom. At the same time, these additional uses of reflexivity, as a term and as a concept, may further serve to “muddy the waters” of teaching reflexivity. When faced with so many different definitions of reflexivity, teachers might be inclined to fall back on reflection, as it is a familiar and still useful practice.

### *The Next Step for Reflexivity*

This chapter has illustrated the various foundations of reflexivity and how those foundations support the development of epistemological reflexivity for researchers. Highlighted throughout is the multiplicity of definitions and the challenges and limitations of invoking reflexivity in one’s work. One prominent challenge is reflexivity’s conceptual paring with reflection, and this chapter argues that a continued conflation of those terms will strip reflexivity of its ability to help writing teachers navigate issues of agency, positonality, and social transformation that they may find in their students’ reflective writing. An additional challenge, visible in both the social science and critical pedagogy discussions of reflexivity is the lack of available student strategies for implementing reflexive thinking and writing.

As mentioned earlier, Sandra Harding grounds her discussion of strong objectivity in feminist standpoint theory. Harding finds that feminist standpoint theory provides her with the theoretical power and practical tools for shaping a reflexivity that can be both critiqued and

assessed, an important quality for work in the sciences. In the next chapter I will use standpoint theory, as well as additional perspectives on feminist research methodologies, to illustrate how feminist researchers have approached reflexivity through both theory and concrete practice, and what this approach can offer teachers of writing. Feminist reflexivity provides both a theoretical and practical way of understanding how students conceive, or fail to conceive, issues of their own agency, positionality, and potential for social transformation in community writing classes. Later, this dissertation will demonstrate how once reflexivity is re-conceived, new pedagogical strategies for reflective/reflexive writing can make community writing courses more effective writing and learning environments.

*Chapter Three*  
**What's in a Name? How Feminist Research Methodologies Shape Reflexivity**

As highlighted in the last chapter, there are various foundations of reflexivity, and each foundation affords researchers and theorists different ways of thinking about reflexivity's place in the writing and research process. While valuable, these foundations do not provide much clarity on reflexivity's relationship to reflection, specific strategies for writing reflexively, or an understanding of reflexivity's truly unique dimensions. How then can writing teachers approach reflexive practices in ways that will facilitate more nuanced understandings of positonality, agency, and social transformation for students? I argue that feminist research methodologies provide just such an approach, and in this chapter I illustrate the distinctive qualities of feminist reflexivity.

Katrina Powell and Pamela Takayoski write in their introduction to the forthcoming collection *Practicing Research in Writing Studies: Reflexive and Ethically Responsible Research*, "a central concern of feminist epistemology and methodology has been self-reflexivity" (2). They define reflexivity as both the critical and analytical exploration of the research process as well as the multitude of ways that researchers "consciously write themselves into the text" through their subjectivity, positonality, and disciplinarity (Powell and Takayoshi 3). While Powell and Takayoshi use the word "reflect" to describe one of the steps feminist researchers can undertake in the process of reflexive inquiry, they do not use reflection to define the theory or practice of reflexivity. Instead, they approach reflexivity through feminist research methodologies and the epistemological theories that structure those methodologies. Like Harding, Powell and Takayoski see the foundations of feminist research methodologies as

creating a unique form of reflexivity that challenges traditional notions of the researcher, the researched, and the writer.

In order for us to understand how feminist research methodologies create a unique understanding of reflexivity and a coherent set of strategies for its implementation, we must first understand how feminist research methodologies are shaped and how they differ from traditional research methodologies, as well as those methodologies that also offer an emancipatory focus. This chapter will illustrate the ideologies and methodologies of feminist research, and how it differs from other activist research models. It will then highlight how feminist research methodologies theoretically and practically structure a unique form of reflexive inquiry. This unique form of reflexivity can provide new perspectives on the challenges of reflective writing that we see in community writing student work.

### *What is a Feminist Methodology?*

This dissertation will propose new pedagogical strategies for making reflective and reflexive writing in community writing courses more effective tools for learning. To do so, I argue for a retheorization of the challenges posed by reflective writing through the lens of feminist conceptions of reflexivity. Feminist research methodologies provide both a theoretical and practical way of understanding issues of agency, positonality, and social transformation.

One theorist often cited in discussions of the genesis of a feminist research methodology is Sandra Harding. In her groundbreaking work *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* (1991) Harding grounds the need for a well-articulated feminist methodology in feminist standpoint epistemology. Harding defines standpoint epistemology as an understanding of both the socially situated nature of knowledge, as well as the material reality of marginalized lives. This is a

radical way of thinking about knowledge creation in three ways. First, it acknowledges the social construction of knowledge, even within the “hard sciences.” She emphasizes how the construction of knowledge is a fluid changing process, offering different answers from different perspectives. Second, standpoint theory offers that the lived experiences of marginalized people—while situated and constructed socially—are materially and practically different than non-marginalized people. Knowledge created from this perspective will be fundamentally different, and therefore more valuable, than knowledge created from a more privileged perspective. Third, Harding argues that these two perspectives are not incompatible. A feminist standpoint is not, as some critics argue, relativism or essentialism. In fact, the idea that what is socially situated and relative can still affect individuals’ actual lived experiences is what separates standpoint feminism from early constructions of womanism or postmodern feminism. In other words, it does not assume a common “woman” nor does it deny the existence of commonalities among women’s experiences. By combining these unique, situated constructions of knowledge, its material effects, and its explicit dual nature, Harding outlines the initial impetus for a feminist way of thinking about research.

Harding’s suggestions that women’s perspectives (she uses the term “marginalized perspectives” to expand the scope of standpoint theories, yet I use “women’s perspectives” to emphasize the theory’s grounding in second wave feminism) are radically different from that of the patriarchy is not new. Feminist theorists such as Addison and McGee (1999) have made the claim that being a women provides one with a different and valuable lens on the world. What Harding’s theories of epistemology do offer though is the idea that this feminist perspective of the researcher or the subject can be systematically interrogated to form a *standpoint* with which to center research questions, evaluate methods, and validate findings. Understanding this

standpoint—a feminist methodological standpoint—illuminates ways of thinking about and strategies for writing through many of the same challenges that students encounter when they are doing reflective writing in their community writing classes. By understanding how this feminist standpoint has developed we can use features of its development to reconceive writing practices.

Building on Harding’s framework, other feminist scholars have continued to enumerate the theoretical underpinnings of a feminist epistemology. Nancy C. M. Hartsock’s *The Feminist Standpoint Revisited* (1999) builds on Harding’s claims for a situated and material epistemology. In this work, Hartsock argues that a feminist standpoint is a logical movement from Marxist theories of knowledge, which propose that a real understanding of society is only available from the structurally different position of those dominated in a capitalist society. By accepting this central premise of Marxism, knowledge theorists are in fact arguing for a form of standpoint theory. Indeed, Hartsock sees Marxism’s inability to account for women’s lives as the foundation for feminist standpoint theory’s validity.

Hartsock’s explication of the historical and theoretical space for a feminist standpoint provides an even clearer explanation of Harding’s rather abstract description of standpoint epistemology’s structure and value. Hartstock writes,

A standpoint is not simply and interested position (interpreted as bias) but is interested in the sense of being engaged. [...] A standpoint, however, carries with it the contention that there are some perspectives on society from which, however well intentioned one may be, the real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible.  
(218)

Building off of Harding, Hartsock argues explicitly that standpoint theory is not dualism and that it in fact supposes a “duality of levels of reality” which transcend simple us/them binaries and

help challenge and invert surface reality (218). Here, Hartsock is providing a clear logic and rationale for a theory of knowledge stemming from and shaped by women's lived experiences. By doing this kind of explication Hartsock is enumerating the uniqueness of the feminist perspective on the realism/relativism debate discussed in chapter two.

Patricia Hill Collins expands these ideas even further, arguing that a standpoint has core themes, or certain commonalities of experiences. For example, within a black feminist standpoint Hill Collins sees a "legacy of struggle" (black women's experiences of historically struggling against racism and sexism) as a core theme (244). Yet, like Hartsock's argument that standpoint is just a replication of a binary, Hill Collins is careful to note that not all people within a standpoint experience and respond to core themes in the same way. She states that social class, sexuality, geography, ethnicity, and age shape the diversity of responses and perspectives. These differences do not invalidate a standpoint or its core themes. Instead, Hill Collins writes, they make discussing a "Black women's standpoint [more accurate than] discussing a Black woman's standpoint" (250).

Clearly, considerable diversity exists in how scholars conceive feminist epistemology, yet what ties these researchers together is there shared concept that particular perspectives, often the undervalued, provide fertile spaces for investigating knowledge construction and its effects on women's realities. As these scholars argue for a standpoint, they argue that the knowledge created from a feminist epistemology is unique and valuable. This inevitable leads to the question: how does one study this type of knowledge and how can it be used to illustrate previously unknown aspects of preexisting knowledge? The answer lies in the construction of a specific feminist methodology. In "Is There a Feminist Method," (1987) Harding challenges how social science has analyzed women, men, and social life, and makes two major claims that will

shape the discussion of feminist research to come. First, she argues that adding women to the research equation is a valuable<sup>2</sup> and important starting point for inquiry, but it is not a sufficient condition for a feminist methodology (Harding 4). Second, she claims that there is not a distinctive feminist method, nor should there be. Instead, feminists should focus their concerns on larger methodological and epistemological issues. Here, Harding is making a remarkable claim, arguing that the power of feminist research is not grounded in methods or subjects. Instead, Harding sees specific features that structure the best and most revolutionary feminist research: a feminist methodology.

The first feature of Harding's feminist methodology focuses on using women's experiences as an empirical and theoretical resource. Harding argues that traditional research has only asked questions about social life that are problematic to men. She writes, "defining what is in need of scientific explanation from the perspective of bourgeois, white men's experiences leads to a partial, even perverse, understanding of social life (Harding 7). Therefore, one distinctive feature of feminist research is that problems worthy of study are generated from the perspective of women and are theoretically informed by paradigms of knowledge construction that take non-dominant ways of knowing into account. Harding explicitly problematizes the notion of research based in women's experiences, noting that women themselves need to be the ones defining what their "experiences" are. She also briefly describes the danger of essentializing "women's experiences" into "woman's experience." In fact, inquiry into what Harding describes as the "fragmented identities" of women can be a rich source for research that values women's experiences throughout the research process (7).

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<sup>2</sup> Harding notes that research on women is an important move because of the historical resistance (intentional or otherwise) in traditional epistemologies to recognize that women can be "agents of knowledge" (3).

If, as I argue throughout this chapter, that feminist research methodologies provide a unique understanding of the challenges of reflexivity, one step towards illustrating this is by showing how Harding's features allow for unique modes of thinking for researchers. For example, recent feminist scholars Sharlene Hesse-Biber, Christine Gilmartin, and Robin Lyndenberg have interpreted Harding's first feature—using women's experiences as an empirical and theoretical resource—to structure an understanding of feminist research's inherent interdisciplinarity<sup>3</sup>. In their introduction to *Feminist Approaches to Theory and Methodology*, a 1999 anthology highlighting feminist work on the margins of disciplines, they argue that disciplinary knowledge reflects male interests and that research arising from women's experiences can help break down the artificial barriers that obstruct understandings of social inequities. As with later feminist uses of standpoint theory, Hesse-Biber, Gilmartin, and Lyndenberg emphasize Harding's caution of essentializing, asking, "if we cannot uncritically assume the commonality of women based on the lived experiences of the female body, what is feminist praxis?" (5). By embracing Harding's concept that the purpose of research is inseparable from the origins of research questions, these authors translate Harding's first feature of feminist research methodology as the central concept for their analysis of the intersection of feminism and interdisciplinary research. This is important because it gives us an example of how feminist research methodologies can be practiced—much in the same way that reflexivity needs to be translated from a theory to a practice in the writing classroom.

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<sup>3</sup> Hesse-Biber, Gilmartin, and Lyndenberg embrace feminism's interdisciplinarity, much like writing scholar Janice M. Lauer does in her notable work "Composition Studies: A Dappled Discipline" (1984). These scholars explicitly argue for the potential of work that crosses or borrows from disciplinary discourses. For a thoughtful discussion of the theoretical and practical limitations of such interdisciplinary, see Julie Thompson Klein's *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice* (1990).

The second feature of Harding's methodology elaborates on the earlier claim that feminist research should be for women. Harding sees traditional social research as being for men; it has provided welfare departments, advertisers, medical establishments, or the judicial system answers to questions that they have found valuable (8). Harding makes the claim that a feminist methodology must provide women explanations of social phenomena that they want and need, regardless of whether or not women themselves or specific gender inequalities are the focus of the research. A feminist methodology must be shaped by the questions that drive people, their interests, and their empowerment.

Later feminist researchers have taken Harding's second feature and expanded it to include the concept of feminist research as activism. In Michelle Fine's important discussion of a feminist psychology, *Disruptive Voices: Possibilities for Feminist Research* (1992), she argues that feminist research should be viewed as a social change strategy. The role of the feminist researcher is to press, provoke, and unbalance the social inequities in race, gender, class, disability, and sexuality (Fine 16). Fine structures her feminist psychology around Harding's second feature, assuming that the larger goal of psychology is activism that is grounded in personal and collective politics and assumed power asymmetries (20). Nancy Naples, in *Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse Analysis, and Activist Research* (2003), also presents ethnographic research centered around Harding's second feature as activism. Interestingly, just as the more recent work of Hesse-Biber, Gilmartin, and Lyndenberg provide a more nuanced and flexible version of standpoint theory, Naples argues that feminist research, "must challenge and critique the assumptions that feminist research must 'create social change'" (137). That is, feminist research should interrogate what social change even means, to whom, and for whom. The feminist perspective of conducting research for women must take into

account power relations and interpretive authority as it constructs what “value” a particular research question might have for women. Understanding Harding’s second feature, particularly how it is used by contemporary researchers like Fine and Naples, is important because it again illustrates a unique feature of feminist research methodologies—an emphasis on understanding the agency of the research objects and well as problematizing notions of change and activism. As we saw in chapter one, and will later see in chapters four and five, these are similar issues to those found in reflective writing in community writing classrooms. By understanding Harding’s and others’ perspectives and strategies we can develop a set of pedagogical strategies that challenge similar constructions.

Harding’s third feature is the insistence that the researcher places herself within the same critical field as the subject matter. For Harding, this allows the entire research process to be scrutinized similarly to the results of research (9). This feature should be read as Harding’s explicit response to the “objectivist” research stance: the researcher’s beliefs and actions shape research practices, results, and interpretations. Harding argues that introducing subjectivity into the research process actual increases the objectivity of the research, while simultaneously moving it away from objectivism. Harding later develops this feature into the previously mentioned concept of “strong objectivity,” which recognizes the situated nature of a researcher’s motives and values and continually theorizes the effect of such perspectives on research.

Harding’s critique of objectivity is further developed in Acker, Barry, and Esseveld’s “Objectivity and Truth: Problems in Doing Feminist Research” (1991). For these researchers, the idea of removing the point of view of the observer from the research process is only possible when the “knower” is thought of in abstract terms and the object of inquiry is positioned as the “other” who cannot effect the knower (Acker et al. 140). Instead, the research process should be

a dialogue between the researcher and the researched. It is this acknowledgement of a researcher-participant relationship that makes Acker, Barry and Esseveld's piece so revolutionary. Turning research's focus on to this relationship allows for research that is more attentive to issues of power and reciprocity. One of Acker, Barry and Esseveld's strategies for critiquing objectivity is to allow participants to direct interviews, rather than have the researcher's idea of what is important structure the process. By introducing subjectivity into their research, Acker, Barry, and Esseveld found their work to more fairly and accurately reflect the aspects of social lives they claimed to represent (145).

Kirsch and Richie classify Harding's and Acker, Barry, and Esseveld's concerns with researcher objectivity as an ethical issue. They propose a "politics of location" to understand how a researcher's perspective can shape research practices and results, an idea that resonates with the notion of a standpoint. They argue that researchers should, "theorize their locations by examining their experiences as reflections of ideology and culture, by reinterpreting their own experiences through the eyes of others, and by recognizing their split selves, their multiple and often unknowable identities" (Kirsch and Richie 141). Once theorized, these areas of conflict or dissonance can be read as opportunities to examine and defend deeply held assumptions that effect research methods, methodologies, and epistemologies. Kirsch and Richie emphasize Harding's notion of strong objectivity and offer that reflection on perspective must be rigorous and ongoing. Again, for Kirsch and Richie, Harding's third feature is an ethical issue that asks why we do the research we do.

These three principles of feminist methodologies—*fragmented identities or positonalities as a resource for research, a nuanced understanding of the goals for social change and transformation, and a critique of the researcher's motives and values through a politics of*

*location*—have led to the development of strategies for conducting feminist inquiry. Again, as Harding notes, these are not feminist methods, but theoretical strategies that shape a feminist methodology. Most notably, Mary Fonow and Judith Cook list four strategies of feminist research in their collection *Beyond Methodology* (1991): reflexivity (researcher analysis and critique), an action orientation (focusing the project on emancipatory goals), attention to the affective (an emotional perspective), and the use of the situation-at-hand (studying common environments and everyday events) (2-11). These strategies for research represent qualities that are not included in traditional positivist research practices, yet are explicitly central to feminist methodologies.

In addition to these four components, Kirsch's review of feminist research adds to the list of strategies supported by feminist principles. She argues that feminist research practices include a commitment to collaborate with participants as much as possible, correct andocentric norms by questioning what is defined as normal or deviant, take responsibility for the representations of others in research, and acknowledge the limitations and contradictions in research data (*Ethical* 5). For Kirsch, these multiple strategies signify that there is not one feminist research method; there are feminist principles of research—a methodology.

In this next section I argue that other forms of emancipatory methodologies, namely activist methodologies, are different from feminist ones. I will examine the theoretical grounding of activist research and emphasize the specific strategies that form the methodology. I will then discuss the overlaps and differences in theory that shape a unique feminist methodology. This discussion again highlights the ways in which feminist research methodologies are unique, which will help us later understand the specific implications of a feminist conception of reflexivity.

### *What Does an Activist Methodology Mean?*

If there are no distinct aspects of a feminist research methodology then why do researchers label their works as specifically feminist, activist, or emancipatory? In a footnote to her introduction to *The Struggle and the Tools* (2010), an ethnography of the language use and strategies of inner city African Americans, Ellen Cushman notes that she is specifically not using the term feminist to describe the research methodology because for many readers it will bring to mind the negative connotations of the women's movement and a community that she herself has never felt a part of. Instead, Cushman labels her work activist because "activist research begin(s) with a firm belief that individuals have extensive knowledge and many linguistic devices for keeping in check that they deem to be society's harmful influences" (*Struggle* 242). Cushman argues that activist methodology is valuable because it highlights these "hidden ideologies" (*Struggle* 242).

Yet is it really only the political and social baggage attached to the term "feminist" that keeps Cushman from claiming feminism as a framework for her methodology? Her epistemological leanings seem very similar to those highlighted by Harding. *The Struggle and the Tools*, as well as her well-received articles on service-learning and public intellectuals, overtly value the marginalized perspective of those outside of traditional economic power structures. In fact, Cushman's book's major claim, that inner city women successfully deploy literacy strategies that allow them to work with and against the institutional powers that shape their lives, is itself a powerful argument for standpoint epistemology.

Cushman's methodological choices also seem to align her with a feminist perspective. Cushman repeatedly centers herself in the text as a participant observer, engages in critical reflection on her role as researcher, and emphasizes the emancipatory goals of the project.

Additionally, throughout the multi-year ethnography Cushman's participants play a major part in shaping the nature of Cushman's role in the community, the types of literacy activities Cushman studies, and the representations of themselves in Cushman's work. Clearly, these choices could be read as linking Cushman's work with the work of feminist researchers like Kirsch, Ritchie, and Acker. Instead, Cushman chooses to identify as activist, drawing on a different, yet overlapping methodological history and theory.

By understanding the methodological history and theory that support activist research, its differences from and similarities to feminist research are explicated. Cancian provides an excellent overview of the genesis and development of the strategies of activist or participatory research<sup>4</sup> in her article "Conflicts Between Activist Research and Academic Success: Participatory Research and Alternative Strategies" (1993). Here, Cancian argues that activist research is a form of social research in which research subjects are both the intended beneficiaries of the research and exercise substantial control over the research process. As Cancian notes, this type of research stems from third world researchers who focus on challenging existing structures of education and economic development by empowering communities to make their own changes and take political action (Freire, Giroux, McLaren) and use their research to support grassroots projects that help marginalized communities identify their own needs, as well as their own tools for solving social and political problems.

