Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning in Composition by Thomas Deans. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2000.

Reviewed by Amy Rupiper Taggart, North Dakota State University

A few years ago, when I began to read extensively the literature of service learning and think about its implications for composition and rhetoric, I and other young scholars at CCCC, who were intellectually stimulated by the prospects of this approach, lamented the dearth of theory and research regarding this pedagogy, particularly as it pertained to our discipline. At the time, much scholarship on this topic was either overly generalized for our taste because the writers tried to address audiences applying the pedagogy across many disciplines or it was overly positive and site-specific, lauding the wonders of service learning without critically engaging its foundations, its applications, or its assessment. We believed the pedagogy might offer tentative answers to some of the perennial questions of our profession: How can we motivate students to see the value of writing? How can we help students to ask the questions writers ask when they write? How can we avoid what Joseph Petraglia calls the "pseudotransactions" of writing in classrooms? How can we expose students to diverse audiences? How can we help students to see their writing as social action? Yet we felt we would have to blaze a trail for theory and research on service learning in composition. While additional theorizing and scholarship in this area still remains welcome, books, articles, and conference presentations in composition and rhetoric have begun to address the lack we perceived such a short time ago. Balancing theory, qualitative research, analysis, and application, Tom Deans's *Writing Partnerships* makes a significant contribution to this growing body of scholarship.

In the first chapter, readers encounter one of the key components of the book, Deans's "three paradigms for community writing," and it is evident even there that the categorization might be useful as a leaping-off point for practitioners and scholars; yet it is in the final chapter that Deans best situates this contribution to the field. Recounting the experience of a CCCC roundtable session, Deans claims presenters and attendees alike struggled to connect disparate service-learning paradigms and their outcomes. Bruce Herzberg, an attendee himself, suggested that "they [the University of Massachusetts presenters] were using the *Stanford approach* and the audience was wondering why they weren't achieving the *Bentley effect*" (Deans 144). The distinctions among the varied service learning approaches to teaching writing were unclear. In response, Deans offers teachers of community writing a useful typology for the writing they assign: writing about the community, writing for the community, and writing with the community. Further, he conducts case studies at three institutions, each of which exemplifies one of the community writing models.

The three broad categories encompass most models of writing done in service-learning and community-outreach classes. The writing *about* the community model involves sending students into the community to do any type of work for a nonprofit agency. These students then write about their experiences, using the experience as research or as fodder for reflection on social issues. Students who write *for* the community typically produce documents such as brochures, newsletters, annual reports, and other professional documents for nonprofit agencies. Finally, students who write *with* the community partner work collaboratively with community members to solve problems through language. While categorizations of language use are never quite powerful enough to represent all of the complex permutations possible, Deans acknowledges this challenge and suggests that many practitioners use linked strands of more than one model. In fact, he offers his own service-learning courses as examples for integrating elements of more than one type of community writing into a course; he has his students produce documents *for* agencies at one point in the semester and write *about* community issues at another.

The book's second contribution is linked to the first. Deans doesn't just offer us categories; he places these models theoretically within the field, suggesting that service learning is not just an add-on as some critics fear but that each model supports specific pedagogical goals and evokes theoretical understandings of language learning and use. Writing *about* the community is typically associated with Freirean and Marxist critical pedagogies and consciousness raising; writing *for* the community taps Deweyan experiential learning and shares pedagogical approaches and goals with professional writing courses; and writing *with* the community blends Deweyan pragmatism with Cornel West's "prophetic pragmatism." This theory-practice connection is the element my colleagues and I searched for as we began to implement community writing in our classrooms. The primary theoretical foundations Deans suggests for service learning—Deweyan pragmatism and experiential learning theories and Freirean critical pedagogy—are not surprising. The interdisciplinary scholarship on service learning also invokes these two touchstones. However, Deans shifts the gaze, viewing Deweyan experimental pragmatism and Freirean dialogic Marxism and their connections to service learning from inside composition studies, always connecting their theories to language teaching, learning, and use. As a result, Deans weaves together theories of audience, WAC, writing to learn, writing as social action, and many other theoretical strands of our discipline with their complements in service learning. Developing these interconnections not only enriches the scholarship in service learning, but also adds richness to composition theory and pedagogical research.

