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Amy C. Kimme Hea & Rachael Wendler Shah

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Silent Partners: Developing a Critical Understanding of Community Partners in Technical Communication Service-Learning Pedagogies

Amy C. Kimme Hea^a and Rachael Wendler Shah^b

^aUniversity of Arizona; ^bUniversity of Nebraska-Lincoln

ABSTRACT

Although many technical communication teachers and programs integrate some form of service-learning pedagogy, there is a dearth of technical communication research on the silent partners of these projects: the community partners. Drawing upon research data from 14 former community partners of professional writing service-learning courses, the authors suggest that understanding community partners' own self-defined stakes in service-learning projects can challenge hyperpragmatist representations of community partners and aid us in the continued creation, management, and critical evaluation of service-learning pedagogies and curricula.

KEYWORDS

Community partners; pedagogy; service learning; stakeholders

In their national survey of technical and professional writing undergraduate programs, Allen and Benninghoff (2004) reported that service-learning is a component of 93% of programs. Yet despite our continued interest in service-learning¹ projects in technical communication, there is a dearth of research on the silent partners of these projects: the community partners. These partners—often nonprofit staff—allow us to continue serving the community. They connect us with their organizations, help our students with their research and project development, evaluate student progress, and in some cases even participate in our class meetings. A handful of research articles have included direct interviews, surveys, or observations of nonprofit partners as part of larger projects, discussing the difficulties that can arise in aligning client and teacher expectations (Graves, 2001; Smith Taylor, 2006), methods for supporting students in listening, interviewing, and questioning clients (Kastman Breuch, 2001), and approaches to communicating nonprofit partner feedback to students effectively (Blakeslee, 2001).² Redd (2003) offers one of the most extensive explorations of nonprofit perspectives, using community partner questionnaires to locate important areas of discrepancy in how deliverables were evaluated by instructors and nonprofit staff. For example, nonprofit staff identified inaccuracies in content that the instructor could not because of a lack of expertise in the topic, such as incorrect assumptions about the causes of domestic abuse. The instructor was concerned with the originality of student work and error-free prose, whereas nonprofit staff were not bothered by the repurposing of text from other promotional material or small grammatical issues. Redd also found that one third of nonprofit staff were somewhat or very displeased with the service-learning collaboration, hinting that tensions may exist in service-learning partnerships that need to be explored beyond the scope of a questionnaire. Her research demonstrates that continued study of community partner assumptions is warranted.

From these studies and our own service-learning teaching experiences, we know that community-based projects demand negotiations among a range of different constituencies, all of whom may have different expectations, assumptions, and motivations for participating in service-learning projects.

These different stakes in the project mean that technical communication teachers carry an additional burden of understanding community partner roles and expectations. Indeed, we suggest that our construction of community partner roles is integral to help our students to complete successful projects, increase their civic awareness, hone their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, and foster rhetorically responsive writing practices (Dubinsky, 2002; Kimme Hea, 2005). A better understanding of community partners' own self-defined stakes in service-learning projects can aid us in the continued creation, engagement with, and critical evaluation of our own community-based pedagogies and curricula. To guide our research on this topic, we have asked, "What are some of the ways community partners themselves construct their roles in service-learning projects? What motivates community partners to participate in these projects? What do community partners expect from such collaborations?"

In technical communication scholarship, teacher characterizations of community partners often reflect our assumptions about partners rather than their own descriptions of themselves. Without extended reflection on the perspectives of community partners, it is easy to present community partner interests reductively, as limited to receiving a usable deliverable. These perspectives can be reflective of what Scott (2004) terms "hyperpragmatism," a framework that avoids analysis of ethical and cultural tensions in favor of efficiency and professional gain. Our teacher perspectives on community partners frequently inform student perceptions of community partners, and therefore, as we frame project goals, technical communication teachers are creating student expectations, implicitly or explicitly, for community partner–student relationships. The ways we describe the community partners and their involvement in service-learning often become the foundation upon which students build rapport, analyze organizational contexts, and assess community needs. Considering the influence that our community partner interpretations may have on student–partner interactions, we should learn more from community partners, themselves, about their motivations for service-learning participation.