From this early work, activist research developed into a set of strategies that help guide researchers to focus on power relations and political action. Cancian offers four major characteristics of this type of research: one, participation in the research by community members;

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<sup>4</sup> In this dissertation I will use the term activist, even though other researchers often use participatory to describe the same set of strategies, use the terms interchangeably, or choose terms through personal preference. This diversity is itself a valid reason for studying the names and origins of research methodologies.

two, consciousness raising and education of the participants; three, inclusion of popular knowledge; and four, political action (94). Within all of these characteristics is the understanding that the researcher's main audience is not policy makers or academics, but community members themselves. These characteristics are reiterated by Charles Hale, a professor of Anthropology and a leading researcher for the Global Security and Cooperation program. In his proposal to the GSC exploring the promise of activist research Hale sets forth how an activist research methodology might structure the basic steps of research. He emphasizes how activist research requires a process of dialogue with communities in the formation of research questions and objectives, as well as in data collection methods. He writes, "the goal [of activist research] is to carry out the research such that a specified group of people can actively participate, thereby learning research skills themselves, contributing to the data collection, [and] taking an active role in knowledge creation" (Hale 14). Key to this definition of an activist methodology is the understanding that participants play an important role in all aspects of the research process, including data analysis and dissemination of research and knowledge.

An interesting example of this type of research at work is Kysa Nygreen's "Reproducing or Challenging Power in the Questions We Ask and the Methods We Use: A Framework for Activist Research in Urban Education" (2006). In this piece, Nygreen argues that academics who study urban education must rethink their research methodologies if they want to change urban schools and the conditions that shape them. She notes that while most educational researchers aim to do work that changes policies and conditions, many who study the effects of education research see it doing little to change institutional relations (2). In fact, Nygreen and others offer that some educational research, even when focused on change, actually only succeeds in reproducing inequality (Apple 1992, Giroux 1987). Nygreen believes the answer

lies in activist research methods, as activist methodologies “aim for more than understanding: [they] aim to change educational structures and institutions, as well as the social structures that shape them” (2).

To apply this methodology to her research interest, urban school failure, Nygreen centers her work around the concept that such failure is not, as other research has suggested, a local issue, an organizational issue, or pedagogical issue. Instead, it is one that is inherently political, relating to privilege and power. Therefore, research into the problem must be contextualized and politicized through the co-construction of liberatory knowledge with communities and practitioners. She recounts her work with the Participatory Action Research Team for Youth (PARTY), emphasizing how the program and its goals sprang from the self-identified needs of the community. Through PARTY, Nygreen was able to collect a variety of perspectives on the power structures that community member see as negatively shaping the local schools. Nygreen argues that she wouldn’t have been able to clearly see all the facets of the problem had she solely relied on academic or personal perspectives.

The table below (Table 6) illustrates how Nygreen’s definition of activist methodologies differs from the construction of a feminist methodology discussed earlier in the chapter. Clearly, there are some practical similarities in these two methodologies. When the descriptions of their central characteristics are placed side by side we can see that while they might be phrased differently, considerable overlaps exist (see Table 6). For example, both methodologies emphasize the value of local knowledge. Feminist researchers refer to these types of overlooked ways of knowing as the “affective component” and the “situation-at-hand.” Activist researchers, on the other hand, use the term “popular knowledge” to define these contextual, often denigrated perspectives. Similarly, each methodology offers “action” as one of their strategies and goals.

Both “political action,” “consciousness raising,” and “action orientation” frame the research as a social change strategy.

Table 6: Central Characteristics of Different Research Methodologies

Feminist	Activist
Collaboration with Subjects	Participation by Subjects
Use of Situation-at-Hand	Use of Popular Knowledge
Action Orientation Goals	Political Action Goals
Women’s Experiences	Community Experiences
Continuous Attention to Researcher Reflexivity	
Continuous Attention to Institutional Power/Inequity	Continuous Attention to Institutional Power/Inequality

It may initially seem reductive to place feminist research methodologies and activist research methodologies in such a table, but this list highlights the subtleties that structure the theoretical and epistemological differences between the two stances. For example, collaboration with subjects is markedly different than participation. In a collaborative model of ethnography subjects might help shape the overall goals of the entire research endeavor, while in a participatory model they may help structure the types of questions that a researcher might use in interviews. The feminist collaboration exemplifies Harding’s second feature in that research centers around the wants and needs of the subject, rather than the researcher, or the researcher’s perspectives on the subject’s political or institutional needs<sup>5</sup>. This subtle difference illustrates the value and the challenges of naming research methodologies.

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<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that the differences articulated here between “collaboration” and “participation” or “feminist research” and “activist research” are not intended to create a static binary. In fact, contemporary research on feminism and third world women can be seen as collapsing these categories into one another. In particular, the work of Chandra Mohanty represents using “activist” strategies to critique western feminism’s subjugation of third world women’s perspectives, all under the epistemological framework of “feminism.”

While some of the differences in Table 9 are epistemological nuances illustrated through language choice, one major characteristic is markedly different, that of researcher reflexivity. As Nygreen, Hale, and Cancian show through their discussions, activist research is not inattentive to researcher biases, assumptions, and motives. Both methodologies argue against the stance of detached objectivity, noting the practical, ethical, and political problems such a stance brings. For activist researchers, the solution is a continuous attention to institutional issues of power. Feminist methodologies diverge from this perspective not in their objections to detached objectivity, but in their solutions. That is, through feminist reflexivity researchers can acknowledge and work through issues of objectivity/subjectivity with the sustained and recursive attention to the researcher's positonality, which, feminists argue, will provide them with a deeper understanding of the research question and solution than attention to institutional positonality would do on its own. This is clearly seen in the description of Harding's third feature—that the researcher place herself within the same critical space as the subject matter and understand how her own beliefs and actions might continually shape the research process. While activist research methodologies ask for researcher reflection, feminist methodologies require researcher reflexivity.

These specific differences in characteristics highlight the major underlying epistemological difference between activist and feminist methodologies: the assumptions from which the research begins. That is, each methodology offers different rationales for valuing the knowledge of marginalized groups and posits that traditional methodologies fall short in their goals to adequately and ethically represent these participants and create emancipatory knowledge. As Hale notes, revisions to methodologies stem from the impetus to distinguish

between “better and less good” explanations of social phenomena (14). Activist and feminist methodologies exist to offer researchers “better” perspectives and tool sets.

Importantly though, they approach “better” from different places. As previously noted, feminist methodologies come from standpoint epistemology, which offers that difference and the shared claims that shape difference are what creates a better perspective. Activist methodology does not begin with this emphasis on difference. Its epistemological center is a constant presence of institutional inequality. By grounding their methodology this way, activist research overtly highlights the political context of its work and attempts to fulfill its goal of being research and service simultaneously. Feminist methodologies are grounded in the personal and the political, which shapes a form of reflexivity that emphasizes the continuous, cyclical understanding of how the self is shaped and is shaped by contexts—local, personal, political, and institutional. How feminist research methodologies differ from activist research methodologies is crucial to understanding how feminist reflexivity is unique amongst the social science and critical pedagogy reflexivities highlighted in chapter two.

Yet, reflexivity is not inherently feminist. In fact, it is possible for reflexivity to be decidedly un-feminist. It is important to again remember that feminism is not a method or a topic in research; it is a set of principles that help guide how research does or should proceed. As defined above, reflexivity, whether epistemic or methodological, asks that researchers be conscious of turning their analysis back on themselves, asking how their location constructs their research, and how their personal epistemologies may structure the types of questions they ask and how they ask them. Just as women can do research that is un-feminist (and men can do feminist research), feminism is not a pre-condition for reflexivity, even though reflexivity is a principle of feminist research. In her discussion of feminist research principles, Kirsch notes that

out of the four characteristics of feminist research described by Fonow and Cook in *Beyond Methodology*, reflexivity is the only one that would avoid a sharp critique, even dismissal, in traditional research design (11).

Reflexivity is also not necessarily a method. A method is a technique for gathering evidence, while reflexivity can ground the theory and analysis of how research should proceed (Harding 1987). A reflective researcher need not use ideas or information they come to through reflexive practice in their research; they need only conduct the research from a reflexive standpoint. One reason why it is easy to confuse a reflexive methodology with a method is because of the strategies offered to researchers that may encourage reflexivity, particularly in feminist epistemologies. *This is the benefit of linking reflexivity with feminism.* As evident in chapter two, reflexivity as described by the social sciences and critical pedagogies often lacks concrete strategies or guidelines for this type of thinking. If such strategies are unclear, it is even more difficult for teachers to make their expectations for reflexive thinking and writing, rather than reflective thinking and writing, known to their students. This challenge effects the disconnects between teacher and student that reflection illustrates in chapter one. If reflexivity and reflection are not the same thing (see chapter 2) then reflective practices are not enough to support reflexivity, in either research or teaching. By articulating a specifically feminist reflexivity we gain specific strategies for thinking and writing about ourselves, individuals, and communities.

### *Reconceiving Experience Through Feminist Reflexivity*

The purpose of using feminist standpoint theory as a basis for the development of a feminist reflexivity is that it emphasizes the experience of difference as an interpretive tool for

inquiry. As feminist historian Joan W. Scott notes, using experiences as evidence, or arguing for the authority of experience is often problematic. It can, as she writes, “serve as a way of talking about what happened, establishing difference and similarity, of claiming knowledge that is ‘unassailable’ (96). A focus on experience as knowledge can deny the contested, contingent, and contextual nature of that knowledge. For Scott, rather than discount experience as a way of knowing, its inclusion as research evidence necessitates an analysis of its operations, a redefinition of its meaning, and an attention to the discursive nature of its construction (96). A feminist reflexivity derived from standpoint theory provides strategies for interpreting experiences of personal agency, positonality, and social transformation in ways that allow such experiences to become not just the origins of interpretation, but that which we interpret.

As this chapter has illustrated, feminist conceptions of reflexivity require that researchers turn their analysis back on themselves, and ask how their experiences of location, identity, and power structure their work’s formation and interpretation. The principles of feminist methodology—fragmented identities or positonalities as a resource for research, a nuanced understanding of the goals for social change and transformation, and a critique of the researcher’s motives and values through a politics of location—provides ways of problematizing “experiences of difference” as a way of knowing. While there are considerable differences between the work done by professional researchers and the work done by students, both feminist research methodologies and the methodologies that structure the work done by students in community writing courses engage in the project of making experiences visible. Feminist reflexivity provides one strategy for making sure the use of experiences as evidence includes a critical examination of how those experiences work as representations of larger ideological or political systems.

Earlier chapters have presented the limitations of using reflective writing as the method for analysis and critique of experiences. Chapter four will continue with this explication, arguing how the structure and goals of community writing classrooms necessitate a rethinking of reflective writing's purpose through the methodological strategies of feminist reflexivity. As chapter four will show, while not conducting research in the same way we see Harding, Kirsch, or Ritchie doing in this chapter, community writing courses ask students to use their own experiences of difference, and their interpretations of those experiences, as the foundations of their internalization of course goals, such as writerly agency and authority, the social conditions that necessitate service, and the possibility of social change through writing and discourse. A feminist reflexivity, derived from the foundations of feminist research methodologies, can provide new ways of re-reading the challenges that students face as they use their own experiences of difference in community writing environments as evidence.

*Chapter Four*  
**The Challenges of Reflection in Community Writing Models: The Case for Feminist Reflexivity**

The last two chapters have illustrated what role reflexivity inhabits in the work of natural and social science researchers. As Harding, Bourdieu, and Woolger articulate, reflexivity is a central component of the research process for those who wish to critique normalized notions of researcher objectivity, relationship, and positionality. For many feminist researchers, reflexivity is central to their goals of promoting social change through research and valuating non-traditional ways of knowing. Chapter three also argued that feminist strategies for research provide a valuable framework for creating concrete ways of *doing* reflexivity in research. If, as this dissertation argues, reflective writing is not reaching its potential for enhancing student learning because it is often conflated with reflexivity, then it is important for teachers who assign reflective writing to understand reflexivity's theoretical and practical concerns. Concurrently, it is also important for teachers to clearly see how this disconnect manifests itself in actual classroom practices.

This chapter will illustrate more clearly what student research and writing looks like in community writing courses and how that research is shaped by traditional perceptions of reflection and the unarticulated ideals of reflexivity. It will show how this disconnect manifests itself in discussions of student agency, positionality, and social transformation, and how feminist strategies for reflexive thinking and writing allow teachers to engage in such disconnects differently and more productively. To these ends, chapter four offers a rereading of Tom Dean's excellent explanation and discussion of community writing courses, *Writing Partnerships*, and it analyzes the challenging roles reflection plays in meeting the goals of different community writing courses. After a discussion of the current state of community writing scholarship, I will

explore the foundations and structures of “writing for,” “writing about,” and “writing with” community writing programs. After each illustration, I will critique the current role of reflection in each paradigm and problematize how these assignments meet their intended goals. The chapter will then demonstrate how feminist theories and practices of reflexivity provide alternate ways of reading these challenges and creating new solutions.

### *Reading Reflection in Community Writing Discourse*

As discussed in chapter one, reflective writing plays an important role in community writing classes. To quote Anson, theories of community writing:

value reflection for helping to create the connection between academic coursework and the immediate social, political and interpersonal experiences of community-based activities. Reflection is supposed to encourage a movement between observation and intellectual analysis or consciousness-raising, and conversely apply abstract concepts (such as citizenship, public ethics, or social justice) to contexts beyond the classroom.

(167)

In community writing courses, reflection allows for self-awareness and social awareness through both personal and practical engagement in abstract concepts. Reflective writing activities give students formal scaffolded assignments that connect what students do with what students think, and this connection is particularly useful in courses where distinct parts (community engagements, writing, analyzing social issues) are not explicitly related to one another. It is precisely because of the seemingly disparate goals of community writing that reflection becomes so valuable as a learning tool, and reflection’s potential for enhancing student learning in community writing courses provides a rationale for using community writing’s discussions of

reflective writing and thinking as a text for a feminist analysis of student challenges in reflexivity.

An additional rationale for the choice (to use community writing's reflective writing to highlight feminist reflexivity's value to reflection) comes from the moment that community writing scholarship current finds itself in. As noted in chapter one, early work in community writing scholarship built off of the foundations of educational theorists like Quintillion, Dewey, Freire and Shor, who argued for education to emphasize civic or public participation, personal intellectual and emotional growth, and a critical awareness of social issues and local concerns. Building off these three key foundations, scholarship on community writing pedagogies in rhetoric and writing took the form of three discrete, yet overlapping waves (see Table 7).

Table 7: Waves of Community Writing Scholarship

1 <sup>st</sup> Wave	Strategizing	Focuses on the logistical and administrative aspects of community writing Designing and evaluating course content
2 <sup>nd</sup> Wave	Legitimizing	Focuses on explicating the relationship between community writing theory and practice Positioning community writing as a legitimate <i>writing</i> pedagogy
3 <sup>rd</sup> Wave	Problematizing	Focuses on a re-theorization of relationships, agency, and stakeholders

The first wave, strategizing, focused mainly on the logistical and administrative challenges of community writing courses. As Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters note in their introduction to *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-*

*Learning in Composition*, much of community writing's early research documented and reported the central problems of developing on and off campus relationships, coordinating academic and non-academic schedules, and getting students between campus and community sites (1).

Additionally, a considerable amount of work, especially in rhetoric and writing<sup>6</sup> centered on designing and evaluating new kinds of assignments.

This focus is clear in the most referenced collection from this wave, the previously mentioned *Writing the Community*. Here, early adopters of community writing outline the practical aspects of community writing pedagogies, as well as theorize rationales for creating community writing courses. Many of these rationales focus on linking service-learning to the contemporary discussion of WAC and WID (Bridwell-Bowles, Deans "Writing Across," Heilker, Dorman and Dorman). This linking is a key move for community writing advocates in two ways: first, it allows them to place the foundational discourses of classical rhetors, Dewey, and Freire in conversation with WAC/WID, exposing new audiences to community writing pedagogies. Second, this linking allows scholars to use the challenges that WAC/WID has encountered to argue for future community writing research to move beyond rationales and applications. For example, Deans notes that WAC/WID programs have had to contend with "low prestige" and are often faced with indifference from administrators and institutions ("Writing Across" 30). Similarly, WAC/WID and community writing face the challenge of being considered activities that take time away from "real" course content. How WAC/WID has dealt with these challenges is seen as a resource for community writing early-adopters. A second theme in this wave is an emphasis on community writing best practices, exemplified by Nora

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<sup>6</sup> Designing and evaluating community writing projects was of particular interest to rhetoric and writing scholars, as composition classes have always navigated multiple purposes. Nora Bacon argues that success in community writing courses cannot be abstract. Writings course must produce certain *writing* outcomes (44).

Bacon’s “Community Service Writing: Problems, Challenges, Questions.” This piece, and others in the collection (Herzberg, Stock and Swenson), follows the model of presenting community writing stories with the intent to show how service-learning pedagogies and writing pedagogies can work together, as well as practical problems and successes of specific community writing initiatives.

Bacon’s piece provides an example of how early community writing theories would soon give way to a second wave of scholarship (legitimizing) which focused on a more explicit understanding of the relationship between community writing theory and practice. This was a critical juncture in community writing studies, where issues of establishing a theory or a practice of community writing gave way to better understanding how the theories and practices work together to structure writing instruction. This next wave of community writing scholarship answers Adler-Kassner et al and Bacon’s call for significant inquiry into how service-learning and writing studies work together. Studies like Brock Haussamen’s “Service-Learning and First Year Composition” and Sapp and Crabtree’s “A Laboratory in Citizenship: Service-Learning in the Technical Communication Classroom” worked to explicitly link the language and goals of writing instruction to community writing pedagogies. By proposing new understandings of composition terms like “public” and “audience” Schultz and Ruggles-Gere, as well as Higgins, Long, and Flower used community writing pedagogies to expand the work of composition scholars like Lisa Ede, Andrea Lunsford (1991), and Douglas Park (1982). Others (Freedman and Adam 2004; Bacon “The Trouble with Transfer” 2010) linked community writing pedagogies to the ongoing conversations surrounding how and why certain writing skills did or did not transfer outside the classroom. For researchers in the second wave, the goal was to legitimize community writing as a *writing* pedagogy, rather than allow it to remain isolated as a

university or college level program. By linking it to preexisting writing studies topics like critical thinking and the rhetorical situation, community writing could be solidified as an active part of the disciplinary conversation.

In concert with the “public turn” in composition studies, the third wave of community writing theorization (problematizing) has focused on understanding how community writing functions for a variety of stakeholders: students, institutions, researchers, and communities. In fact, in their introduction to Bedford/St. Martin’s 2010 critical sourcebook *Writing and Community Engagement* editors Deans, Roswell, and Wurr note that recent community writing scholarship has focused less on problem-solving and more on theorizing relationships, agency, and reciprocity (4-5). Ellen Cushman’s “Sustainable Service-Learning Programs” embodies this shift. Like her earlier work, “The Public Intellectual,” this article links activist research with community writing. Here, Cushman theorizes that we can create sustainable, flexible, mutually rewarding community writing programs by reevaluating the roles of, and relationships between, service-learning stakeholders, specifically the role of the professor. Throughout the article Cushman critiques traditional community writing pedagogies like the end-of-the-semester projects and reflective journals, arguing that neither of these projects establish community writing as a legitimate form of inquiry on its own because they lack a well-defined methodology, and they therefore face difficulties representing themselves to others (47). She theorizes a research-based community writing initiative that positions community writing sites as places of reciprocal, collaborative inquiry. To do this, professors must see community writing sites as places where their own research, teaching, and service can take place collaboratively with community members and students.