Deans takes great pains to avoid privileging one model or theoretical strand of community writing over the others, commenting in the introduction of the text, "I do not argue that any one of the three paradigms is morally superior or inherently more ethical than the others" (19). He concludes similarly: "As noted at the outset, the typology is *not* intended as an argument for any single program or paradigm as most effective, most worthy, most just" (145). Valuing all models of community service learning and community writing is reasonable in the sense that research has shown all models to have some positive benefits, at least for the students. However, Deans seems to suggest subtly that all are not entirely equal (or is it my own bias leading me to believe there is a hierarchy implicit in his discussion?). That is, when discussing the writing with the community model of the Community Literacy Center in Pittsburgh (with which Linda Flower, Wayne Campbell Peck, and Lorraine Higgins are involved), Deans notes the depth this cooperative has been able to achieve: University and community representatives are all equally involved in solving community problems; the initiative was begun by someone who occupied positions both in the community agency and the university—Wayne Campbell Peck, who was director of the Community Literacy Center while also a graduate student at Carnegie Mellon; the CLC is rich in resources and support. It is difficult to imagine that community and students/university mutually benefit as much in a model in which the students work for a few hours in a homeless shelter, returning to school to reflect on their experiences. The ideal of the critical-pedagogy/writing-about-the-community model seems to be that the students' understanding of their roles in the world will be challenged significantly by their experiences and reflection and that their actions will, in turn, reflect their changed attitudes. Deans does not provide a convincing case that this goal has been met in such classrooms. Even Freire, the foundational theorist of critical pedagogy, claims in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that "[a]uthentic education is not carried on by 'A' *for* 'B' or by 'A' *about* 'B,' but rather by 'A' *with* 'B'. . ." (93).

Writing Partnerships attempts a lot, including situating service-learning within higher education and English Studies, reporting on three case studies that fit the taxonomy of community writing models, briefly addressing issues of sustainability, offering some teaching materials samples, listing programs already using community service to teach writing, and providing a list of resources for practitioners. This weakens the book slightly. The text can't cover every issue pertaining to service learning in composition, and while I'm not suggesting that Deans had that grandiose a plan, the text may try to fill too many holes in the disciplinary literature. For instance, one portion of the text that might have been better as an online, updatable resource rather than in a book is the appendix of "Community Writing Course and Program Descriptions." Practitioners have much to gain from reading about others' program models and from gaining relevant contact information. However, because of the length of time it takes to bring a book to print, some of the information in this otherwise helpful resource is already out of date. When using the manuscript version of *Writing Partnerships* to make campus contacts for my own dissertation in 1999, one or two of the people I tried to contact had already moved on. Since then I, too, have moved, as has Deans; the appendix cannot reflect such changes. Fluidity is the nature of service learning and one of its challenges: Where programs are not fully integrated into the institution and into the curriculum; when individuals go away, the programs sometimes collapse or change to adapt. For this reason, a more fluid resource might serve better than the appendix Deans includes.

In terms of methodology, some bemoan the prevalence of case and classroom studies in service learning. However, when connected to larger bodies of scholarship and theory, such case studies as the ones Deans conducts here may form some of the best scholarship in this field. The highly situated and situational nature of service learning requires that teacher-scholars in this field contextualize our studies and findings. Furthermore, through Deans's interviews, readers get to hear the voices of leaders in the field as they reveal their commitments more directly and frankly than is often possible when they publish their own research results. For instance, Linda Flower is cited as saying that "Cornel West's prophetic pragmatism 'is the place where I would like to be standing' . . . because he 'recognizes the injustice that is there and looks for opportunities for transformational praxis' while not losing focus on 'the agency of marginalized people' " (Deans 117). There is insight to be had here regarding major researchers' motivations. What's missing, however, are the community members voices, as Deans acknowledges. Reciprocity is a "god-term" in service learning, a commonly cited value held by service-learning practitioners. Ideally, this equal representation and equal involvement should spill over into service-learning research. One of the challenges to researchers such as Deans may be bridging discourses since community members do not use the privileged language of research in our field.