To move away from our own speculations on community partner investments and toward partner-defined articulations of their stakes in service-learning projects, we describe research with former community partners of a professional writing service-learning course at University of Arizona. After discussing how representations of community partners in technical communication scholarship can be reflective of hyperpragmatism and offering stakeholder theory as an alternate frame for promoting attention to community partner perspectives, we discuss community partner participant responses to a questionnaire and an interview on their involvement in service-learning projects. Through these data, we identify four areas of productive tension that community partners identify as affecting their stakes in participation and even their satisfaction in collaborations with students. Those four areas of tension include (1) the paradox that receiving resources requires giving resources, (2) community partners are both teachers and clients, (3) strong partnerships involve plans and flexibility, and (4) meeting the interests of community partners requires meeting the interests of students. Our call to interrogate community partner perspectives is not to suggest that there is a single, unified community perspective on service-learning projects, but rather, we claim that until we study community partner interests, we run the risk of constructing partners reductively as "others"—outsiders to our classrooms, our goals, and our scholarship.

Hyperpragmatism, stakeholder theory, and technical communication constructions of community partners

Scott's (2004) foundational article, "Rearticulating Civic Engagement through Cultural Studies and Service Learning," called attention to the dangers of hyperpragmatism in service-learning technical communication courses. Scott described *hyperpragmatism* as an ideology and a set of practices that aims primarily to promote career success (p. 292), with a focus on conformity, clarity, and efficiency. This approach contrasts with a "cultural studies approach" that involves "ethical engagement with, critique of, and intervention into the conditions, functions, and effects of value-laden practices

(including discursive ones)” (p. 298). Historically, hyperpragmatism has trumped critical approaches in the professional writing classroom, a tendency that can be traced especially to the influence of the military and industrial boom of World War II on curriculum (p. 290). Hyperpragmatist pedagogy often continues to permeate technical writing classrooms, even—especially—in service-learning projects, as students and instructors can become caught up in the logistics of working with community partners, creating deliverables, and using the experience as an enculturation to the professional world. Discussion of the social issues that give rise to the nonprofit organizations, or reflection on the complex power dynamics inherent in the service-learning project can be easily overlooked.

Many scholars in technical communication have challenged hyperpragmatism and advocated for more critical approaches, claiming that these critical practices are necessary for responsible teaching. For example, Dubinsky (2002) argued that instructors miss the opportunity to foster the development of “the ideal orator,” attuned to civic responsibility, when we only focus on technical aspects during service-learning. His perspective is affirmed by Eble and Gaillet (2004), who drew from historical courses in moral humanism to argue for technical communication courses as places to develop “community intellectuals” through service-learning. Bacon (2004) extended this line of thought to call for explicit ethical reflection and political considerations in technical communication service-learning textbooks. Additionally, several scholars have introduced strategies for avoiding hyperpragmatism in professional writing curriculum (Mara, 2006; Pope-Ruark, 2014; Turnley, 2007), to support students in developing critical frames for their service-learning work.³

Though the calls to move beyond hyperpragmatism for students are robust, a hyperpragmatist frame may still sometimes impact the representation of community partner roles in technical communication scholarship and teaching. A hyperpragmatist focus on efficiency can lend to the assumption that community partners themselves come from a hyperpragmatist stance, defining *community partners* as, above all, interested in the efficient production of valuable deliverables. As teachers and academics arguing for the value of and need for service-learning projects in technical communication, we often have emphasized the contributions students make to organizations through deliverables. In many ways these discussions about community partners have helped to legitimate our service-learning initiatives to ourselves, students, and administrators. In a review of technical communication scholarship on service-learning projects, community partners have been described as “lack[ing] the resources to create effective documents to explain, promote, and accomplish their missions” (Youngblood & Mackiewicz, 2013, p. 260), as “happy to get whatever help they can” (Huckin, 1997, p. 55), as “appreciate[ive], and often badly [in] need, [of] help with problem-solving for internal writing projects or with external publications that meet professional standards” (Rehling, 2000, p. 78), and as community members in “desperate” need of services (Bush-Bacelis, 1998, p. 31). In his argument for taking into account the perspectives of our nonprofit partners, McEachern (2001), identified nonprofit organizations as severely lacking in resources (p. 217), executive directors as overburdened (p. 216), and staff as potentially lacking in necessary writing and management skills (p. 219). This clear-cut portrayal of community partners as invested primarily in saving time and money through student deliverables is easy to communicate to students and administrators, and the notion of community partners as charity beneficiaries and “consumers of university resources” is readily packaged in university promotional literature (Sapp & Crabtree, 2002, p. 425). However, these representations may overlook important nuances of why community partners participate in collaborations with technical communication classes, what community partners value as the partnerships unfold, and what nonprofit staff must contribute to work with our students.