In highlighting the practical and theoretical development of community writing scholarship what becomes visible is community writing's shift away from best practices and program development and towards problematizing and theorizing individual components of the community writing curriculum and experience. Now that a structure is in place, that structure can be analyzed and critiqued to create a stronger theoretical grounding for both large and small curricular choices. I believe this moment in community writing scholarship mirrors a less articulated moment in reflective writing studies. Best practices are in place, as is a strong theoretical foundation in the work of expressivist and pragmatist educational theorists. The next step for reflective writing scholarship is to engage critically with these best practices and foundations to illuminate places where solid theory and practice still fail to shape the education outcomes scholars hope they will.

Clearly, this is an important moment in the evolution of community writing scholarship. Scholars and practitioners are asking for new ways to read longstanding issues in community writing curricula, a moment that overlaps in the development of reflective writing scholarship. This, along with reflective writing's ability to create movement between thinking and doing, the abstract and concrete, provides a compelling rationale for using the two areas together to highlight the value and current limitations of each. By understanding how reflection functions as a significant component of community writing, both successfully and problematically, we can see how a re-theorization of reflection as reflexivity, specifically, feminist reflexivity, might impact the issues raised in this contemporary phase of community writing scholarship.

### *Writing Partnerships: A Heuristic for Reflection in Community Writing*

In order to understand how feminist research methodologies allow us to reconceive student challenges in reflection as reflexivity, we must first understand how reflection functions, both practically and theoretically, in community writing discourse. An overview of contemporary community writing scholarship shows the diversity of programs' structures and goals, and the different philosophies of learning that support these differences. Reflective writing cannot be the same in each unique structure. A thorough review of community writing's diverse forms highlight three distinct goals or purposes for reflective writing, each with their own unarticulated relationship to feminist notions of reflexivity: student positionality, student conceptions of social transformation, and student agency. By understanding the breadth and depth of reflection in community writing, we can illustrate the benefits of rethinking reflection as reflexivity.

One of the most important books to offer a comprehensive yet nuanced understanding of the multiple forms of community writing in the classroom is Tom Deans's *Writing Partnerships*. Deans, a contributor to *Writing the Community*, situates *Writing Partnerships* as a rejoinder to the "micro revolution" described by Adler-Kassner et al.<sup>7</sup> Deans's main argument is that not only is community writing appropriate for writing studies, it hinges on writing instruction. Deans cites data from Eyler, Giles and Braxton's "The Impact of Service-Learning on College Students" that argues that community writing helps students' ability to see problems as systemic, in addition to enhancing their ability to view issues from multiple perspectives (3). While Deans notes this research is anecdotal, he sees continued research on situated student writing and

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<sup>7</sup> The introduction to *Writing the Community* frames the first wave of service-learning scholarship as a "micro revolution" because while they saw tremendous growth in the field, most rhetoric and writing instructors knew little, if anything, about it (1).

rhetorical competencies as the next building block. To illustrate this point, Deans describes how community writing pedagogies logically build off of already accepted social-constructionist writing theories. He writes:

While the social turn in composition encourages teachers and students to see their writing not as skills and drills but as participation in a discourse community, service-learning takes *the next logical step of asking students and teachers to situate their work in both disciplinary and wider nonacademic communities.* [...] While the social turn in composition... speaks to the ethical, democratizing, and consciousness-raising potential of the writing classroom, many forms of service-learning confirm such critical intellectual habits and go *the next logical step or marrying them with pragmatic civic action.* (9-10, emphasis in original)

To legitimize community writing as a writing pedagogy, Deans stresses and extends composition's consistent commitment to writing as social construction.

To further delineate the relationship between community writing and composition Deans offers three models for community writing courses based on predicted outcomes, or as Deans puts it, based on asking, “what is this course supposed to do?” (16). Deans is not the first person to argue that the relationships between community writing and composition courses hinges on outcomes. In his 1995 article “The Irony of Service:” Keith Morton states that different forms of community writing will lead to different writing outcomes (118). Morton is responding to the idea that there is a continuum of community writing’s value, where “charity” is the least valuable educational tool and “social change” is the most valuable. Instead of this continuum, Morton offers “paradigms” of service-learning (Charity, Project, and Social Change) where each paradigm has its own way of shaping learning and writing.

In *Writing Partnerships* Deans does not use Morton's paradigms explicitly, but his organization is predicated on Morton's concept of contextualized value. Deans's three models of community writing pedagogies, writing for the community, writing about the community, and writing with the community, are all based on the types of writing and learning teachers hope their students will do (see Table 8). The "writing-for" model is project based, where students work for community organizations to create writing that is of use to them. "Writing-about" pedagogies use service-learning projects as a spring board to jump start students' critical thinking on social issues, both the personal and political. "Writing-with," on the other hand, asks students to work with communities to identify social needs and use their course writings to promote "literate social action" (Deans 112).

Table 8: Deans's Definitions and Responses to Community Needs in the Three Community Writing Paradigms

	<b>Writing for the Community</b>	<b>Writing about the Community</b>	<b>Writing with the Community</b>
<b>Definition of Community Needs</b>	Service: nonprofit agency staffs define community needs and what documents are required	Service: local community agencies or school administrators define needs and tasks	Service: community residents, together with university people, name pressing local problems
<b>Response</b>	Writing: students respond by composing workplace documents in collaboration with the agency contact person, to his or her specifications	Writing: students respond by composing essays for the teacher to analyze the root social and institutional forces that put people in need	Writing: students respond by composing problem-solving public documents in collaboration with local residents

Again, Deans's goal for theorizing community writing this way is to show how these pedagogies can be clearly linked to preexisting writing outcomes. Deans summarizes:

Writing-for courses, therefore, generally reflect on the learning process, on community needs, and on personal rewards. In contrast... writing-about courses tend to reflect abstractly on the nature of systemic social and ideological forces (race, class, gender), and writing-with courses tend to reflect on strategic local change and the rhetoric of collaboration. (79)

Despite these differences, all three of these pedagogies emphasize experiential learning, the dialectical relationship between reflection and action, and a belief in rhetoric and writing's ability to promote social change. Deans does not ask readers to see his pedagogies as a strict structure. Instead, he offers them as heuristics for both practitioners and the next wave of community writing theorists.

Deans is also clearly cognizant of the limitations of viewing community writing through these paradigms. Deans acknowledges that many, if not most, community writing courses function as some form of hybrid model, using multiple assignments to attend to multiple course goals. This is not a weakness in the paradigm though. In fact, Deans's argues that the sign of a good typology is its continued ability to adapt and stay useful (145). In his text's conclusion he relays the story of a 1996 College Composition and Communication Conference roundtable where presenters (Deans included) described their experiences with different community writing courses. Deans observed that the audience seemed confused and overwhelmed by the different descriptions and programs. Later, Bruce Herzberg relayed to Deans that a continued discussion of the roundtable centered on the dissonance between each paradigm's structure and its goals and outcomes. Deans quotes Herzberg as saying, "They [the panel] were using the *Stanford*

approach and the audience was wondering why they weren't achieving the *Bentley effect*" (144). By retelling this moment, Deans is acknowledging the disjunctions between the different paradigms' purposes and the outcomes that practitioners favor (i.e. doing a "writing for" project yet hoping for student ideological change—a "writing about" outcome). At the time, Deans notes, there was not a useful vocabulary for understanding the various relationship between and among public service, writing, and social change that each different paradigm presents. A new typology, one that clearly delineates the grounding philosophies and the goals and outcomes of each community writing paradigm, provides scholars with such a vocabulary, even as it could be used to constrict community writing's cross-paradigm growth.

In the next section, I examine the first of Deans's paradigms for community writing, the "writing for" model. By illustrating the role reflective writing plays in meeting "writing for" writing goals, we can see where a shifting focus from reflection to feminist reflexivity can enhance both the rationale and strategies for course learning.

### ***Reflection in "Writing For the Community" Pedagogies***

Deans's first section, entitled "Writing *For* the Community: 'Real World' Writing, Non-Academic Literacies, and Writing in Sports Management" describes community writing courses that are motivated by both the prospect of students experiencing "real world" rhetorical situations beyond their classroom and an ethical commitment to community needs and to reflection on service and social justice (54). Students participating in "writing-for" constructions of community writing, or what Bacon calls "writing as service" (qtd. in Deans 57) draws on Deweyian concepts of experiential learning, vocational application, and civic participation. This is not the same at workplace or internship writing. In Allen Gross's critique of instrumentalist

approaches to workplace writing he argues that client or workplace projects run the risk of drifting away from the goals of a humanities education and may end up ignoring ethical, social, and political aspects of writing (Deans 76). “Writing-for” curricula, on the other hand, encourages both a cultural critique and non-profit work to first and foremost illuminate community needs.

The course example highlighted in this chapter is the class Writing in Sports Management, designed and taught by Laurie Gullion for the University of Massachusetts’s junior year Writing Across the Curriculum program. Students in this course are paired with local sports and recreation non-profits and create writing projects for the organizations such as first-aid brochures, coaching manuals, administrative handbooks, and grant proposals. Other assigned compositions include a fieldwork journal or log, a project proposal, a progress report memorandum, and an in-class oral presentation. These assignments clearly have multiple audiences; the audience for the final project is the non-profit, while the professor is the audience for the supporting academic documents (journal or log, proposal, memo, etc.).

In Deans’s description and analysis of the course he draws out two major concepts that structure the course’s activities and goals—the movement between academic and workplace literacies and a textured understanding of multiple audiences. The first, the importance of movement between academic and workplace literacies is grounded in social constructivist understandings of knowledge, language, and writing. This aspect of the course helps students see writing as a social and rhetorical act rather than a set of value-free skills and an awareness of differences between academic and non-academic writing. One of the major purposes of this type of writing is to experience unfamiliar discourses, and this experience manifests itself through what other scholars have identified as dissonance or disorientation (Anson and Forsberg, 1990;

Doheney-Farina 1992) or the challenge of the ongoing process of adapting to new settings, new discourse communities, and new idiosyncratic textual features.

Deans's description of the dissonance created by the disconnect between academic and workplace literacies inadvertently highlights the central role reflection plays in how students navigate such challenges. He notes that students have identified peer-group dynamics and interactions with their partner non-profits agencies as places where dissonance effects them, and this information is gained through reading student reflective writing in the form of fieldwork logs and final reflections. Deans writes:

Members of several of Gullion's groups stated that they expected their projects to be "so easy" or "cake" (perhaps not only because brochures and manuals seem simple genres at first glance, but also because many students in the class had been involved in hometown recreations leagues like those being served in Amherst). For some groups, disorientation set in at the first meeting. One group doing a swimming lessons brochure remarked, "We didn't know what we were getting into." For others, disorientation surfaced during the writing and revising process (most were surprised at the degree of revision that had to undertake, and that there was no room for error in final drafts. And for others, the collaboration process among group members was sometimes problematic. (58)

The information gained from reading these student reflective entries is not inconsequential. Gullion remarks that student success depends as much on their understanding of the relationships and the social interactions with their agency and the group as on their writing skills. While there is still a clear emphasis on textual conventions in the class materials as a whole, the reflective writing prompts in journals and fieldwork logs give students a place to examine the impact of

relationships on writing and group work when they move between academic and workplace literacies.

A second concept that structures “writing for” course activities and goals is the notion of multiple audiences. Deans argues that overly simplistic forms of “writing for” courses rely heavily on traditional nonacademic/academic or real/unreal binaries. His goal, on the other hand, is to move beyond these linear conceptions and towards a more textured understanding of audience (Deans 68). To do this, both Gullion and Deans assign reflective journals to create a place for students to write about working with multiple, layered audiences. What Deans found though is that these reflections show less of an understanding of the rhetorical exigencies that shape the audiences in “writing for” courses and more of students writing about how shifts in audience made them “feel” (70). Reading these reflective journals over the course of the semester highlighted that the biggest impact writing for multiple audiences had on students was motivational, not rhetorical. Students generally felt better about their writing assignments and shared such feelings through reflective writing prompts like “how does writing for a college course differ from writing for your agency? What did you learn?” and “How did your group function?” (Deans 74).

I believe that because these writing prompts were presented in a reflective journal, students were more inclined to write about their personal social experiences and feelings of investment rather than their understanding of rhetorical exigency, audience awareness, and discursive shifts. This is not to downplay the importance of students understanding their own motivations—Dewey and Vygotsky both argue for learning to be linked to personal motivations, inclinations, and needs. Instead, I read these journals as representative of students’ natural predilections to write about audience in terms of feelings and the challenges that this poses for

using reflective writing as learning tool for rhetorical awareness (both audience awareness and writing transfer). When students were asked to journal about workplace/classroom transfer and multiple audiences their reflections highlighted how they felt about their relationships and motivations—that is, students in “writing for” courses use reflective writing to understand their own location in relationship to their usual coursework and their new course environments.

Deans and Gullion are not the only scholars to note how “writing for” courses challenge students’ perceptions of their location. In her 1999 piece “The Trouble with Transfer: Lessons from a Study of Community Service Writing” Nora Bacon begins by questioning the value of transfer, that is, the idea that students acquire knowledge in school and apply it elsewhere. This transfer is one of the major goals of “writing for” community writing courses, and its success can be evaluated by how well students can articulate differences between classroom and workplace literacies and different audiences. For Bacon, her observations of students in “writing for” courses show that the academic component of the courses, the writing transfer, could not be separated from students’ social experiences. Their academic understanding of a text and its context were shaped by their social experiences and their views of themselves as writers and learners (Bacon 449). In her longitudinal study, Bacon found that students who succeeded as writers outside of the classroom were those who used reflective writing opportunities to question their own location in relationship to the course, their peers, their writing communities, and their conceptions of self. More specifically, Bacon found that when students were asked to write reflectively about what they learned in their community writing courses the students who showed the greatest level of rhetorical awareness were also those who reflected on social relationships and their own identity as a learner and writer. For example, in end of the semester student

reflections, most students barely wrote about the actual texts they created for partner organizations. Bacon writes:

While a few commented briefly on having applied lessons about writing to a ‘real world task,’ not one wrote that he or she had learned how to produce a press release or a newsletter article or a brochure. Even when students were specifically asked to identify what they had learned about writing, they responded by discussing what they had learned about a community organization. (447)

Again, the students that were most successful at critiquing their learning were students who were also more successful at using reflective writing prompts to critique their own location. Bacon notes that successful students’ reflective writings were full of comments that emphasized an understanding of their own changing position as a writer and learner, as well as their own changing relationship to their community agency and peers.

#### *Renaming Reflections on Transfer and Audience*

What Bacon, Deans, and Gullion have all identified are the challenges of using traditional reflective writing prompts while asking for students to make connections between their own experiences and the different perspectives that underlie their work, particularly their location, in regards to their coursework or community. As mentioned in chapter two, this form of reflection, often qualified with the terms “critical” or “consciousness-raising,” is more similar to critiques of knowledge that represent methodological reflexivity, than traditional reflections on the past. By asking students to think about such nuanced concepts as audience analysis and transfer through a mode of thinking that usually rewards linear explanations of past events, it is not entirely surprising that even teachers with well-designed and implemented “writing for” courses find

student reflections to be lacking intellectual depth. Student success at the informal reflective component of these “writing for” courses is important, because as Bacon argues, those who are able to make connections between audience and their own locations are also those who are able to best use the lessons of transfer in the future.

Understanding how the goals of “writing for” classes disrupt students’ expectations of reflective writing requires us to integrate new approaches to these assignments, that is, to view our assignments as fundamentally different from “critical” or “sustained” reflection. Through reading Bacon and Deans it is clear that the reflective assignments in their courses are more than just methods of attendance keeping or a re-articulation of course matters. They have been developed as a place for students to engage in a form of personal and social critique. Describing these assignments as “reflections” creates significant challenges. First, naming an assignment a “reflective journal” or “semester reflection” encourages the rote responses described by Yancey in chapter one. The basic reflective stance is one students are very familiar with, and it encourages students to limit their reflections to “how they felt.” This is one reason why Gullion reported student reflections on transfer to center on how students felt working outside of the classroom. The second challenge of naming these assignments reflections is that it misrepresents what kind of thinking and writing teachers are asking for. In “writing for” courses, most students’ reflective assignments focus on discussing issues of transfer and audience. It is in these reflective journals and essays that teachers hope students will move away from the personal to the rhetorical (or see the personal as the rhetorical). If we rename the assignment in a way that challenges students’ assumptions and integrates teachers’ expectations we can change the very nature of the assignments.

Again, Deans, Gullion, and Bacon note that the goals for their reflective assignments are audience awareness and an understanding of personal location. As we saw in chapters two and three, scholars and researchers use methodological reflexivity to achieve similarly articulated goals. If we rename these assignments in the language of feminist reflexivity we can see that what we are really asking students to do is to reflexively think about their own location—in terms of themselves, their work, and their communities.

This is not just an issue of semantics. Much like articulating the differences between a social science reflexivity and a feminist reflexivity affords researchers certain perspectives and strategies, articulating the differences between traditional reflective assignments and feminist reflexive assignments affords students and teachers different ways of approaching and evaluating the goals of a “writing for” class. It also provides students with actual strategies for critiquing their personal and public locations and the rhetorical exigencies that shape those locations.

### *“Writing For” Reflections as Feminist Reflexive Positionality*

As mentioned in chapter three, feminist researchers who’s work engages in methodological reflexivity also interrogate their location and perspectives. These researchers use reflexive thinking to make connections between the goals of their work, their investigative communities, and themselves. “Writing for” courses, as articulated by Deans and others, ask students to make similar connections. The tools given to students for this purpose are traditional reflective writing prompts, such as reflective journals and end of the semester reflections. The value here is, as Bacon states, that the students who are most successful at making these connections in their reflective work are also the most likely to succeed in the professional and academic goals of the course. Yet, these activities do not always lend themselves well to

provoking thoughtful and focused critiques of students' own positionality, while strategies developed by feminist reflexive researchers provide just such opportunities. By rethinking how we structure these "writing for" reflective prompts, we can provide students with alternative ways of understanding and doing reflexive positionality.

Chapter three briefly discussed how Patricia Hill Collins's conception of the "outsider within" gives her reflexive access to critiquing her own challenges in understanding individual positionality. Her location as both an insider to the communities she studies (as a sociologist) and an outsider (as a black woman) means she straddles two discursive worlds that are often at odds with one another, or at the very least, incongruent. To negotiate such a challenging stance and location, Hill Collins uses her unique position as a way to think reflexivity about the value of such tensions and of difference. Hill Collins's work specifically speaks to African American women sociologists as they function as outsiders within mainstream sociology. Her work argues that by valuing *experienced reality* through a reflexive examination of one's own personal and cultural experiences, one can sensitive oneself to her own positionality as a legitimate way of knowing (172-173).

Clearly, the intellectual work being done by Hill Collins and the challenges students experience using reflective writing to understand issues of audience and transfer are extremely different. Rarely, if ever, are students asked to articulate and defend the value of their own work and perspective in the ways Hill Collins is describing. At the same time, there are distinct links between the types of reflexive thinking that feminist researchers do when they work to understand their own positionality and the thinking and writing we want our students to engage in as they learn ideas of transfer and audience in community writing. In her book, *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African Americans*, Jacqueline Jones Royster builds

off of Hills Collins's conception of "the outsider within" in a way that highlights the value of this perspective for larger audiences and the role it could have in structuring reflexive thinking on positionality. Royster's text is both a reflection on her experiences as an "outsiders within" ethnographer and an implicit argument for reflexive positionality over reflection. It also provides readers with thinking and writing strategies for engaging in this type of self-positioning. Royster's argument emerges from her observation that her past work has been distinctly shaped by the combination of roles she has held at any individual time. For example, at one point in her intellectual career she was on an editorial board for a publisher, teaching and coordinating a college writing program, and conducting her own ethnographic research (Royster 212). These cross currents of work have had two effects: first, the work she created at this time was shaped by her relationships to these multiple environments. Second, Royster found that significant value of the experience came from how she reflected upon it. That is, one benefit of experiencing dissonance between types of work and audiences was that it encouraged reflexive thinking on her own positionality. Royster writes that thinking reflexivity about her own location as an outsider within these diverse communities illuminated her own point of view and allowed her to "create bridges" between different types of intellectual work (225).