Prior to *Writing Partnerships*, the AAHE collection *Writing the Community* (to which Deans contributed) was the most complete statement regarding community service learning in composition (Adler-Kassner, Crooks and Watters). Deans has given us a book-length, in-depth review of service-learning efforts in our field, as well as the theories that inform these approaches. Experienced service-learning practitioners reading this book will find ways to better articulate what they do in the classroom and will benefit from understanding other models. Those interested in learning more about service learning and its possibilities before integrating it into their own classes will be able to con-

nect their teaching goals with approaches that match. And readers interested in understanding the ways composition studies has addressed the "social turn" will also want to read this text for its examination of service-learning's role in teaching writing as social action.

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Moving a Mountain: Transforming the Role of Contingent Faculty in Composition Studies and Higher Education, edited by Eileen E. Schell and Patricia Lambert Stock. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2001.

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It's clear why this collection of essays, edited by Eileen Schell and Patricia Lambert Stock was co-winner of the 2002 CCCC Outstanding Book Award. The book consolidates in one volume a wide array of success stories, cautionary tales, analyses, arguments, strategies, and models, which, taken together, suggest how composition programs can make real progress toward resolving the vexing and seemingly intractable concerns arising from the use of contingent labor in higher education. The book's fourteen chapters are framed on one end by an introduction that not only previews the book's rationale and contents but also provides a succinct history of contingent labor in the academy and a critical reading of 30 years of research on such labor. The other end of the frame is a 40-page bibliography of works (published through 1998) on contingent labor issues in higher education, especially composition. The editors point out that most of this research can be sorted into three categories: studies that outline the scope and demographics of contingent labor in the academy, articles that generalize on how to improve conditions, and polemics that expose the politics of hiring practices in higher education. While these kinds of studies provide a necessary foundation, the editors argue that "local narratives" are needed now to document how employment practices have been transformed within "site-specific bureaucratic structures: programs, departments, colleges, universities" (28-29). And local narratives are, largely, what the book offers.

Many readers don't find local narratives interesting or compelling. In fact, I have often heard a bias expressed against the telling of local narratives. At professional conferences, for example, I have heard disapproval of speakers who talk about what they do in their courses or their writing programs. Reviewers of manuscripts sometimes reject research because it is anecdotal, based on a case study, or founded on too small a sample and therefore not generalizable. Many seem to want research and writing in composition studies to be like that in the natural sciences, based on and aiming to produce general and abstract theories that hold true across time and place. I was reminded of the bias against the local and specific when, trying to estimate how many pages to write, I called up on my computer a review I wrote last year of Bent Flyvberg's *Making Social Science Matter*, a book that makes a compelling argument for the power and generalizability of case studies. I meant only to count words and pages, but as I re-read the summary of Flyvbjerg's argument, I was struck by how his proposal for re-thinking the social sciences applies to understanding and changing the material conditions under which composition teachers labor.

Briefly, Flyvbjerg's argument is that social science can never be an *episteme* in the way natural science is because human and social action cannot be reduced to rules. Since theory depends on rules, no grand predictive theory can ever come from the study of human and social action. Flyvbjerg proposes that social scientists cease attempting to ape the natural sciences and instead focus on what they do best, i.e., analyzing political and social practices reflexively and discussing values. He proposes that the social sciences conceive of themselves as applying the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*, usually translated as "prudence" or "practical wisdom." Phronesis is developed by experience, by taking note of the particulars of many cases (i.e., local narratives), thereby developing good judgment that leads to beneficial action. Phronesis is a sense of the "ethically practical"; it is "deliberation about values with reference to praxis" (Flyvbjerg 56-57). Thus, it contributes to developing society's value rationality as opposed to its instrumental rationality, dominant since the Enlightenment. For Aristotle, phronesis was the supreme intellectual virtue needed in the social and political realms. Yet, because Aristotle and his followers neglected to account for the role of power and conflict in democratic societies, Flyvbjerg adds the dynamic of power to *phronesis* to fit it for analyzing contemporary social action. He proposes that anyone applying phronesis to the solution of a problem should answer these four value-rational questions: (1) Where are we going?