We see critical stakeholder theory as a potential corrective to hyperpragmatist perspectives on nonprofit participation. Stakeholder theory is a framework used in business contexts to understand the ethical responsibilities of a corporation to the community at large by considering the impacts on various stakeholders, the many individuals and groups “who can affect or [be] affected by the achievement of the organization’s objective” (Freeman, 1984, p. 46). Stakeholder theory can best

be understood in contrast with its predecessor, shareholder theory. Often defined as the “Friedman paradigm” after its proponent, Friedman, shareholder theory argued that a corporation’s social responsibility is “to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud” (Friedman, 1970, p. 32). In other words, a corporation’s primary responsibility is to its shareholders. Stakeholder theory fundamentally challenges this view, demanding a complex view of business constituencies and their relationships. In his foundational book *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, Freeman (1984) suggested, for example, that shareholders, investors, employees, customers, suppliers, and residents of the community all qualify as stakeholders.

Stakeholder theory, like most theories, cannot be represented as a single, unified school in either its definition or deployment, but its central tenant that corporations must consider a range of persons and entities who affect or are affected by company decisions has profound implications when applied to client–consultant pedagogies in technical communication (Kimme Hea, 2005). Although a shareholder approach might lead instructors to focus on a single stakeholder—such as students—stakeholder theory challenges technical communication teachers to consider the range of people and groups involved in the deliverable production, from university administrators, to instructors themselves, to nonprofit staff, to those who volunteer, donate, and access services from the nonprofit organizations, to the environment. In particular, we advocate for a critical stakeholder theory approach that necessitates direct engagement with stakeholders to listen to their perspectives on service-learning. Critical stakeholder theory (Burton & Dunn, 1996; Calton & Kurland, 1996) draws from feminist ethics and epistemologies to suggest a focus on material lived realities versus abstract principles, and it requires dialogue where multiple voices are heard to achieve “shared goals and mutual growth” (Calton & Kurland, 1996, p. 170). In sum, we see critical stakeholder theory as animating our efforts to consider the nuanced “stakes” or interests of nonprofit partners involved in service-learning.

Stakeholder theory offers the potential to disrupt hyperpragmatism, because it challenges service-learning practitioners in professional communication courses to intentionally explore the multiple stakes of nonprofit partners, assessing value beyond only the exchange value or financial benefits of service-learning deliverables. As this study suggests, nonprofit partner stakes are often complex, interlocking, and paradoxical and relying on a hyperpragmatist assumption that nonprofit partners are only interested in efficiency and professional gain limits the opportunities for richer and more critical interactions with nonprofit staff. At best, less complicated views of nonprofit stakes may undermine the opportunity for students to engage in meaningful community partner relationships. At worst, they work against the goals of service-learning instructors by affirming attitudes that marginalize nonprofit representatives and their clientele. More complex and engaged perspectives on community partner motivations will not resolve all complications with partner–student and partner–instructor relationships, but they may allow for more thoughtful engagements with such projects from all invested parties. In contemplating our own teaching, supervising, and research on service-learning pedagogies, we want to move beyond end-of-the-semester student and community partner reflections on service-learning projects to think more carefully and systematically about the ways in which community partners are represented. This article outlines beginning research to articulate community partner self-representations and positionalities, drawing on community partners’ own motivations for participating in service-learning projects.

Methodology for community partner research

To begin to understand community partner stakes, we gained University of Arizona Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for a study that asks former community partners to reflect on their participation in service-learning writing projects and offer their recommendations about making such projects and university–nonprofit collaborations successful. The research questions for this project include:

- What are some of the ways community partners themselves construct their roles in service-learning projects?
- What motivates community partners to participate in these projects?
- What do community partners expect from such collaborations?

The community partners involved worked with various sections of a professional writing course at University of Arizona taught by different instructors, including the authors of this article. The semester-long service-learning project for the course has four major components: a job assessment unit, a field research and proposal unit, a deliverable unit, and a reflection unit. These four units begin in the second week and end in the last week of the semester; they are book ended by an introductory memo project and a job/graduate school portfolio project. The course goals emphasize rhetorical principles for student processes and products. Because the course is populated by a range of majors from horse racing and race track management to family studies and retail and consumer science majors, the course emphasizes the differing—although equally valuable—stakes that students, community partners, and teachers all have for the work in the service-learning project. In particular, the introductory job assessment unit stresses the need for students to connect their personal and professional goals to the objectives of the project. These goals have included understanding the nonprofit mission in the community, polishing presentation skills, learning more about particular technologies, and even developing a more complex understanding of diversity in a workplace setting. Through this inventory, students share and question their roles and responsibilities as consultants with the nonprofit partners and consider the multiple persons affected by their work.