While the scale is considerably smaller, the notions of transfer and audience ask students to create similar intellectual bridges between the different types of writing they encounter in "writing for" community writing courses. Also not overtly included in the traditional reflective writing assignment prompts, these bridges are exactly the types of connections teachers *hope* students will make after they spend a semester writing in reflective journals. The reflexive thinking modeled by Royster and Hill Collins through their "outsider within" concepts allows researchers, and also students, to see how connections are merging between different types of

work. For the afro-feminists quoted here, that merger is between private, social, and public spaces (Royster 231). For students in “writing for” community writing courses, the merger is between classroom writing, workplace writing, and experienced reality. Structuring students’ writing assignments in ways that foreground students’ own “outsider within” perspectives may transition reflective writing away from rote responses on the past and towards reflexive thinking and writing on positionality.

As discussed in chapter three, one of the benefits of linking reflective writing to feminist reflexivity is that feminist research methodologies provide concrete strategies that encourage reflexive thinking. In her extension of Hill Collins’s “outsider within” discussion, Royster provides just such material terms for this type of thinking and writing. Royster argues that an approach to the “outsider within” position requires thinking and writing on four sites, two of which are relevant here. These two sites, or strategies for encouraging thinking and writing about feminist reflexive positionality, are *careful analysis*, and *acknowledgement of passionate attachment* (Royster 227). Careful analysis is the process of systematically analyzing the specific views we have of certain types of discourses and location, as well as analyzing how these views were shaped over time by our experiences. For reflective assignments that are used to encourage students to understand issue of transfer and audience in “writing for” community writing courses, the strategy of careful analysis can structure ways that students reflect and write about the discrepancies and distortions they see and feel as they move from classroom writing to workplace writing, and from internal audiences to external audiences. This strategy scaffolds student reflective writing in ways that move it to more closely resemble the reflexive writing that teachers ask for. Similarly, an acknowledgement of passionate attachment is a strategy for helping researchers and students become aware of the ways that the work they are doing is

“vested with vision, values, and habits” (Royster 228). This type of thinking focuses on seeing the relationship(s) between personal experiences and rhetorical choices. In a “writing for” reflexive assignment, the strategy of acknowledgement of attachments might help students structure reflective journals in ways that situate their experiences within the context of their own lives and understand how reflexive positionality informs the value judgments they make on transfer and audience.

If we return to Deans’s initial description of the role reflective journals should play in meeting the goals of “writing for” courses we see the limitations of asking students to reflect when we want them to think reflexively about their positionality. Deans, Gullion, and Bacon all hope that these assignments will encourage students to examine the impact of their relationships to different writing environments, the value of moving between literacies, and the rhetorical nature of audience. Instead, because they are presented to students as reflection, these assignments become places where students write less than critically about their individual feelings and motivations.

Feminist researchers like Hill Collins and Royster make conscious and strategic choices to interrogate similar reflective stances. As they experience “outsider within” dissonance, I’m sure they too are aware of the effects such a position has on their own feelings and motivations. Yet these researchers have been trained, or are more inclined, to take these reflections one step further—to think about them reflexively. They have developed reflexive prompts and strategies for answering such prompts that give them access to more nuanced ways of thinking about their work and experiences. While students in “writing for” courses are certainly not doing the kinds of detailed, critical thinking on positionality that Hills Collins and Royster exemplify, the prompts and strategies they suggest in their own bid to be reflexive, not reflective, can also

provide a structure and rationale to students' journals in a way that may allow them to reach more productive and provocative conclusions on transfer and audience. The question then becomes an issue of translating these thinking and writing prompts and strategies into assignments that move student reflections closer to their reflexive goals.

Chapter five will go in to greater detail about how feminist reflexivity can create a specific community writing pedagogy that highlights positionality and values experienced reality as evidence for rhetorical choices. It will propose a systematic way of illustrating how these feminist reflexive practices might answer the challenges of reflection in “writing for” courses highlighted here.

### ***Reflection in “Writing About the Community ” Pedagogies***

Deans’s next section, “Writing *About* the Community: Critical Pedagogy, Academic Literacy, and First-Year Composition” focuses on community writing courses in which students do community service and then reflect on their experiences though academic discourse. “Writing about” courses draw their rationale from critical pedagogy in that an overarching goal is the development of students’ critical consciousness or critical literacy. Critical literacy differs from other forms of literacy (functional, academic, and cultural) in that it concerns itself with power relations, disenfranchisement, and oppressive cultural institutions and practices (Knoblauch “Critical Teaching” 79). For leading critical pedagogue Freire, schools are cultural sites that reproduce dominant ideologies, and work that fosters critical literacy, here “writing about” community writing courses, promotes an analysis and critique of the social context in which schools and literacies function to empower or disempower students.

Unlike “writing for” courses, the service elements of “writing about” courses do not directly involve writing. Students are often tutors at community centers for disenfranchised or “at risk” students. There they may assist with other students’ reading and writing, but none of the documents created through this tutoring are part of the course assignments, its goals, or evaluations. Instead, the students in “writing about” courses use their community service experiences to drive their academic inquiry into the social contracts that shape education, literacy, access, and other root social forces relevant to critical literacy studies.

For Deans’s review of “writing about” coursework he examined one of the most well known of these forms of community writing courses, Bruce Herzberg’s Expository Writing course, part of the Bentley College Service Learning Project (BCSLP). Bentley, a private undergraduate business school located in suburban Boston, was early to establish a serious, well-funded cross curricular service-learning program. Within this program, faculty members may choose their approaches to integrating community service with disciplinary goals. For Herzberg, his course emphasizes identifying and critiquing hidden curricula in education, while preparing students to write in traditional academic forms. To do this, Herzberg’s students volunteer at a variety of outreach sites, but are most often involved with youth tutoring in the local community.

In his analysis of “writing about” courses, Deans identifies two major concepts that structure these community writing courses: a focus on learning academic discourse, and a focus on learning cultural critique. The first, a focus on learning the conventions of academic discourse, is a major goal of Herzberg’s courses. In fact, his syllabus for Expository Writing I (a first-year composition course) offers that “the main goal of the course is to help you learn to read and write ‘academic discourse,’ the type of writing that occurs in the academic disciplines (Herzberg qtd. in Deans 92). The final course project is an individualized research paper, and in

his interview with Deans, Herzberg describes his class as a traditional research and argument course (92). For Herzberg, familiarity with academic discourse must be the focus of his course's writing, because, as he states, "I can't not teach academic discourse....They [college students] have to learn how to handle it" (qtd. in Deans 92).

At the same time, Deans notes that Herzberg's commitment to critical pedagogy means that his courses on academic discourse are more conceptually centered on the philosophical commitments of critical literacy. This second focus, cultural critique, shapes how and why students engage in the aforementioned academic discourses. Herzberg argues for linking academic discourse to cultural critique as a way of broadening students' perspectives and encouraging them to participate in their communities. Deans notes that this linking is based on the assumption that ideological analysis in the classroom will eventually lead to concrete civic action in the future, and while Herzberg is aware of the limitations of such an assumption, his course provides students with opportunities to write academically for a world outside the classroom—a way for them to "go public" with their research (109). For this to occur "writing about" courses must equip students with the tools they need to intervene in the public sphere. For many teachers these are the "critical thinking skills" that populate so many first-year writing syllabi. Herzberg's "writing about" courses are considerably more specific in their structuring. Herzberg argues community service rarely, if ever, automatically leads to critical consciousness (109). Similarly, rarely does critical thinking alone lead to more complex understandings of systemic ideological and social forces. By making cultural critique a major goal of the course, Herzberg gives purpose to both the community service elements of the course as well as the academic writing assignments.

To make the connections between these two goals Herzberg uses the reflective writing assignments of experience journaling and critical reflection on outside texts. In their reflective experience journals students discuss observations from their tutoring sessions. Many students begin these assignments by remarking on experiences that are notably different from their own. In a journal discussion group that Deans observed, one student described his work with a Pakistani child who had difficulty with English as his second language, while another student shared observations of “busy work” that had been assigned to the special education children she had been tutoring (95). At first glance, these reflective assignments seem traditional and straightforward. Deans writes, “on the surface students seem to be touching on a collection on matter-of-fact observations of school life in the United States” (96). Similarly, Herzberg assigns reflective responses as students read outside texts that discuss the social issues students witnessed firsthand. Students independently research particular issues and integrate these sources into a final research project that relates to, but does not mirror, the observations they make in their reflective journals and responses. For example, after one student’s reflective journal touched on what she saw as the effects of academic tracking, the student engaged in a semester long research process that examined the economic issues that academic tracking may represent and perpetuate. To do so, students read and reflect on academic books, journal articles, and popular works of experts, as well as public documents like news reporting, editorials, and popular magazines. Herzberg’s goal with these reflective assignments, and the research generally, is for students to see the relationship between these types of discourses and the public policies that they have experienced (Deans 98).

In his description of “writing about” courses Deans notes a provocative quote of Herzberg’s. He writes, “Herzberg admits that his students ‘don’t really have the tools to evaluate

it [their topic]... They are just freshmen, but they'll have some way of understanding" (Deans 98). What Herzberg is expressing here is the inherent challenge of using personal reflections to create social consciousness. In fact, Deans observes that not every student in this course, or his similar courses, eventually reaches a level of cultural critique. "In fact," Deans writes, "almost half [of the enrolled students] reported that they valued the course more because it prepared them for the challenges of their college coursework, with little mention of its impact on their lives as critical citizens" (99). Fewer still parlayed this critical consciousness into concrete social action. Just as reflections on community service do not automatically lead to critical consciousness, critical consciousness does not always lead to social transformation.

Deans and Herzberg are not the only scholars to articulate this limitation of reflective writing in meeting the goals of "writing about" community writing courses. The challenging transition between reflecting on experience, developing a critical consciousness, and engaging in either personal or public social transformation is highlighted in Susan Wells's "Rogue Cops and Health Care: What Do We Want From Public Writing." In this 1996 piece from *College Composition and Communication* Wells problematizes the notion of teaching students to build and participate in a public sphere. Building off of Habermas's definition of a public sphere as a discursive domain where private individuals engage with public and political bodies, Wells argues that the idea of interacting in a public sphere in order to effect social transformation presents students with considerable problems as they try to explain abstractions for their work (159). That is, students' critical consciousness, and what they do with such critical consciousness is limited by their own experiences with both a "public" and with writing.

Wells's article is not directly discussing "writing about" community writing courses; her work takes a considerably broader view as it discusses the role of the public sphere in writing

courses. But the challenges she articulates are strikingly similar to the challenges noted by Deans and Herzberg. First, Wells argues that without a notion of the “public” and social transformation, classrooms that engage in cultural critique lack a form of usable exigency. Wells writes, “the writing classroom does important cultural work for the million and a half students its serves each year, but it does not carry out that work through the texts it produces” (163). While Wells defines “carry out” as enacting the public sphere directly, Herzberg might argue that a well-developed critical consciousness is a form of “carrying out.” Second, Wells critiques the notion that reflection on a public problem leads to transformative knowledge. In fact, she argues, reflection on experience without critique can lead to “relentless ideological reproduction: direct experience of the social can be a very convincing argument for the impossibility of change” (Wells 163). Neither of these challenges are reasons to avoid writing pedagogies that use reflection to foster social transformation, but Wells cautions the use of reflection on experience of difference and/or cultural critique as direct methods of engaging students in the public or in social transformation. Wells’s suggestion for writing teachers who wish to broach the concepts of the public, exigency, and social change looks suspiciously like Deans’s conception of “writing about” community writing course. She writes, “a possible strategy for teaching public writing is to work with the discourses of the discipline as they intervene in the public... such a class could analyze how, if at all, their discipline speaks to a broader public” (Wells 164). Like Herzberg’s use of academic discourse to analyze root social issues, Wells’s pedagogical suggestions outline a course that uses experience to engage in cultural critique, which might then provide students with knowledge of how to enact public writing and social transformation.

## *Reframing Reflections of Social Transformation*

By critiquing the role of reflective writing in “writing about” community writing courses we get a sense of how Herzberg and others use reflective experience journals and reflections on texts to help students become adept at academic discourse, while at the same time developing a nascent critical consciousness of social forces and ideology. Unfortunately, students’ adeptness with traditional reflection leads to mostly matter-of-fact observations about society and basic responses that acknowledge linkages between texts and student experiences. This structure seems considerably more successful at teaching students academic writing than it does critical consciousness. In fact, students in the course value the focus on academic discourse exponential more than their new perspectives on social issues. This is not necessarily a problem. As Herzberg himself articulates, an introduction to academic discourse is one of, if not the major and most tangible, goals of the course. But if the goal of critical consciousness is not more fully realized, then what is the value of teaching academic writing through a “writing about” pedagogy? There are many other structures of first-year writing that are practically and conceptually simpler for both students and teachers. If the goal of familiarity with academic writing can be reached in other ways, then what does “writing about” really add to the equation?

Herzberg, Deans, and Wells all argue that academic writing about social issues has the *potential* to create transformative knowledge that can benefit the lives of both students and communities. The traditional reflective writing assignments described here are meant to link experience to exigency, and then to social consciousness and transformation. As discussed in chapters two and three, understanding how experience, exigency, and social transformation function together is a practice of scholars and researchers whose work includes methodological reflexivity. In particular, feminist researchers use reflexive thinking and writing prompts and

strategies to examine and critique the motivation and transformative abilities of their research.

By reading the reflective challenges of “writing about” courses as issues of reflexivity, specifically feminist conceptions of exigence and social transformation, we can reconceive these assignments and disrupt students’ traditional reflective responses in productive ways.

### *“Writing About” Reflections as Feminist Reflexive Social Transformation*

As shown in chapter three, feminist researchers use reflexive thinking and writing as a way to reflect upon, examine critically, and explore analytically how their experiences of difference can lead to critical consciousness and social transformation. Since the overall aim of their work is emancipation and liberation, feminist researchers must identify ways of understanding previously hidden phenomena that can lead to both emotional catharsis and/or academic insight. “Writing about” courses ask students to make similar connections between their observed experiences and larger social issues. Unfortunately, traditional reflective assignments in these courses often lead to matter-of-fact observations or detached summarization. Herzberg’s statement that first-year students are not always equipped to do such critical thinking should give us pause in considering the efficacy of such assignments. By combining the assignments of experience journaling and critical reflection on outside texts with reflexive thinking and writing strategies, we can provide students with better tools for making such connections.

In their piece, “Back to the Future: A Look at the Second Wave of Feminist Epistemology and Methodology” Mary. M. Fonow and Judith A. Cook discuss how reflexivity structures feminist inquiry as “lived research.” As an introduction to their larger collection of feminist research, their piece functions to situate the work of diverse feminist researchers in a

larger paradigm of feminist epistemology. Writing in 1991, Fonow and Cook detail the ways that second wave feminism has shaped the structures and limitations of academic research, and they outline the underlying assumptions in the previous decade's literature on feminist research. They argue that feminist work can create social transformation because of its attention to the exigencies of the situation-at-hand and because of its action orientation. These concepts structure how feminists reflexively use their experiences to create research questions and methodologies that encourage personal and social transformation. Clearly, the goals of "writing about" courses are considerably more limited. As Deans notes, these courses' overall purposes are teaching the skills of academic writing and cultural critique. At the same time though, a "writing about" pedagogy is exposing students to the ways their own "lived research" can create critical consciousness.

Fonow and Cook identify the use of the situation-at-hand as representative of feminist conceptions of exigence. For researchers this includes "the tendency to use already given situations as the focus of investigation and as a means of collecting data" (Fonow and Cook 11). The development of this form of generating an unconventional inquiry focus originally rose from feminist interests in investigating the everyday world and as a survival mechanism in response to women's exclusion from more traditional locations of research. By examining places of "rupture" in everyday life, Fonow and Cook argue that feminists use their own experiences to generate research topics, questions, methods, and analytical tools (12). In the "writing about" students' reflective experience journals summarized by Deans, what seems to be straightforward representations of tutoring experiences can also be read reflexively as places where students experience some kind of "rupture." Students made note of things that seemed different or "off" from their own educational experiences, yet their reflections stopped short of analyzing these

disruptions. In fact, these moments of reflection by students mirror, to a lesser extent, the reflexive concept of using the situation-at-hand as a starting point for research. As Wells argues, the creation of a personal exigency is one of the challenges students face when conceiving their work as social transformation. Exposing students to the perspective of the situation-at-hand creates a powerful rationale for research that stems from their own experiences, and explicitly valuing such exigencies can provide critical ways of viewing those moments of rupture. By framing these observations as places to reflect, examine, and explore these ruptures, not just report them, these assignments can function reflexively to move students toward course goals of critical consciousness and social transformation.

Additionally, Fonow and Cook provide concrete strategies for conceptualizing the transformative social effects of their work. One overarching concept that they see in feminist research methodologies is research reflexively stemming from an action orientation that is consciousness-raising. This action orientation can raise the consciousness of the individual researcher, or it can focus on raising the consciousness of participants, institutions, or a more general conception of society, and it is reflected in a feminist researcher's statement of purpose, topic selection, theoretical orientation, choice of method, and definition of roles (Fonow and Cook 5). By consciously structuring their research as to link their own experiences of difference to action, these researchers use reflexivity to enact some form of personal or public social transformation. To think through this linkage, Fonow and Cook provide reflexive questions that structure purposeful yet creative insights into the research questions and motivations that are created by experience. Fonow and Cook propose researchers ask themselves:

- 1) What are the consciousness raising effects of this research on the researcher?
- 2) What are the consciousness raising effects on research participants?

- 3) What are the consciousness raising effects of this research on the broader social issue studied?

For students, the process of asking themselves these reflexive questions is the first step toward thinking of their own reflections and research as *social action* and linking their own work to personal or public social transformation. As Deans and Herzberg have noted, there exists significant challenges in asking students to use their personal reflections to create social change, and feminist reflexivity provides a way to translate those experiences into the language of critical consciousness and social transformation. Regular experience journals and reflections on texts, no matter how well explained or contextualized they are, do not lend themselves to addressing public issues through private exigencies, but the questions presented here by Fonow and Cook create purposeful places where experiences are translated into exigencies, which then help scaffold students perceptions of their works transformative value.

As both Wells and Deans note, “writing about” pedagogies, or pedagogies that seeks to engage students in public thinking and actions, need a better understanding of what social transformation really is. Feminist researchers have grappled with the personal, incidental, or limited transformative effects of their research and have developed rationales and strategies for invention and implementation of work that originates from a bottom-up exigence or from a personal and local situation-at-hand. As participants in “writing about” courses, it is imperative that students see how their work might effect social transformation, particularly *because* it comes from “lived” and local experience. Reflexive thinking and writing strategies disrupt traditional reflective exercises in ways that help students see that a consciousness of social forces and ideology can lead to creative insight into social transformation. As previously highlighted by Deans, reflections on community service do not automatically lead to critical consciousness, and

critical consciousness does not always lead to social transformation, yet by adding reflexive thinking and writing strategies to “writing about” prompts we can support these reflexive goals while still meeting the goals of a course on academic discourse and critique.

In chapter five I will present a specific pedagogy that illustrates how personal reflections as reflexivity can be used to create social consciousness and transformation for students in community writing courses. By incorporating an attention to personal exigencies of the situation-at-hand and an action orientation, this pedagogy will address ways that experiences of difference can structure students’ reflexive thinking and writing on social critique.

### ***Reflection in “Writing With the Community” Pedagogies***

Deans’ third paradigm for community writing courses is also the most well reported on of all community writing forms—writing *with* the community. In this manifestation community writing is a long term collaboration between universities (not just courses or departments) and community groups, best described by Wayne Peck as “first and foremost a response of urban residents to dilemmas and opportunities in their lives...and best understood as transactions or responses of people addressing dilemmas through writing (Peck, Flower, Hayes 20). This emphasis on community needs, not student needs, is a significant departure from Deans’s other two models of community writing. While most other community writing projects pair academic goals with local community opportunities and needs, the “writing with” model centers on collaborative action that is driven by community members themselves. In fact, most “writing with” models do not hinge on academic courses at all, even though those courses often play a key role in the development and training of community mentors. The long-term goal of the

“writing with” model is the collaboration between diverse community members (including students) and the creation of meaningful writing that addresses community identified concerns.

For Deans’s study he observed and interviewed the university faculty and students involved in one of the most prominent “writing with” programs, the Community Literacy Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (CLC). The CLC developed as a partnership between Carnegie Mellon University and the Community House of Pittsburgh, an organization founded in 1916 as part of the movement for urban residents of “settlement houses” that predated modern social service systems (Deans 111). The CLC is now a multifaceted community program that has moved the actions of the Community House away from social services and recreation and towards literacy work, creating a space for tutoring, community productions, public gatherings, and forums on community issues. Because of the investment of multiple stakeholders in the development of the CLC’s diverse programs, it is important to note that for Deans’s purposes, he interviewed CLC staff, student mentors, and faculty, so his observations of how this example of “writing with” community writing functions, as well as my explication of the role of reflection in such an environment, can not be extended to represent the perspectives of the community members themselves, regardless of their equal participation in initiatives.

The rationale for the CLC and similar “writing with” models comes from both Dewey’s pragmatic tradition and studies of cognitive rhetoric, particularly the work of Linda Flower, who is now involved in the operations of the CLC. Dewey’s form of pragmatism measures the value of theories, policies, and beliefs by the actual experienced consequences, rather than by normal academic standards of critique and analysis. In her explanation of how CLC invokes Deweyian pragmatism, Flower states, “instead of talking about the causes of problems with kids, we’re trying to help them look at those problems and deal with them themselves... trying to put out a

sense of the substance of that knowledge in the larger community (qtd. in Deans 114). By invoking Dewey's pragmatic philosophies in "writing with" community writing programs, Flower, Peck, and others argue for *literate social action*, that is, oral and written intercultural communication that addresses pressing community problems.

Combined with this activist perspective of Dewey's pragmatism is Flower's focus on cognitive rhetoric. At first glance, traditional research in cognitive rhetoric (what Flower was once most widely recognized for)—a focus on individual agency, problem solving, strategic thinking, and meta-cognition—may seem far removed from the collaborative community goals of "writing with" projects. Instead, proponents of "writing with" argue that cognitive rhetoric's overall goal is problem-solving, particularly when thought of as a social cognitive conception of literacy that assumes texts are situated and purposeful (Deans 121). Combined with a pragmatic focus on consequences, cognitive rhetoric helps structure "writing with" projects that are goal-driven forms of social action. In particular, pragmatism and cognitive rhetoric help form what Deans sees as the four guiding aims of "writing with" projects: social change, intercultural conversation, strategic approach, and inquiry/research (111). Examples of the types of work that these aims encourage include the writing and publication of a magazine co-authored by local teens and college mentors that responds to a city mandated youth curfew, a teen video that dramatizes the effects of such a curfew, and a public forum where teens and college student mentors perform their previously unheard perspectives on the curfew to local citizens, city officials, and university faculty (Deans 112).

One of the things that sets "writing with" programs apart from their "writing for" and "writing about" counterparts is the role college students play in the program. While the writing that is created by students in "writing for" and "writing about" courses is often the central goal of

the program (student documents for a partner agency, academic discourse surrounding a social issue), the work created by students participating in “writing with” programs is rarely independently created and has considerably different goals. At the CLC, college students function as mentors for local teen writers, as they and the teens create collaborative intercultural texts. These “boundary-crossing encounters” serve to help the teens create action-oriented texts based on community need, and help the college mentors learn intercultural communication and negotiation skills (Deans 133).

In conjunction with the CLC, Carnegie Mellon offers a course in mentoring, divided into three phases. The first phase focuses on the research and theory of community literacy, the second on on-site mentoring work at the CLC, and the third focuses on a research project: “an experimental hybrid genre on a topic emerging from the mentor’s experience, and requiring empirical research (interviews and data collection), and representing multiple voices (college students, urban teens, popular culture, academic scholarship)” (Deans 133-134). This ability to read and write hybrid texts is one of the major goals of the mentoring course. As students participate in the course, and as they write their individual projects, Flower and other CLC faculty members hope the experience will affirm “the personal agency of urban teens and college mentors as writers, problem-solvers, and strategy users of literacy for social change” (Deans 123).

Interestingly, reflective writing is not an integral part of the CLC program or the Carnegie Mellon mentoring course. With its emphasis on cognitive, pragmatic rhetoric, reflection and reflective writing are not the tools faculty use to encourage student learning. Reflection’s roles in helping “writing with” programs meet their student goals then, is illuminated by the interviews conducted by Deans for his own project. In these written and oral

interviews, student mentors are able to make connections, sometimes for the first time, between the CLC goal of intercultural collaboration and their own individual roles as writers. Often these “reflections” collected by Deans focus on the challenges of the teen-mentor relationship, particularly when the goals of cognitive rhetoric (get the writing done) clash with goals of collaboration, or the goals of the teen clash with the goals of the mentor (Deans 129). For example, in her interview with Deans, one mentor notes that the cognitive rhetoric and collaborative process of the CLC “made me think about writing strategy... how the audience enters into it—things that I did [in my own writing] but never realized I did before.”

Additionally, she states that at the keyboard she “had to resist the temptation to automatically translate what [the teen] was saying to how I might have wanted it” and that “when you are steering him toward something, you may not be steering him toward something better, but toward what you want” (qtd. in Deans 128). It is entirely possible that this student mentor could have developed these nuanced ideas of agency and collaboration entirely through her work with the CLC mentoring program. On the other hand, this reflective interview shows her making *explicit* connections between the goals of the CLC teen program and the goals, as articulated by Flower, of training students in cognitive, collaborative rhetoric. Similarly, Deans quotes another mentor as reflecting:

The coordinators [of the CLC] were interested in developing the teens’ writing abilities, but they were more concerned that the teens produce a document instigating social action. They allocated their time and energy to having something in hand, a hard copy of the teens’ ideas. I was more concerned with exploring the challenges and frustrations of composing and revising. We were approaching the task from two different perspectives, and working toward different, although not contradictory, objectives. (129)

In this reflection, again prompted by Deans, the student mentor articulates a different challenge to her own individual agency as a writer, this time coming from the coordinators of the project. As this reflection centers more on the dissonance the student felt between her own goals and the goals of her institution, I find it less likely that this reflection on agency was shared during the mentoring course in the same way the first student's might have been. This reflection, therefore, might have been the first opportunity the student had to make such explicit connections between the mentoring project and her own agency. The challenges of working with goal driven rhetoric and collaboration become visible through these unstructured, incidental reflections. This begs the question, did all the students interviewed by Deans for this project express such thoughtful reflections on agency, or are these the best of the interviews, and additionally, did students in these "writing with" programs who were not presented with such an opportunity to reflect make the same connections?

Other proponents of "writing with" community writing courses problematize the role of student mentors in community writing programs. In their *College English* article "Writing Beyond the Curriculum: Fostering New Collaborations in Literacy" Steve Parks and Eli Goldblatt identify the training and education of student mentors as a place where "writing with" faculty must become more thoughtful and inclusive. In general, Parks's and Goldblatt's article focuses on describing how "writing with" the community efforts can be used to shape new directions for Writing Across the Curriculum programs (WAC). The rationale behind such collaborations is their assertion that "if compositionists and rhetoricians are to act on current research and theory in our own journals, then writing programs can no longer be limited to introducing students to the rhetoric of academic fields and majors" (Parks and Goldblatt 339). They argue for a version of Susan McLeod's proposal of "braiding" community "writing with"

programs into WAC curricula. This braiding would integrate important campus initiatives—assessment, technology, and general education reform—with WAC programs and the larger public turn in writing studies (Parks and Goldblatt 341).

As their program example, Parks and Goldblatt describe the Institute for the Study of Literature, Literacy, and Culture, an alliance between Temple University, local public schools, and community members and educators. The Institute sponsors meetings, seminars, workshops, and lectures based on the belief that “an integrated and productive educational environment requires an active dialogue between educators, neighborhood members, and students” (Parks and Goldblatt 345). Like the CLC, the purposes of these meetings and seminars are developed by community members in conjunction with educators at a variety of levels. Like Flower’s description of the CLC, Parks and Goldblatt only briefly discuss the role of student mentors and volunteers in the Institute’s aims, and when they do, they refer mostly to graduate students who are pursuing degrees in composition or literacy education. What they do note however is that “writing with” programs cannot deny the role these students play in community writing initiatives. They argue that these students get considerable educational value from widening the context of their educational experiences, but they realize that that value cannot just come from the assumption that students learn from any experience with intercultural collaboration (Parks and Goldblatt 355-356). I see this call to action on behalf of student mentors as an invitation to think more concretely about the roles we ask students to play in these “writing with” initiatives, and to have students themselves identify and discuss the issues of their own participation and agency in these programs. As Deans’s work reveals, when given the opportunity to do so, students in “writing with” programs draw interesting parallels between their own educations and

the educations of those they work with, as well as between the conflicting goals they experience through recognition of their individual agency and the challenges of collaboration.

### *Reframing Reflections of Agency*

Unlike “writing for” and “writing about” pedagogies, reflection is not meaningfully integrated into student mentors’ experiences in “writing with” programs in any formal way. This means that any reflective thinking done by these students is done spontaneously, or on an independent, after-the-fact basis. As Deans’s research illustrates, the reflective thinking on collaboration and agency that students did do was at his external prompting, yet it elicited interesting and thought provoking responses. Proponents of “writing with” programs argue that these mentoring experiences will allow students to think critically about issues of collaboration and their own agency as students and writers. At the same time though, the overt goals of these programs, collaboration that benefits the community and cognitive rhetoric’s problem solving through writing, do not necessarily lend themselves to a critical focus on the dissonance these mentors feel when their own assumptions of personal agency are challenged. The vital roles that students play in these programs, as mentors for and participants in “boundary crossing experiences,” can be both confusing *and* productive for all parties if students are given the appropriate tools to identify and interrogate these experiences.

Dean’s work reveals two specific ways that reflection can move students towards a greater understanding of collaboration and agency. The first is the negotiation of power and agency as students work with writers of less experience or traditional rhetorical savvy. Here, reflective writing helps foster the kind of post-event thinking that allows students to identify their own models and practices for writing, and come to a better understanding of why these models

did or didn't work productively. This reflective exercise helps students see where their own assumptions of knowledge and agency structure their actions and collaborations. The second way that reflection can bolster student learning in “writing with” programs is to encourage critical thinking and analysis when students encounter different institutional goals than their own. Again, this is an issue of power and personal agency, and reflective writing can function as a place where students examine feelings of disenfranchisement that may have impacted the collaborations they had with their community writers.

This argument for the explicit inclusion of reflection in “writing with” programs is not just about the betterment of already privileged and knowledgeable college students who work with communities with considerably different, and some might argue greater, literacy needs. Instead, I believe that the formal inclusion of this type of thinking and writing benefits the whole of the community writing environment. If, as Flower argues, “writing with” programs support and develop “the personal agency of urban teens *and* college mentors as writers, problem solvers, and strategic users of literacy for social change” (emphasis mine), then it would increase the value of the experience for all involved to have student mentors who are more thoughtfully aware of their own preconceived notions of agency and can negotiate and adapt when those notions are upended or challenged (Deans 123).

If the results of reflective thinking are clearly valued by the proponents and faculty of “writing with” programs like Flower, Parks, and Goldblatt, then reflective writing assignments must be formally integrated into these programs. One reason they currently might not be lies in the observation developed in chapter one that traditional reflection is thought of as so straightforward that it might not warrant inclusion in programs that already have so many nuanced and challenging goals for multiple stakeholders. How then can thinking and writing

about agency and power be framed so that it not only disrupts student expectations of its purpose, but it also rises above the intellectual stigma of reflection and moves towards a more critical and systematic form of thinking about knowledge?

### *“Writing With” Reflections as Feminist Reflexive Agency*

As mentioned in chapter three, one feminist strategy for reflexivity is the acknowledgment that research can have multiple, even conflicting goals. When researchers experience a disruption to their own sense of interpretive agency, or when they are faced with power differentials that may inform their work, reflexive thinking and writing become a strategy for moving beyond observation and towards useful analysis. Student mentors in “writing with” programs also seem to experience such challenges, inherent in the very nature of collaboration, yet the structures of these programs do not emphasize a formal way for students to intervene on their own behalf. As the works by Flower and Parks and Goldblatt illustrate, a program’s success at goal driven forms of social action writing is closely linked to the skills and rhetorical awareness of student mentors. While the ideas of their action-oriented texts might not be theirs, the final work depends on these student mentors’ ability to successfully negotiate issues of agency and collaboration during the invention, writing, and presenting processes. By rethinking how reflective writing is prompted and integrated into “writing with” programs, we can provide students with formal, critical, and systematic ways to address these disruptions in collaboration and perceptions of agency.

In her work *Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse Analysis, and Activist Research* Nancy A. Naples discusses how she uses reflexive strategies to interrogate issues of agency and power that often structure the different goals of her activist, ethnographic research.

The direct result of this reflexive thinking and writing is a deepening of ethnographic analysis and a highlighting of the dilemmas of fieldwork (41). Broadly, her book is a discussion of the role a feminist materialist standpoint can have in solving the problems faced by social scientists that do collaborative, reciprocal work. In her analysis of issues such as objectivity, essentialism, and the materiality of discourse, Naples highlights how problematic the relationships between the researcher, researched, and institutional knowledge can be. To help recognize and work through these challenges, Naples works with both a rationale and strategies for using reflexivity to uncover issues of agency and collaboration in her approach to her subjects and topics, as well has her fieldwork, research, and narratives.

Naples's ethnographic work is often centered on recognizing the powerful role individuals' narratives can have in fostering social change that benefits women. As she works closely and collaboratively with these women, she experiences moments where her goals do not mesh, or directly clash, with the goals of individual participants. Like the student mentors of "writing with" programs, the success of her project's ability to create social action relies on her ability, and the ability of her participants, to navigate such challenges to individual agency and power. As a remedy, she argues that reflexive practice can create a recognition and analysis of power dynamics that can "challenge the authority of the writer and of the power distance in the field" (Naples 42). This form of reflexivity examines power while recognizing the agency of the researcher and the research subject. This is particularly important in collaborative projects where individuals have different levels of authority over project outcomes.

Similarly, Deans's reflections with "writing with" students show an eventual recognition of the challenges of maintaining both their own agency and the agency of someone else that they are "responsible for" in the collaborative process. By looking back in to their experiences, and

then outward through what they have learned about collaboration, rhetoric, and writing, student mentors are able to make sense of moments where their own wants and needs do not necessarily come first. This experience of the willing subjugation of their own needs might be disruptive to college students used to the self-directed work of the university. Understanding the power structures at play in these working relationships, and explicitly naming such structures and their effect, can help students more effectively meet Deans's identified "writing with" goals of effective collaboration and problem solving. This is not just an exercise in reflective thinking; students are not just looking back and identifying experiences or feelings, they are contextualizing those experiences based on a systematic critique of their own assumptions, position, and experiences.

Again, the explicit value of feminist reflexivity lies in the specific strategies employed to reach such contextualized understandings. Naples suggests just such strategies for reflexively negotiating and analyzing power imbalances and agency in collaborative situations. Her first strategy is the process of reflexive dialogue through life narratives. This strategy requires the participation of the collaborating individuals in the reflexive process. Creating this reflexive life narrative asks participants to identify how they embody their own perspective, that is, how their own social locations and positions in the community (defined through the research or writing process) shape their relationship to the research or writing process (Naples 197). By recognizing, sharing, and reflecting on the value of this embodied perspective, researchers are given access to where challenges to collaboration may come from. This strategy could be of particular value to students as they integrate formal reflexive thinking and writing into "writing with" paradigms. Rather than the unstructured and incidental reflections that Deans uncovers, a prompt that encourages this type of critical and collaborative thinking is exactly the type of

“intercultural conversation” that “writing with” programs hope to foster between mentors and community members. In practice, these additional research and inquiry prompts may reflect the hybrid texts that are central to these programs’ repertoire, and the active dialogue proposed by Parks and Goldblatt.

While Naples’s first strategy involves dialogic thinking and writing by all participants, her second strategy for reflexive inquiry on agency is a process of writing and thinking prompts designed to help the researcher critique the relationship between themselves and the researched. These questions problematize traditional ideas of the objective power distance between the two locations and how such a power difference structures all aspects of a collaboration. Building off of Diane Wolf’s (1996) work on ethnographic fieldwork strategies, Naples presents three prompts for reflexive analysis of power:

- 1) What are the power distances stemming from the different positonalities of the researcher and the researched (race, class, nationality, life chances, urban-rural background)?
- 2) What are the powers exerted during the research process, such as defining the research relationship, unequal exchange, and exploitations?
- 3) What is the power exerted during the pre and post fieldwork period—writing and representing? (38-39).

What these questions provide is a roadmap for analyzing the effects that daily interaction with collaborators can have on the research. In particular, these questions work to challenge claims to authority made by ethnographers and reveal a truer nature of the collaborative process. This set of questions can be particularly valuable for student mentors for two reasons. First, this sequence creates an individual context for all four of Deans’ goals for “writing with” programs: social

change, intercultural conversation, strategic thinking, and inquiry/research (111). As students work through these formal reflexive prompts, they uncover how their individual assumptions on those four goals structure their collaborative experiences. Second, the systematic and explicit nature of these prompts disrupt students' expectations of traditional reflective writing assignments. Instead of asking how students feel about class or race differences, or how they experience an unequal exchange, these prompts move students toward more critical thinking and writing about agency and collaboration.

As Parks and Goldblatt argue, we cannot just assume that students learn from experience. In order for these experiences to become intellectually and practically meaningful, they must be contextualized within the goals of the program they stem from. This contextualization must come from the students themselves, and it must address the areas where students experience ruptures with their own perceptions of themselves and of writing. Through the types of reflexive prompts proposed by Naples, researchers can develop ways of understanding their own responses to challenges to individual agency and these responses can assist students as they critique their own observations. Unfortunately, as Deans reveals, this type of thinking is currently not a formal part of "writing with" programs. By making reflexivity an integral aspect of the "writing with" experience for student mentors, the program can better serve the needs of all stakeholders. The type of thinking and writing modeled here by Naples needs to be expanded and integrated into the entire "writing with" program.

### *Integrating Reflexivity in Community Writing Models*

As this chapter illustrates, reflective writing functions in a variety of different ways in community writing courses. It is loosely structured to provide students with places to

thoughtfully consider the genesis, practice, and implications of their writing. Unfortunately, most students approach reflective writings as places to only consider their personal feelings, motivations, observations, and responses. This dissertation argues that one particular reason why reflective writing is not reaching this potential for enhancing student learning because its goals are conflated with reflexivity, yet assignments are presented without the scaffolding that feminist reflexive thinking and writing necessitate. This chapter has articulated ways that such strategies can be meaningfully intergraded into “writing for,” “writing about,” and “writing with” community writing courses to enhance students’ abilities to meet academic course goals and to make their experienced reality central to meeting those goals. Rather than recount observations, feelings, and linear explanations of experiences in reflections, feminist reflexivity provides more nuanced ways of thinking and writing about location and positionality, social consciousness and transformation, and collaboration and agency.

As noted earlier in the chapter, the third wave of community writing studies has focused less on problem-solving and more on theorizing relationships, agency, and reciprocity, and Deans has called for more systematic research into situated student writing and rhetorical competencies. Chapter five will speak to how the questions raised by this chapter’s analysis of reflection in community writing models necessitate a rethinking of community writing pedagogies and the incorporation of feminist strategies for reflexive thinking and writing, as well as ways to assess and systematically study such writing.

*Chapter Five*  
**A Pedagogy of Reflexivity and Reflection in Community Writing**

This dissertation has argued that reflective writing prompts have not necessarily helped students fully realize the potential of reflective writing in community writing courses. Consequently, traditional reflective writing has generated concern and debate among scholars and teachers of community writing. When asked to reflect in writing, most students respond with their own observations, feelings, or personal motivations. While these reflections are important first steps in any inquiry process, community writing practitioners also frame reflective writing, explicitly or otherwise, as a place where students can think and write through the larger rhetorical and contextual goals of the course. Unfortunately, this type of thinking and learning does not always happen as hoped, and this dissertation suggests that this problem stems from a gap between the names of the student assignments and teachers' expectations of such assignments. That is, while teachers assign "reflective" activities, what they expect to receive is "reflexive" thinking and writing.

This disconnect is particularly clear through an examination of the reflective writings assigned in community writing courses. Community writing courses provide a useful area for this kind of analysis, as the goals of community writing courses are practical, rhetorical, and theoretical, positioning reflective writing assignments as central activities for learning and engagement. Chapter four presented ways that feminist conceptions of reflexivity can shape a rethinking of the challenges posed by reflective writing assignments in different models of community writing courses; "writing for," "writing about," and "writing with." While each course may have individual goals, these courses generally ask students to write critically and analytically about issues of agency, positionality, and social transformation, using their own

experiences as evidence. Reading these challenges through a feminist reflexive lens provides teachers and scholars with more nuanced ways of encouraging students to think and write about their reflections reflexively and to use such thinking and writing as tools to connect experiences of difference to academic goals.

In chapter five, feminist suggestions for reflexive thinking and writing will be used to argue for and structure a new writing pedagogy for community writing. Building off of the feminist strategies for reflexivity presented in chapter four, chapter five illustrates how feminist reflexivity can structure a community writing course's goals and activities specifically (as in the case of positionality, agency, and social transformation), and more generally (larger, rhetorical goals of community writing). An intentional pedagogy of reflexivity holds the potential for highlighting the rhetorical and contextual purposes of doing community writing and may allow students to make powerful connections between their service experiences and their writing. This chapter will then present a rationale for a community writing pedagogy of reflexivity and offer suggestions for how such a pedagogy could be assessed and systematically studied. Such a study of this pedagogy would position reflexivity in community writing as part of the next wave of scholarship in community writing.

### *The Argument for Continued Research in Community Writing and Reflection*

In 1997 Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters note that the early movements in community writing scholarship have, like composition studies in general, been under-theorized. While they reject the binary oppositions of “academic theory” and “practical applications,” they argue that community writing scholarship must move to connect the

classroom and community to the ways we currently theorize about working, learning, writing, and creating knowledge. They write:

The most important turns in the current phase of theoretical work have been toward bringing conceptual abstractions together with the experimental—history, contingency, politics, culture, and the like. Theory is now not an armchair exercise—if it ever was—but a movement towards systematic cross-disciplinary approaches to analyzing and transforming the experimental world. (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters 14).

What Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters are asking for is that the next generation of community writing scholarship ask challenging questions about how the community writing enterprise positions itself, practitioners, and students in relationship to the larger nature of academic endeavors, much the same way researchers and scholars ask challenging questions of themselves. To do so would require community writing proponents to think about their practices in terms whether or not they are representative of the theories that structure larger work in rhetoric and writing, methodology, and epistemology.

While the last decade in scholarship has provided community writing practitioners with considerably more of a theoretical grounding—linkages to the public turn in writing studies, an emphasis on local knowledge, and the rhetoric of community engagement—Deans, Roswell, and Wurr argue that Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters's call to action has not been fully realized (8). They write that while considerable attention has been paid to what community writing courses and placements look like, as well as the rationale behind courses and programs, community writing scholarship has still not fully articulated the role theory may play in identifying and addressing problems in community writing coursework. For example, they write that while critical analysis of exemplary programs is a valuable start, the gathering of data

regarding community writing pedagogies would help practitioners understand how community writing develops as a system. They argue for additional attention to questions like: what kinds of partnerships are more successful?; what roles do teachers and partners play in crafting student assignments?; and what texts are read in these courses and to what ends? They applaud the field's ongoing inquiry into issues of community and university reciprocity and they embrace the movement to ask not only how community writing courses should be structured, but how those structures determine what kinds of relationships are developing and what types of learning, writing, and knowing those relationships make possible.

At the same time though, the role of theory in community writing scholarship has still been limited. As a recent review of the literature by Nora Bacon and Jim Dubinsky highlights, most published works on community writing are critical reflections on practice (Deans, Roswell, and Wurr 8). Little work has focused on empirical studies like ethnography or discourse analysis, and even less has focused on students' perspectives (rather than institutions of communities). Much like my critique of the "writing with" model in chapter four, current community writing scholarship does not always address the effects of such programs on students, nor the effects such programs have on the resulting writing. The purpose of this study has been to suggest research on the effects of community writing reconceived as reflexive writing, and to situate such research within a review of community writing discourses and within discussions of reflexivity in feminist methodology. The development of a specifically reflexive community writing pedagogy, and suggestions for a study of its effects on student reflective writing, will address Deans, Roswell, and Wurr's critiques of theory's role in current community writing scholarship.

The lack of empirical research on community writing is particularly troubling because of the notion of “parallel play,” that is, the concept that there is work being done in other fields or disciplines that can inform and shape another, if brought to light. Deans, Roswell, and Wurr invoke this “parallel play” as they argue for the necessity of their collection (5). Work on community writing is cross-disciplinary, being done by writing scholars, educational scholars, K-12 educators, and university administrators. The unfortunate result of such parallel play is that previous lessons learned can be forgotten, work is unknowingly repeated, and new scholarship is often limited to disciplinary perspectives. We can see the scholarship on reflective writing in community writing and feminist research methodologies as evidence of such parallel play. While both areas grapple with writers embodying domains of recursive critical reflection (reflexivity) and developing conceptual frames for responses, the two fields replicate similar research and inquiry questions; however, because of the distinct differences in audience and purpose, they do not necessarily share their perspectives and findings in an ongoing conversation. The purpose of this dissertation has been to put these two fields in conversation with one another and to see how this conversation illuminates new justifications for further theoretical and pedagogical development and study.

Representative of this parallel play between reflection and feminist reflexivity is Anson’s description of the future needs of reflection studies in community writing. Writing at the end of the second wave of community writing scholarship (see chapter three), Anson argues that future studies on reflection must grow as our understanding of reflection’s relationship to learning grows, and as student familiarity with reflection grows. He writes that as students become more used to critical reflection, our responses to these reflections must become more sophisticated, challenging students’ preconceived notions of the observation and reflection process. He writes,

“as teachers we need to approach our service-learning courses with a critically reflective stance that models for students the kind of discursive explorations that they should take in their journals and reflective logs” (Anson 178). Here, Anson is arguing for a pedagogical structure that not only promotes reflexive thinking by students, but one that models it through feedback, writing prompts, discussion formats, and questions for inquiry. *The future of research in reflection and community writing then, must not just expect reflexivity, but find ways of overtly promoting that kind of thinking and writing within the goals of the community writing course.* This call to action exists simultaneously and parallel to feminist researchers developing and examining strategies for embracing reflexivity in their own work. Rather than abstractly calling for research that attends to issues of power, reciprocity, and purpose, feminist researchers purposely and specifically incorporate reflexivity into their methodologies. By doing so, they highlight reflexivity as one of the larger purposes of their research, and they create thinking and writing structures that are representative of Anson’s conceptions of more sophisticated responses to reflections on experience.

Clearly, the time is right for more systematic studies of community writing and for the development of a stronger conceptual apparatus for reflective and reflexive writing. Both of these areas of scholarship have reached a tipping point, where the accumulation of knowledge problematizing standard practices and procedures must inevitably lead to the development of new pedagogies based in new theoretical relationships. A cross-disciplinary approach to new scholarship is key, as multiple areas of scholarship currently grapple with creating bridges between inquiry and action. Higher education in general continues to question its relationship to the world outside of campus—through academics, research, and outreach. In his conclusion to *Writing Partnerships*, Deans offers that future research in community writing will have to

question some familiar assumptions about the teaching of writing (172). Chapter four in this dissertation has illustrated how some of the assumptions we make regarding what students can learn from reflection and community writing courses are challenged by actual student practices and by what we know about feminists conducting reflexive research. The development of a new pedagogy for reflection in community writing courses then, must incorporate the reflexive strategies and practices at work in feminist research methodologies. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to present a pedagogical structure for community writing that attends to feminist conceptions of reflexivity.

In the next section I will reiterate the ways in which feminist research methodologies help us reread challenges to the efficacy of “writing for,” “writing about,” and “writing with” community writing models, and I will introduce additional feminist reflexive strategies that engage the community writing process more generally. This explication will provide the theoretical and practical foundation for a revision of community writing pedagogies and suggestions for how to assess such a pedagogy’s effects on reflective writing.

### *Feminist Perspectives on Reflexivity Revisited*

As previously illustrated, student responses to reflective writing prompts used with the intent to spur critical and analytical thinking about the goals of community writing often encourage rote student responses that center on students’ feelings and personal motivations. Teachers who assign these prompts are more often than not looking for students to make connections between their own experiences and larger issues of rhetoric, social constructionism, and public work. Rather than discount the value of students’ feelings and motivations, a reflexive stance encourages students to see those initial responses as starting points for a

productive critique of their own ways of knowing. For such a movement to happen though, students must be given assignments and prompts that are scaffolded in ways that support such movement. This requires an explicit attention to the process of reflexivity, outlined in chapters two and three. The review of feminist strategies for reflexive thinking in this dissertation has shown how such theories and practices structure reflecting upon, examining critically, and exploring analytically personal experiences and motivations.

Feminist strategies for reflexivity are visible in the individual discussions of feminist methodology. As discussed in chapter four, Patricia Hill Collins and Jacqueline Jones Royster offer that black feminists have a unique “outsider within” status that allows them to both participate in and critique society simultaneously. This status shapes valuable creative tensions that, when encouraged and institutionalized, create new ways of seeing and understanding existing societal issues (Hill Collins 172). I argue that this “outsider within” status is one strategy that encourages reflexivity. Obviously, considerable social and political differences exist between Hill Collins’s and Royster’s representations of black feminist participation in mainstream academia and research done by more privileged groups and/or students in community writing courses. I am not suggesting that all researchers or students view themselves as marginalized or subjugated. I am suggesting, though, that Hill Collins’s and Royster’s work does an persuasive job of arguing for the significance of a perspective of difference. Understanding the “outsider within” gives researchers a vocabulary for explaining, assessing, and valuing their own experienced reality as a “position”, a key component of reflexivity. In turn, providing students with this vocabulary can help them analyze and critique their own experiences of dissonance in community writing environments.

Chapter four also discussed how feminist researchers reflexively respond to experiences that create an exigency for work that leads to social transformation, either personal or public. Fonow's and Cook's conceptions of exigence through the situation-at-hand and personal experience details how ruptures within normal experiences can lead to fruitful and innovative critical analysis. From this exigence, Fonow and Cook develop reflexive strategies for an action orientation, structuring their research and reflections on research in ways that raise their own awareness of their works' public or personal transformative value, or raise the consciousness of participants, institutions, or publics. Exigence and consciousness-raising social transformation are both very abstract concepts, and the fluidity of Fonow's and Cook's descriptions of their rationale and strategies exemplifies this challenge. Feminist researchers like Michelle Fine and Nancy Naples problematize the power structures and institutions that determine the goals and external parameters for social change. Negotiating these goals is not the responsibility of students in community writing classes and asking students to think through conceptions that challenge experienced researchers may not be entirely possible, but Fonow and Cook provide compelling tools for problematizing how reflections based on observation can lead to social transformation in student work.

Additionally, chapter four illustrates how feminist reflexive strategies can provide new ways of interpreting and responding to challenges of agency. Nancy Naples's work discusses issues of collaboration and perceptions of agency similar to those experienced by some "writing with" students as explained by Deans. Her reflexive strategies in her own thinking and writing ask for critical narratives of collaborators' locations and the overt recognition of the power dynamics at play in even the most egalitarian working relationships. By recognizing, sharing, and reflecting upon embodied narratives, Naples argues that researchers can identify and

critique the relationships between researchers and researched. The reflexive analysis of power moves reflections on dissent and negotiation towards more formal and explicit purpose of useful critique. As noted in chapter four, students often negatively reflect on the emotional challenges of working relationships and collaboration. A systematic focus on understanding the power dynamics within these relationships can help students address disconnects similar to those experienced by Naples.

In this reading of feminist rationales and strategies for reflexive thinking, writing, and research, there are clearly overlaps in perspectives and goals. As a researcher identifies her own positionality, she is at the same time critiquing her own exigency and power. While chapter four was organized in a way to show how feminist reflexivity can respond to specific challenges that manifest themselves in specific types of community writing curriculum, in practice, reflexive feminist methodology attends to all of the individual issues raised in that chapter. That is, feminist reflexivity as a whole engages researchers in recursive thinking and writing about their own locations, agency, and alternative ways of knowing. Additionally, these reflexive rationales and strategies also provide new lens with which to read larger challenges that encompass all of the community writing models described by Deans.

One such challenge is the emotional nature of student reflective writing. As chapters one and four highlight, student reflections on their community writing experiences often center on how they felt about a particular interaction, success, or failure. Because student writers are adept as responding to reflective prompts in terms of their feelings, these moments of feeling are rarely productively utilized for analysis and critique. As Herzberg recounts in chapter one, students are aware of the conventions of reflection well enough earn an “easy A” by writing about their feelings of “growth” and “awareness” that come from service. In many ways, the emotional

aspect of reflective writing is one of the reasons why reflection is so often discounted as a method of research and analysis. Feelings and emotions are far from the standards of objectivity and detached observation embraced by both qualitative and quantitative researchers. This construction of emotion is similar to Scott's critique of experience as knowledge illustrated in chapter three. Just as Scott argues that uncontextualized and historicized experiences cannot be grounds for knowledge creation, in spite of their "unassailable" nature, so too must emotion be critiqued. How can one analyze, critique, and assess something as subjective as how one "felt" about a situation or experience?

For feminists, understanding the emotional dimensions of their work—both in motivation and response—is a valuable practice that can move reflection towards reflexivity. As Fonow and Cook argue, a major feature of a feminist epistemology is its refusal to ignore the emotional aspects of inquiry and research. In fact, they posit that researchers must examine how the affective dimensions of research help shape the production of knowledge. This understanding "serve[s] as a source of insight or a signal of rupture in social reality" (Fonow and Cook 9). By encouraging researchers to value and critique their emotions throughout the research process, researchers can validate their initial responses while considering how those responses were shaped by the situation. The attention to the affective is one way Fonow and Cook practice reflexivity in their research methodologies. Likewise, encouraging students to view their emotions as productive ruptures provides them with concrete examples of affect as a way of knowing.

Attention to the affective components of research includes analyzing both the elements of caring and emotionality that arise in relationships with participants and the analysis of negative reactions that occur in response to unpleasant interactions. This uniquely feminist form of

reflexivity is a response to what Horkheimer describes at the turn in 20<sup>th</sup> century social science research towards “reason” above all else (1976). As the focus on reason and logic became central to the research endeavor, objectivity and unemotionality came to be seen as interchangeable. Rather than ignore the complexities of emotions, feminist researchers like Fonow and Cook aim to restore the affective to the reflexive research enterprise by paying explicit attention to emotional experiences, analysis of their meaning, and their incorporation of emotional conclusions into further inquiry (11).

Fonow and Cook’s approach to reflexive affective knowledge is mirrored in the work of other feminists scholars who believe that emotional responses fundamentally change how individuals conceptualize roles, research, and knowledge. It is precisely because it is challenging to analyze that research must attend to affect explicitly. As Naples notes, attending to the role of emotions in research and analysis is an important yet under-theorized aspect of reflexive practice (199-200). Feminists are still in the process of developing and utilizing reflexive strategies on affect that can enhance their work. Naples, like Fonow and Cook, believes that emotions influence the values, observations, and thoughts that make up all knowledge and inquiry, particularly those moments where emotions are a sign of rupture. Naples quotes Sociologist Susan Greenhalgh, who writes, “atypical emotional responses... can facilitate the building of critical theory by motivating investigations into new issues and by enabling new versions of reality that challenge dominant views” (Greenhalgh 2001, qtd. in Naples 200). Clearly, these feminist researchers see attention to affect as an integral aspect of reflexive inquiry. Not only are emotions valuable as points of rupture to stimulate inquiry, they are also a legitimate part of building the theory that helps situate and critique such inquiry.

Like the attention to the affective components of research, Gesa Kirsch offers the conception of a “politics of location” as an broad aspect of feminist reflexivity. In her conclusion to her book *Ethical Dilemmas in Feminist Research: The Politics of Location, Interpretation, and Publication*, Kirsch and Peter Mortensen write that reflexivity fostered by feminist principles of location “tends to refine the translation of theory into practice, over time, making the process more efficient...[and] more accountable by exposing it to the scrutiny of colleagues and participants (88). This translation of feminist theory into a reflexive practice of location draws explicit attention to the overall constructed nature of researchers’ and participants’ subjectivities, and asks researchers to define, analyze, and critique how they position themselves in relation to such subjectivities. A reflexive politic of location also asks researchers to analyze and critique the structures of relationships that emerge from such initial reflexive thinking on subjectivities. Through the politics of location as described by Kirsch, feminist researchers create a larger vocabulary for the types of thinking and writing illustrated by other reflexive feminists highlighted in this chapter (see Table 9). As Naples creates narratives of power and agency and Royster critiques her own positionality, both are participating in the construction of a broader politics of location that structure feminist reflexive inquiry.

Kirsch’s strategies for reflexivity evaluating location are prompts for investigating what shapes locations and what limitations locations create. Her questions—what has shaped your own perspective, what is currently supporting this perspective, and what has shaped and is supporting your participants’ perspectives—provides a roadmap for the larger project of reflexivity and allows researchers to create a vocabulary for reflecting, analyzing, and critiquing the relationships that develop among researchers and participants. For students, understanding the overarching concept of the politics of location may provide them with a larger framework

with which to situate the specific feminist reflexive strategies mentioned here and in chapter four.

Table 9: Feminist Reflexive Strategies for Research and Writing

<b>Researcher/Theorist</b>	<b>Research Strategy</b>	<b>Reflexivity Strategy</b>
Collins	“outsider-within”	Explaining, assessing, and valuing, individual realities of experience
Fonow & Cook	Larger Affective Knowledge	Understanding how emotions effect agency of self and subject, structure inquiry
	Situation-at-Hand Action Orientation	Development of an exigency for social change through experiences
Kirsch	Larger Politics of Location	Questioning own positionality in relationship to participants/others
Royster	Reflexive Positionality	Careful analysis Acknowledgment of passionate attachment
Naples	Narratives of Power and Agency	Identifying and critiquing the power distances between collaborators

At the crux of many of the challenges students face when engaging in community writing are the relationships that exist and develop between students, community partners, community members, and institutions. These relationships prompt reflections on feelings of disenfranchisement, confusion, and dissonance, or purely positive reflections on meeting new people and learning new things. Strategies like using the situation-at-hand and understanding the outsider-within

give students ways to use reflexive thinking and writing to work through specific experiences of difference, but Kirsch's politics of location creates a larger structure students can use to examine how all of these different experiences and strategies are representative of a larger reflexive project.

This review of feminist strategies for reflexive thinking and writing shows how feminist researchers create structures for reflecting upon, examining critically, and exploring analytically personal experiences and motivations. While the projects undertaken by feminist scholars and students in community writing courses are substantially different, both types of research offer challenges to individuals' preconceived notions of agency, positionality, and social transformation. This dissertation argues that feminist strategies for reflexivity offer nuanced ways of encouraging students to think and write reflexively and to use such thinking and writing as tools to connect experiences of difference to academic goals. By understanding the role feminist reflexive theories may play in indentifying and addressing problems in community writing, we can develop a pedagogy that specifically incorporates such strategies into community writing courses and projects.

### *A Reflexive Community Writing Pedagogy*

In their 2012 book *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies* Kirsch and Royster draw attention to the interconnections among three critical terms of engagement in feminist rhetorical practices: critical imagination, strategic contemplation, and social circulation.<sup>8</sup> These terms illuminate what Kirsch and Royster

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<sup>8</sup> Kirsch and Royster use these terms of engagement to define excellence in feminist rhetorical practices in the following ways: *critical imagination* discusses the questions used to clarify the scope, nature, and principles of feminist rhetorical work; *strategic contemplation* describes the

see as the standards of excellence in feminist rhetorical studies and function as a meta-cognitive way of helping them see patterns and possibilities in feminist work (*Feminist* 19). Central to this conception of excellence is a focus on grounding inquiry in the dialogic strategies of using experience as evidence, or reflexivity. While they see this inquiry paradigm as representative of current work in feminist rhetoric, they also note its adaptability for other types of rhetorical work, particularly the development of usable pedagogical approaches that are aware of students' presence, values, and attitudes, and that recognize the blind spots in that awareness that may not be as immediately visible (Kirsch and Royster, *Feminist*, 76). This framework, a dialogic exchange that allows for movement back and forth between varying points of interrogation, is used by reflexive feminist scholars deliberately and self-consciously, but challenges lies in articulating this framework as a dynamic and flexible way for training others. Kirsch and Royster write that one goal for articulating this usefulness is in developing pedagogical approaches and classroom strategies "capable of engaging contemporary students thoughtfully and responsibly" (*Feminist* 67). A creation of such a reflexive pedagogical framework would benefit not only feminist rhetorical practices of rhetoric, but the fields of rhetoric, writing, and literacy more generally.

Similarly, Chandra Mohanty's work on third world feminism addresses why reflexive thinking on experiences of difference is integral to the development of pedagogy. In her work *Feminism Without Borders* Mohanty argues that traditional feminist scholarship inadvertently produces western women as the only legitimate subjects of struggle and western women's voices as the only perspectives worth analyzing. While forms of contemporary feminism argue for acknowledging difference (verses essentialism), Mohanty sees such an acceptance of "benign

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critical thinking central to pursuing an actively robust intellectual agenda; and *social circulation* describes the evolutionary relationships of feminist rhetorical thought and action.

variation” as just as limiting a perspective. Instead, researchers should investigate kinds of difference and how those kinds of differences are engaged (Mohanty 193). Mohanty sees an important step in institutionalizing this kind of thinking about difference as the development of a pedagogy that takes seriously questions of lived experience and develops a critical analysis of how experiences are discussed and named. This reflexive pedagogy would be more than just a recognition of difference, it would be centered upon helping students see how their voices come as the result of their own locations and experiences (Mohanty 216). For Mohanty, it is important that this kind of reflexive thinking happens at the pedagogical level, as she recognizes that education is a powerful place for validating lived experiences of difference, and that an education that discusses knowledge and knowledge creation as part of self-definition and self-identity would begin to create an analytical space for understanding kinds of difference generally, and the differences of third world women specifically (Mohanty 193).

What Kirsch, Royster, and Mohanty are identifying is the role pedagogy can play in institutionalizing reflexive thinking and writing and furthering a larger feminist research agenda. Formal reflexive thinking that interrogates experiences of difference, names those experiences, and deliberately and self-consciously makes those experiences visible holds considerable potential for radically restructuring student learning and writing. A pedagogy that asks students to write critically and analytically about issues of power, location, and social exigence responds to the Kirsch, Royster, and Mohanty’s call for unique, reflexive student learning.

A community writing course structured around reflexive thinking and writing must highlight the ways that reflexive practice adds value to reflective assignments and to thinking and writing through the larger rhetorical and contextual goals of the course. That is, the addition of reflexivity to community writing pedagogy must address how students can write critically and

analytically about issues of agency, positionality, and social transformation, using experience as evidence. Reflexivity in these courses must be overt and continuous so that teachers do not just expect reflexivity, they promote it. An overt attention to reflexivity means that it becomes part of the course goals themselves. As chapter four highlighted reflexive thinking and writing is an implicit goal in “writing for,” “writing about,” and “writing with” community writing courses. Through traditional reflective assignments students are encouraged to make connections between their experiences of difference, academic transfer, audience, writerly agency, and writing’s ability to enact social change. These “connections” are another way of framing loose reflexivity. At the same time though, students’ abilities to make these connections largely relies on their own individual abilities to think reflexively, a skill often developed outside of a particular course. An overt attention to reflexivity would mean that reflexive thinking becomes part of the course goals. Doing this would mean that reflexivity is presented to students in much the same way as other forms of thinking and writing: through readings and discussions of what constitutes reflexive thinking and writing, through examples of what reflexive writing looks like, and through continuous practice and critique of reflexive writing. Just as first-year writing courses present academic discourse conventions through the introduction and practice of those conventions, a course with an overt focus on reflexivity should make visible the discursive purposes and conventions of reflexive writing.

Challengingly, if reflexivity is incorporated into the overt goals of a community writing course, then it must also be incorporated into the assessment of students’ success in that course. Reflective writing is often assessed using a standard and unspoken bad/good/better rubric. It is used as a way to make sure students have completed the tasks of the course, and it is rarely “graded” in the same way other compositions are graded. This reluctance to grade reflections

stems from two reasons: one, it is difficult, and even unethical, to grade students' "feelings" and observations; and two, it is difficult, and even unethical, to grade assignments for which no structure has been given. That is, how can students be graded on the successful creation of reflective writing without examples, guidelines, and parameters for those reflections?

Integrating reflexive writing into the overt goals of a community writing course means that it must become an assessed part of the course, and that such an assessment develops from the initial and sustained focus on the structure and strategies of reflexivity.

A reflexive community writing course must also make the practices of reflection and reflexivity continuous and dialogic. As Yancey notes in her descriptions of the her own reflective assignments (chapter one), students' reflections on their own writings lose focus and purpose when they are framed as one-off writing assignments. After-the-fact reflections and end of the semester reflections in community writing face this exact problem. These types of assignments clearly have the potential to encourage reflexivity, as they provide spaces for students to make their responses, observations, and feelings explicit, and to use experience as a source of their knowledge. While making such responses explicit is the first step, the next step towards reflexivity is to make this type of writing continuous, recursive, and dialogic. Reflexive writing must be integrated into all parts of the curriculum, practiced regularly, respond to itself, and become part of the larger shared conversation of the course through both student and teacher discussions and feedback. Making reflexivity an overt and continuous aspect of the community writing course changes the way that it is presented to students and disturbs their preconceived notions of its purpose and structure. In her discussion on reflection in the writing classroom, Peggy O'Neill offers that for reflective writing to be a valuable way to assess course and student success it must overtly emphasize negotiation and real conversation among all participants.

O'Neill's strategy is to implement a writing sequence where teachers and students continually respond to reflections and responses to reflections, much like the dialogic nature of the bridge building journal illustrated here. This method is supported by Glenda Conway, who argues that reflection is only ethical if it exists in the ongoing conversation of a course, and if the teacher clearly and continuously discusses her reactions to the reflections with students, both individually and communally. A community writing course structure that makes reflexivity overt and continuous must create purposeful assignments for thinking and writing reflexively throughout the entirety of the course, similar to the reflective assignment structure presented here. This continuous, recursive, and dialogic form of reflexive writing integrates reflexivity directly into a community writing curriculum.

### *Reflexive Course Assignments and Activities*

Creating course assignments and activities that meet the goals of overt and continuous reflexivity in a community writing course requires structuring reflection and reflexivity as both a behavior and a process. As chapter one argues, when reflection is conceived of as only a behavior, it becomes a loose, narrative process of recounting feelings, motivations, and experiences. For traditionally reflective assignments to encourage students to think and write reflexivity, the assignments themselves must become more systematic and focused.

The assignments and activities suggested here are appropriate for most community writing course structures, as they focus on the disconnects students feel and identify within the relationships between and expectations of community writing stakeholders. While each form of community writing has its own specific set of cognitive and social goals, all forms require students to perform service to and with others as successfully as possible, a situation that, as

chapter four argues, creates space for considering how power, location, agency, exigency, and experience function. Modeling these assignments on the broad, overarching goals of community writing courses, rather than the specific goals of certain forms of community writing, is important because as Deans notes, most community writing classes are a hybrid style, incorporating the objectives and assignments of different structures to meet the specific curricular goals of a class, program, or institution (143). What ties these suggested assignments together into a specific community writing pedagogy for reflexivity is its focus on writing assignments that reflect upon, examine critically, and explain analytically students' personal experiences in community writing.

Three particular ways of making reflexive thinking and writing an overt and continuous project in community writing courses are *reading and responding to writings and presentations on reflexivity, rethinking the reflective journal, and assigning specific reflexive writing assignments*. The purpose of the first of these ways, *reading and responding to writing and presentations on reflexivity*, is to make reflexivity a central aspect of the course content. Just as first-year writing courses present students with examples of analysis or research writing, community writing courses must not assume students' abilities to write reflexively. Instead, courses that make reflexive thinking and writing a goal of the course must present students with sources that engage the general notion that experiences and responses to those experiences can be starting point for critiquing ways of knowing.

To present students with the idea that experience is central to knowledge creation in community writing, teachers must provide students with readings and discussions that focus on the different ways of knowing that will structure the experiences that student have doing service. In particular, community writing teachers can introduce writings that focus on the practical

aspects of fieldwork: the challenges of entering communities, conducting observations, and reporting on those observations. These readings, such as the ones found in *Fieldworking: Reading and Writing Research*, would encourage students to think of themselves as researchers, and set the stage for practicing active listening and conducting grounded research. Additionally, students would be presented with explanations or readings about affective knowledge and the politics of location. By understanding how their experiences within a community writing environments can be viewed as knowledge and research, these readings and discussions focus on the purposes of reflexive thinking and writing before students enter their collaborative service sites. The goal of these discussions and readings is to prepare students for the experiences of “rupture” that they may encounter in their community writing environments and to provide them with a vocabulary for examining, assessing, and valuing their experiences that differs from the vocabulary of traditional reflections.

The second aspect of a reflexive pedagogy for community writing, *rethinking the reflective journal*, creates a type of dialogic and continuous writing that fosters reflexivity. As shown in chapter four, most reflective journals, and individual entries in these journals, do not have specific purposes or assignments. Instead, they ask students to record their observations, activities, and opinions. Rethinking the structure and purpose of these journals allows them to become a central place for reflexive writing, rather than just a record of experiences. One way to do this would be to specifically present the journals as “bridge building” writing assignments, not “reflective” journals. Using Royster’s conception of building bridges between different experiences, the known and the unknown, as well as the Hill Collins’s outside-within status, the explicit assignment for such journals should be for students to use their observations and experiences as starting points for interrogating their own locations and perspectives before,

during, and after their service activities. The following table illustrates the types of continuous questions that would structure such a “bridge building” journal (Table 10).

Table 10: Questions to Structure a Reflexive Bridge-Building Journal

<b>Before Service</b>  (self-critique)	What are your conceptions of the community you are going to work in? (community group, non-profit, etc.) Where do your ideas of such groups come from? What previous experiences have you had with this type of group? What types of writing do you think go on there? What do you think the goals of such writings are? Are you and outsider or an insider to this community? Why? How do you believe collaboration will happen in this community? What will be your role? What do you believe the social goals of this project will be?
<b>During Service</b>  (objective reflexivity)	What types of writing go on in this community? How is collaboration happening or not happening? What kind of power do you have in this community? Where do you identify “ruptures” from your own previous experiences? What seems off? What differences or discrepancies do you see between your initial perceptions of the community and your current experiences? Who might not see these moments as discrepancies or ruptures? Why? What are your ideas and locations that might structure how you see these ruptures? Where do you see your previous ideas or experiences being challenged? What do you see as the social goals of your project?
<b>After Service</b>  (impact of politics of location)	What types of writing go on in this community? When and why did you experience ruptures in expectations? How did you and/or community members respond to these ruptures? What are your ideas and locations that might have shaped how you “read” these ruptures? How has your understanding of your role in the community changed or not changed? Do you believe that the social goals of the project were met? Could be met?

These questions create an organized form of journaling that exemplifies Woolgar's movement of "reflection as narrative" towards "reflexivity as focused and systemic inquiry". Incorporating the themes of Lipp's strategies for reflexivity, Royster's careful analysis and acknowledgment of attachment, and Fonow and Cook's prompts for utilizing and analyzing the situation-at-hand, these journal questions respond to both Yancey's call for journal scaffolding as well as the need (identified in chapter four's "writing with" section) for more explicit opportunities for student reflection. These questions allow for students to both participate in and simultaneously critique their community writing experiences, a central activity of feminist reflexivity.

The purpose of these types of writing prompts is to create a place where students see reflections' relationships to the reflexive goals of the course, and to scaffold specific forms of writing that validate students' experiences as legitimate ways of knowing. These types of questions engage students in recursive thinking about their perspectives and locations at all stages of the community writing process. They address issues of individual agency, relationships and power, changes to students' understandings of writing structures and purposes, and they situate the process of analyzing and critiquing those experiences within the larger goals of the course.

For this type of structured journal to encourage continuous reflexive thinking and writing, the journal itself must be analyzed and critiqued reflexively. That is, teachers and other students must thoughtfully engage in the ideas and experiences presented. In one way, this mirrors Yancey's "talk back" assignments, where teachers and students participate in ongoing reflections on a specific writing assignments. Bridge building journals not only provide opportunities for students to begin to write reflexivity, but they also provide opportunities for teachers to model reflexive questions and writing, as well as the rhetorical moves of reflection. Just as we never

expect a student to write a research paper without first seeing what a research paper looks like, teacher entries in bridge building journals show students what reflexive writing can look like. In these entries, teachers can discuss how their own perspectives and locations structure their readings of these journals, and can ask students the types of questions that will foster thinking and writing about reflexive issues that students may have only touched on in their initial writings. This dialogic conversion also provides opportunities for teachers to help students see the connections between their service experiences and the course's rhetorical goals. Similarly, just as Herzberg's "writing about" students shared observations of their tutoring experiences in class discussions and those observations helped structure individual student projects, using these bridge building journals as starting points for student discussions takes them even further out of the realm of private reflections, and moves them toward public discourse.

The key to assigning a bridge building journal would be for teachers to emphasize the journal's role in fostering the types of reflexivity that have been overtly illustrated in the earlier readings and discussions in the course (conceptions of fieldwork, a vocabulary for using affect and perspective as knowledge). If reflexive thinking is, as this dissertation argues, key to helping students successfully navigate the multiple goals of community writing courses, then the journal must be adaptable to the different needs of individual students as they develop a sense of how experience structures knowledge and learning, it must be a place for students to make connections between these experiences and the larger goals of the course, and it must support the thinking and writing about discourse and cultural critique that the community writing perspective adds to writing courses.

Finally, *assigning specific reflexive writing assignments* integrates reflexivity into the overt course goals of community writing courses. These specific assignments stand apart from

the dialogic reflexive writing assigned in a bridge building journal, and are more tightly integrated into the course curricula than end of the semester reflections. One example of such an assignment would be to have students create a collaborative narrative modeled on the reflexive questions Naples uses in her own feminist reflexive work. These narratives would ask students to recognize and write about the individual narratives that shape their community writing experiences. Using experiences of dissonance identified in their bridge building journal, students would collect and write narratives of their own location and the locations that shape their collaborators' work. These narratives would draw attention to the power dynamics that structure collaborations when individuals have different levels of authority and power over the writing process. As Deans observes, students in both "writing for" and "writing with" courses experience challenges to their own ideas of the types and purposes of writing as they work in what Flower calls "intercultural collaborations." A reflexive narrative would encourage students to think and write about these experiences of difference in a formal way and for new audiences. Feminist reflexive strategies for creating such a narrative would contextualize the challenges to authority and agency that students might have previously responded to in solely emotional or motivational ways.

This type of specific reflexive writing is an example of what Yancey calls reflection-in-presentation, the process of thinking reflexively about the creation of reflective work. The questions that scaffold Naples's analysis of her own co-created narratives offer structure to students' reflections on collaboration. For example, after the first creation of a narrative, Naples' prompts for analyzing the power at play in such writings (questioning power in different individuals' perspectives, identifying power in the research and development process, and analyzing how those issues of power and agency manifest themselves in the final write up of a

document) can provide students with ways to uncover how assumptions of agency structure their collaborative experiences. Additionally, the formal nature of this kind of assignment would also disrupt students' expectations of traditional reflective writing by moving it out of a journal (private) and into a specific document, with its own holistic evaluation rubric (see Appendix). Specific assignments like a collaborative narrative make reflexively a central component of the goals and assignments for community writing, and represent the kind of thinking and writing that feminist reflexivity can add to forms of purposeful reflection identified by Yancey as adding cognitive course value.

### *Assessment*

The shifting of reflective writing assignments towards reflexivity creates challenges and opportunities for new forms of assessment. First, adding reflexive thinking and writing into the overt goals of the course adds another specific dimension of student writing to be assessed. That is, a “writing for” course who’s large course project is a recommendation report for a community organization must also integrate formal reflexive assignments into their percentages for grading, creating exponentially more material for review, more feedback, and more drafts. This could pose an even greater problem if the course is structured to provide students feedback on their writing from community partners as well. Courses would have to be tightly structured to allow students, teachers, and partners ample opportunities to read, comment, and grade student work.

A second challenge is creating a form of assessment that evaluates both the behavior and the process that is reflective and reflexive thinking and writing. Behaviors and skills like reflexivity, critical thinking, and analysis are not easily documented or measured in the writing students produce. This necessitates the creation of holistic writing assessments that may account

for the interaction of different cognitive elements within a text, and may allow a greater degree of interaction between the reader, writer, and the text than the enumerating of specific points that characterizes evaluations using primary trait analysis (Wurr 242). In his article “Text-Based Measures of Service-Learning Writing Quality” Adrian Wurr describes a research project using such holistic writing assessments to evaluate the effects of a community writing curriculum on first-year writers. Such assessments scored student writing based on its persuasiveness; use of rhetorical appeals; quality of claims, data, and warrants; coherence; and mechanics. Using ratings by a team of trained independent evaluators, Wurr’s project concluded that in comparison to a control group of first-year writers who were not in community writing courses, student writing from community writing courses was judged to be better than comparison essays by about half a letter grade (431).

Wurr’s work is a useful model for reflexive community writing in that it sets standards for holistically scoring and comparing community writing’s effects on academic writing. At the same time, this study’s limitations lie in that it does not differentiate the aspects of community writing that scaffold such rhetorical development. The pedagogy for reflexivity in community writing presented here offers that the explicit inclusion of reflexive thinking and writing is what links community writing’s more abstract goals to specific rhetorical outcomes like transfer, audience negotiation, and collaboration writing. For such a model to be a useful form of analysis for student writing, and for the pedagogy as a whole, holistic assessments must gauge the impact that an overt emphasis on reflexive has on community writing, and the impact a community writing curriculum has on writing itself.

The first step toward such a multilevel assessment like the one described above is to create holistic assessment tools that evaluate student gains in reflexive thinking and writing. The

sample rubric presented in appendix A is modeled after the Virginia Tech's Assessment Office's holistic scorecard for evaluating first-year student writing in terms of problem solving skills and integration of course content. The adaptable model's objectives are to demonstrate integration between past and present experiences, academic course content, as well as demonstrate self-awareness and meta-cognition (VT Assessment). This loosely structured form of evaluation is appropriate for the assessment of writings like bridge building journals, as it is designed to measure changes over time. Student reflective writings are scored at the beginning of the semester and again after their exposure to reflexive thinking and writing process. One way to integrate this into the pedagogy presented here is to use this type of holistic evaluation to assess student reflexive journals throughout the course of the semester. As the rubric in Appendix A shows, student writing is evaluated based on how well it connects relevant experiences and academic knowledge, well as how well it evaluates and contextualizes experiences of difference, power, agency, and emotion. Assessing the more informal reflexive assignments using this rubric at multiple points in the semester may illustrate how well students make gains in reflexive thinking and writing.

The second sample holistic grading rubric presented illustrates how grading strategies for reflexivity can be formally integrated into assignments that would also be graded for rhetorical competencies, like collaboration narratives. Based on Ulla Conner and Janice Lauer's scales for judging the persuasiveness of student writing (used in the International Study of Written Communication [IEA]), this rubric provides measures of identifying and rating the use of specific rhetorical structures, rhetorical appeals, and reflexive strategies. The rubric is set up to evaluate stand alone assignments through a five point scale, drawing attention to students rhetorical moves like focus and organization, as well as to reflexive moves like using details and

examples to describe relevant experiences and link experiences to an analysis and critique of power. Again, if students who make concrete gains in reflective and reflexive thinking and writing are also more likely to succeed in a courses' academic components (Bacon, "Transfer") then assigning and evaluating narratives based on dual measures of competencies serves students and the course well.

These forms of holistic grading can be used to assess the individual writing of students, but importantly, they also can be used to assess a pedagogy of reflexivity for community writing. This dissertation has argued that an increased emphasis on reflexivity can create both more nuanced reflective writing, which in turn would affect students' abilities to meet the academic and rhetorical goals of the course. In making such a claim, this work argues that such gains can and should be formally assessed. Such research require assessment on two fronts: one, the assessment of student writing for gains in reflexive thinking, and two, the assessment of student writing for gains in academic competencies. Wurr's project on assessing service-learning courses' effects on first-year writing provides a model for this type of empirical research. This dissertation suggests that systematic research using control groups, holistic scoring, and inter-rater training can help identify the specific reflexive and academic gains made by students in courses centered on a community writing pedagogy of reflexivity.

By comparing reflexive and academic gains in a pedagogy of reflexivity in community writing to those made in traditional community writing courses and in non-service structures of the same academic course, we can create more than anecdotal evidence for the added value of reflexivity in community writing and evaluate the larger claim that feminist reflexivity affords students more nuanced ways of looking at issues of positonality, social transformation, and agency. As this dissertation has argued, for considerable shift to occur in students' expectations

of reflective writing, students must view themselves as reflexive practitioners within a community writing pedagogy that is overly structured around reflexive thinking and writing. The creation and assessment of such a pedagogy is the first step towards framing reflexivity as a legitimate way for students to make powerful connections between their service experiences and their writing, and to write critically and analytically about issues of agency, power, location, and social transformation, using their own experiences as evidence.

*Conclusion*  
***Reflexivity and Community Writing: A Case for Empirical Research***

This dissertation, “From Reflection to Reflexivity: Challenging Students’ Conceptions of Writing, Self, and Society in the Community Writing Classroom,” examines the disconnect that characterizes much of the discussion of reflective writing in community writing studies and argues for the potential of reflexivity as a concept to further develop the kinds of reflective writing assigned in community writing classrooms. Many practitioners and scholars view reflective writing as a potentially powerful tool that may help students learn challenging or abstract theories and practices from their own community writing experiences. With such potential, it can be disappointing when student reflective writing does not achieve teacher expectations of critical thinking and analysis, stopping before critical engagement and understanding is achieved. Instead, it often centers on students’ personal feelings and motivations that shape or arise from their community experiences. I have argued in this dissertation that one reason for such a disconnect between teacher expectations and actual student writing comes from the word “reflection” itself. While a traditional understanding of reflective writing asks students to look back on their experiences, observations, feelings, and opinions, community writing teachers use the term “reflection” with qualifiers like “critical,” “sustained,” or “intellectually rich.” In qualifying their expectations for reflective writing, teachers are in fact asking for something very different from reflection, namely, reflexivity.

When reflexivity is presented to students as “qualified reflection” it loses the considerable theoretical grounding that makes it a particularly unique way of using experiences as the foundation for inquiry. Building on theories of epistemological reflexivity for researchers in the social sciences, chapters two and three of this dissertation highlight the methodological

reflexivity theorized and practiced by feminist researchers. Reflexivity, and for this work, a *feminist* reflexivity, specifically affords researchers more nuanced ways of looking at issues of positonality, social transformation, and agency.

Articulating the differences between student expectations of reflection in community writing, and the unarticulated goals of reflexivity provides new ways of reading the forms of reflective writing used in community writing classes. Using Deans's work *Writing Partnerships* as the text for analysis, this dissertation argues that in such courses, and in composition in general, reflexive writing serves not only as a place to thoughtfully consider personal motivations and responses, but also as a place where students can think and write through the larger rhetorical and contextual goals of the course. Those goals include thinking and writing reflexivity about students' own positonality, the exigencies and public purposes of their work, and the powers and institutions that may shape their experiences. "Writing for," "writing about," and "writing with" community writing courses, while serving different academic and social purposes, all ask students to purposely analyze and critique their own initial reflections.

For such a shift to occur in student expectations of reflective writing, students must view themselves as reflexive practitioners, a move that begins with a community writing pedagogy that is overly structured around reflexive thinking and writing. As illustrated in chapter five, this type of pedagogy centers on making reflexivity an overt and continuous goal of a community writing course through specific writing activities such as reading and responding to writing on fieldwork and reflexivity, rethinking the traditional reflective journal prompt, and assigning formal reflexive writing assignments. By positioning students as reflective practitioners, we are not expecting students to embody the types of epistemological and methodological thinking done by researchers, but we are creating the conditions for students to explicitly do the types of

thinking and writing that are often done implicitly by feminist researchers and critical teachers. This kind of explicit attention to reflexivity provides students with a vocabulary for thinking and writing reflexively about their own service experiences.

The larger goals of this dissertation are two-fold. First, this work seeks to exemplify one kind of benefit of drawing from different fields to find answers to common issues. Even though Rhetoric and Writing has long benefited from the work of other disciplines, both methodologically and theoretically, there still exists a sense Deans, Roswell, and Wurr's "parallel play," where scholars from different discourse communities are, often unknowingly, working with similar questions. As Julie Thompson Klein argues, the late 20<sup>th</sup> century saw new forms of intellectual work, including collaborative research, hybrid fields, comparative studies, and increased borrowing across disciplines (11). Educators and researchers have turned to such types of interdisciplinarity to answer complex questions, address broad issues, and solve problems that exist outside the scope of one discipline. However, this dissertation does not necessarily position itself as a model of interdisciplinary work. In fact, I refrain from using the term interdisciplinary to describe this work, because questioning the problems and implications of borrowing, delineating the differences between multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, and discussing the effects of interdisciplinarity on disciplinary characteristics are outside the scope of this project.

At the same time though, this dissertation does present an example of what challenges in one field look like when read through the theories of another. While such interdisciplinarity certainly raises important questions of epistemology and purpose, these questions do not preclude such exercises in problem solving as presented here. It is my intent that this dissertation illustrate one way of using our knowledge and skills as researchers to inform what

goes on in the classroom. Drawing attention to such methodological similarities and creating a pedagogical response is the first step. Future work, such as empirical studies, will require us to look more closely at the challenges and limitations of the theoretical and practical pairing of feminist reflexivity and community writing.

The second larger goal of this dissertation has been to position reflexive writing as an integral part of the political classroom. As critical pedagogy continues to influence the writing classroom and community writing courses become more widespread, we must continue to think about how our courses attend to the goals of social mobility and the individual development of political and economic powers. As Aronowitz and Giroux argue, we must create “places of critical education in the service of creating a public sphere of citizens who are able to exercise power over their own lives and especially over the conditions of knowledge acquisition” (xi). This attention to the political impact of our courses has become a widespread goal of not only writing programs, but of a humanities education, and it is the driving force behind much of service-learning’s integration into university curricula. It is not enough that the theories and rationales that structure our courses emphasize the political; our classroom practices must do so as well, at the same time attending to writing’s academic goals. As Allen Larson offers, we must ask how our courses can work towards both social knowledge and the expectations of the discipline (115). Like Larson, I see the distinction between political course goals and cognitive learning goals as a false dichotomy. If the classroom is an inherently political space, as I believe it is, then reflective writing, understood as reflexivity, is positioned as a particularly useful form of classroom discourse that can bridge the gap between the political and the academic for both community writing students and teachers. Reflexive thinking and writing should not be thought of in the same way as the much maligned personal reflection. Instead, it is my goal in this

dissertation to show the critical and political (personal and public) possibilities for feminist reflexivity assignments in the community writing classroom.

The limitations that shape such a combination of community writing and feminist reflexivity are much like the limitations that shape service-learning projects generally. Service-learning course activities take many shapes, and those shapes are grounded in how each individual practitioner/ researcher defines the “service” of the course, as well as the “learning” of the course. This flexibility often translates to a lack of concrete resources for practitioners interested in creating service-learning courses, or prescriptive, yet vague, “how-to” guides for classroom planning. Additionally, defining success in a service-learning course or pedagogy is particularly challenging. Few formal research studies have been done, as goals, projects, and partners (the researcher variables) differ from course to course. Again, the flexibility that allows for service-learning’s adaptability seems to work against it for evaluative purposes. What this leads to is extensive “case study” methodology. Since there are few set or measurable standards, practitioners and researchers must rely on their own experiences to determine success. Research reporting the successes or failure of a service–learning course centers on methods such as student interviews, classroom observations, surveys, and questionnaires (McEachern, Schutz and Ruggles Gere). While these are very valuable methods of data collection, it remains difficult to draw significant or consistent conclusions about service-learning courses across a curriculum or across institutions, a challenge that will certainly continue in future studies of community writing and reflexivity.

Similarly, the overt inclusion of reflexive writing assignments in community writing curricula raises additional questions of assessing such forms of writing. As described in chapter five, investigating the impact of a community writing pedagogy of reflexivity requires the

assessment of social, cognitive, and personal domains of learning. While Wurr's model for service-learning assessment provides compelling data on service-learning's effects on the rhetorical features of student writing, few direct measures of community writing exist. However, despite these limitations, this dissertation argues that a community writing pedagogy of reflexivity holds the potential to change not only the ways students approach reflective writing, but also to positively impact students' writing development and their beliefs about writing and research.

There also exists challenges specific to combining two different discourses and practices, namely the limitations of using a professional research methodology as a classroom practice. First, students are not researchers. They have not been trained in the epistemological or methodological thinking that allows professional researchers to engage in their own work in the same kind of thoughtful and critical manner. They do not have the same experiences or tools to thoroughly work through the larger context of their own reflexive thinking and writing. Again, as mentioned in chapter five, this is not enough of a reason to discount this kind of pairing, but it should give us pause as we create a pedagogy that extends the type of thinking and writing that students are prepared to do. Providing students and teachers with heuristics for reflexivity can create a space for the kinds of writing and thinking that teachers desire. As Herzberg notes, while students do not always have the skills to analyze and critique the experiences community writing provides them, they do have their own ways of knowing. It is our responsibility as we structure our assignments to think critically about the implications of positioning students as researchers and attend to the ways that students' ways of knowing can limit concepts of methodological reflexivity.

Second, considerable risk exists in collapsing an epistemological and methodological conversation into a pedagogical one, particularly one that deals with power and marginalization that many college students have not, or will not, ever experience. While the separation of research and teaching is a false dichotomy, by asking students to think and write like feminists, one might argue we are asking them to take on a role and perspective that is quite different from their own. The feminist theories of methodological reflexivity presented in this dissertation have been strategies developed by these researchers as direct responses to the marginalization they have felt as outsiders to disciplinary communities and to the inequities they perceive in the research being done with marginalized individuals. It seems almost antithetical to transition work that has come from such a personal place to the reflective writing assigned of students as they attempt to meet disciplinary and institutional goals. However, as chapters two, three, and four show, community writing, critical pedagogy, and feminist research methodologies operate from similar epistemological perspectives. The combination of feminist reflexive strategies with community writing pedagogies challenges students to think and write like academics, and view themselves as part of knowledge construction.

Additionally, combining feminist reflexive strategies and community writing raises questions regarding the amount of feminist theory and research that should/could be presented to students in community writing classes. As we teach feminist reflexivity, do we teach feminism? Exposing students to the development of feminist standpoint theory could provide a compelling rationale for writing reflexively, yet composition courses rarely present students with academic studies and rationales for other kinds writing they may encounter. Similarly, we can ask if it is possible for students to approach communities from a feminist perspective if this perspective does not rise organically from their own experiences. Much feminist research begins from a

place of personal exigency born of marginalization and disenfranchisement. Can students who have never experienced such institutional and ideological forces really understand and do feminist research? These questions challenge the notion that feminist reflexivity and community writing can be easily integrated and poses interesting questions for a future analysis of such a pedagogy.

At the same time, I see the combination of community writing reflection and feminist reflexivity as adding significantly value to the discussions of writing and student engagement. Major figures in higher education and curricular reform argue for a redefinition of the university's role in the community. For example, in his landmark work, "The Scholarship of Engagement," Ernest Boyer, former president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, argues that "for the first time in nearly half a century, institutions of higher learning are not collectively caught up in some urgent national endeavor" and more alarmingly, that there is a growing feeling that higher education is part of our country's current problems; that it had become a private benefit, not a public good. In response, Boyer calls for a shift in the scope of scholarship and teaching, one that highlights both discovery and application, and asks scholars and practitioners to connect the resources of the university to the social, civic, and ethical problems facing communities and citizens. Bringle, Games and Malloy take Boyer's call to action one step further in *Colleges and Universities as Citizens*. Here, Bringle and his coauthors develop Boyer's notion of engagement into a theoretical framework and a practical plan for institutional change. They argue that educational civic engagement is located at the intersection of teaching, service, and research with the community. Within this intersection is student work like service-learning programs and independent undergraduate student research, but also faculty and administrator work like professional community service, and participant action research.

I believe that an overt emphasis on feminist reflexivity helps community writing courses in all forms meet both curricular goals and the goals of civic engagement. For the work students do in a course to embody both public and private good, students must be able to reflexively analyze and critique the relationships between public and private knowledge and understand how such relationships structure higher education and its role in communities. Community writing courses that emphasize reflexivity position students as active agents in engagement, and they position the ways of know that come from such reflexive thinking and writing as viable ways of intervening in institutional and community engagement.

The addition of concepts feminist reflexive thinking and writing to the scholarly discussion of reflection also extend current work on the form. As chapter one highlighted, contemporary work in reflection offers reflective strategies for practitioners. This work provides teachers and professionals with ways to be reflective in their own discipline and practice, and ways to create an environment of reflection for others. Again, Yancey's work, published in 1997, is one of the only investigations of the rhetorical structures and strategies of reflective writing. In the intervening years, most published work has addressed reflection as a behavior, not a product. Emphasizing reflexivity's added value to the discussion of reflection continues and extends Yancey's original work of analyzing the strategies for reflective writing in new ways, in new contexts, and for new purposes.

As mentioned in the introduction to chapter two, Kirsch and Royster call for the future of feminist rhetorical studies to center on sustained and systemic research in rhetoric and writing. They propose an agenda for feminist research that includes finding new pathways, raising new and different questions, and holding work accountable reflectively and reflexivity (Kirsch and Royster 662). One way to engage in such a call to action is to not just create new spaces for

feminist research, but to bring visibility to what feminists are already consciously and explicitly doing to new and different settings. This dissertation suggests that using feminist methodological strategies for reflexivity in the creation of a community writing pedagogy is exactly this sort of new direction for feminist rhetorical studies that Kirsch and Royster call for. As feminist rhetorical studies move away from the work of reclaiming and validating the experiences of women, or using rhetorical research strategies on topics relating women, we should turn our attention to how feminist strategies illuminate other disciplines and practices outside of gender studies. The combination of community writing and feminist research methodologies suggested in this dissertation illustrates one way of answering Kirsch and Royster's challenge for new pathways and visibility for feminist rhetorical studies.

Thinking about reflexivity in the community writing classroom also adds to and extends movements in feminist inquiry more generally. As Mohanty argues, what and how feminists teach students is the first step towards actualizing feminist theory's ability to create social change. Like critical pedagogy practitioners, Mohanty sees education as the development of a critical conscious and, as mentioned in chapter five, she recognizes that education is also a powerful place for validating lived experiences of difference. Mohanty believes that past feminist scholarship has not paid enough attention to pedagogies as forms of feminist research and that future moves in feminism should address ways of constructing and "oppositional pedagogy," which expands disciplinary knowledge into a recognition of difference that can take on issues of race, gender, and class through students' own ways of knowing (200). I argue in this dissertation that a structure of feminist reflexivity creates moments of thinking and writing that allow students to develop and engage in their own ways of knowing that stem from personal experiences. The analysis and critique of ruptures in students' expectations of agency, location,

and emotion provide students with a vocabulary for describing and assessing their own ways of knowing, and provide them with opportunities to use these new ways of knowing to enact personal or public social transformation. This development is what I believe Mohanty is calling for when she suggests that the future of feminist theory lies in the creation of oppositional pedagogies that name the critical analysis of experience.

### *The Future of Reflexivity and Community Writing*

This conclusion has highlighted how the theory and pedagogy presented in this dissertation continues and extends the work done in the fields of community writing studies, reflective writing studies, and feminist research. All three of these discourses are at moments in their development where it behooves them to think creatively about how their own theories and practices can effect work outside of their specific discourse communities, and how parallel work in other communities may help them solve their own challenges. This dissertation suggests that the implementation and assessment of a community writing pedagogy of reflexivity is just such a next step. Future empirical research on this pedagogy should investigate the impact of such a collaboration of fields by measuring the effects it has on different aspects of community writing's rhetorical goals. The development of a longitudinal study, utilizing control groups of diverse community writing students, would mark the next development for a community writing pedagogy of feminist reflexivity. Modeled after Wurr's study presented in chapter five, this form of empirical research would center on multilevel assessment tools to evaluate student gains in reflexive thinking and writing and evaluate this dissertation's claim that naming reflections as reflexivity, and subsequently building a course around such a difference, may afford students more nuanced ways of looking at issues of positonality, social transformation, and agency.

As this dissertation has shown, the time is right in community writing studies and feminist research scholarship for the development of new ways of thinking about and structuring the reflective work done by community writing students. A tipping point has been reached, and such a moment necessitates the creation of new pathways and new forms of visibility for the role theory may play in indentifying and addressing problems in community writing coursework.

This dissertation has argued that the potential for reflective writing prompts in community writing courses has not been fully realized, and that traditional reflective writings only encourage the sharing of observations, feelings, and personal motivations. If such writings are to be framed as places where students can think and write through the larger rhetorical and contextual goals of the course, then these assignments must be reconceived to overtly attend to issues of agency, positonality, and social transformation through lived experiences.

Reading the challenges of reflection in community writing through a feminist reflexive lens provides teachers and scholars with more nuanced ways of encouraging students to think and write reflexively and to use such thinking and writing as tools to connect experiences of difference to academic goals. Rather than abstractly calling for students to think and write about issues of power, reciprocity, and exigence, a feminist reflexive pedagogy for community writing purposely and specifically incorporates reflexivity into the classroom, allowing for unique forms of engagement in service and in writing.

Kirsch and Royster's call for more systemic and sustained creative research in feminist rhetoric is powerful and persuasive. I believe that the development and research of a pedagogy of feminist reflexivity for community writing exemplifies the types of "excellence" that will shape this next wave of feminist rhetorical work

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## Appendix:

### Holistic Rubric for Assessing Gains in Reflexive Thinking and Writing (Adapted from VT Assessment's rubric on "Integration")

Measures	3	2	1	0
Connects relevant experiences and academic knowledge	Synthesizes meaningful connections between prior knowledge and curricular pursuits.	Identifies meaningful connections between prior knowledge and curricular pursuits	Identifies superficial connections between prior knowledge and curricular pursuits	No response
Evaluates and contextualizes experiences of difference	Synthesizes experiences of difference into contextual responses on location	Identifies experiences of difference and their relationship to locations	Identifies superficial reactions to difference	No response
Evaluates and contextualizes roles	Synthesizes and critiques the value of experiences of agency and power	Identifies experiences of agency and power that are disruptive	Identifies superficially the power and agency of self and participants	No response
Evaluates and contextualizes collaboration	Synthesizes how collaborative strategies and goals emerge from locations to shape the project	Identifies how experiences of collaborative strategies and goals shaped project	Identifies differences in collaborative strategies and goals	No response
Evaluates and contextualizes the effects of emotions	Synthesizes how feelings and responses that shaped participation structured interactions	Identifies how feelings and responses to participation shaped experiences	Identifies feelings and responses to participation	No response

## Holistic Rubric for Scoring Narratives of Collaboration

(Adapted from Connor and Lauer's scales for judging persuasive writing)

### *Score of 5: Excellent*

Strong, clear focus. Effective organization—including a beginning, middle, and end—with logical grouping of ideas into paragraphs. Lots of detail and relevant examples and personal experience to support discussions of power distance related to location. Discussion shows a clear understanding of purpose and audience. Few errors.

### *Score of 4: Good*

Clear focus. Overall coherence with paragraphs to group similar ideas. Some examples of experiences to support conclusions of power distance related to location. Discussion demonstrates a good understanding of the purpose of the assignment. Occasional errors.

### *Score of 3: Adequate*

Weak focus on topic. Some coherence and logical grouping of ideas. Some examples and details, though connections to experiences of power distance are not clear. Discussion demonstrates a basic understanding of the issue. Multiple errors.

### *Score of 2: Poor*

No clear focus or message. Few appropriate examples or details. Discussion relies on limited examples of power distance and overlooks complicating experiences. Serious errors, which interfere with meaning.

### *Score of 1: Failing*

Writing is seriously incomplete or does not address the assignment prompts. Errors prevent communication.