As students develop the inventory, instructors finalize community partners for the project. The nonprofit staff that partner with the course come from a variety of local organizations, as instructors often reach out through the Volunteer Center of Southern Arizona, e-mails to organizations found online, student contacts, and personal connections formed through particular community work. After arguing to be matched with community partners and being placed in partnerships, students establish processes for negotiating their own collaboration, create interview and observation tools, conduct field research, map stakeholder relationships, write-up transcripts, and draft proposals of their service-learning deliverable. Then, they consult with the community partner on the parameters of the deliverable, draft the deliverable, and present progress reports to the class. The course concludes by asking students to reflect on their work, evaluate their own and peer's progress on the project, send thank-you correspondence to their community partner, and finally deliver the end project in print and electronic forms.

To recruit community partners for our study, we invited recent instructors to send out a recruitment e-mail to their nonprofit partners, and we also invited our own nonprofit partners to participate. Of the 17 respondents who initially agreed to participate, three left the study after personal and work conflicts, and the 14 remaining participants completed a 1-hour interview. Thirteen of the 14 also responded to the 20-minute questionnaire, and as part of the evolution of this project, we also requested that all participants remain available for follow-up questions. The 14 community partners who participated in this study collectively have experience with six different instructors and about fifty student deliverable groups.

Although all participants were offered anonymity, some community partners chose to be identified by name, which allows us to credit them for their insights. For those who are anonymous, self-selected pseudonyms are used for them and their representative organizations. For their input to this study, we agreed to share the write-ups of the research, asking for any feedback on the ways in which the project represents their interests and that of their organizations, and to support their organization through reciprocal actions such as volunteering, sharing information with our networks, or helping in the creation, revision, or editing of a writing project.

The questionnaire and interview questions were pilot tested with a former community partner of Amy's course who was not part of our participant pool. His recommendations motivated slight revisions to the questionnaire and interview questions. The questionnaire has four main sections: (1) checkbox listing of possible community partner motivations, (2) Likert scale questions on the

significance of certain student and teacher practices with open-ended follow-up questions, (3) checkbox of acceptable time commitment for community partner involvement in such projects, and (4) open-ended question asking about community partner perceptions of a successful service-learning relationship. Knowing that the study would have a small number of participants, we did not create this questionnaire as a means to argue for statistical significance. Instead, the questions purposefully attend to some of the same issues highlighted by the interview questions. The questionnaire allowed for further clarification of aspects of community partner participation in service-learning projects, and responses were approached in this manner in the discussion of results. The interview questions were organized around four major categories: participant background, student-nonprofit collaborations, English 307 service-learning project, and nonprofit–university collaboration success. The interviews encouraged community partners to share stories of working with students. To allow participants’ input not directly solicited through these tools, each aspect of the research requested that participants offer any further ideas or clarifications not addressed in the data collection instruments.

Results of community partner research

The 14 participants in this research project represent a range of nonprofit organizations, from a small animal rescue led by a full-time volunteer to the Pima County Juvenile Court System, which has more than 300 employees (see Table 1). The average number of years of experience in the nonprofit sector is eight and the majority of interviewees hold a college degree, though several have graduate degrees and one has completed high school. Most community partners are White and female, which is consistent with Toupin and Plews’ (1997) analysis of the demographics of nonprofit professionals, though this study also included two men and a small number of people of color.

Sally Jones holds the dual titles of executive director and dietician with White River Meal Delivery. She oversees staff, finances, and volunteers, offers dietary recommendations, and coordinates with facilities that prepare meals. Jane Martin’s position is community relations manager of the Duck Foundation Food Bank. Her job encompasses three major areas: media relations, public relations, and direct-mail campaigns. Susie Spay⁴ has the dual titles of volunteer coordinator and feral cat program coordinator of Animal Shelter, managing volunteers and offering direction to the feral cat program. As director of development for Mentoring Children, Nina Libson is responsible for “everything associated with fundraising” (interview transcript). The director of Educating Parents,

Table 1. Community partner research participants.

Community partner	Partner organization	Partner job title	Years in nonprofit sector
Sally Jones ^a	White River Meal Delivery ^a	Executive Director and Dietician	1–3
Jane Martin ^a	Duck Foundation Food Bank ^a	Community Relations Manager	1–3
Susie Spay ^a	Animal Shelter ^a	Volunteer Coordinator and Feral Cat Program Coordinator	1–3
Nina Libson ^a	Mentoring Children ^a	Director of Development	3–5
Lydia Moore ^a	Educating Parents ^a	Director	6–10
Ethan Cox	Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation	Director of Development	11–19
Roxana Matiella	Pima County Juvenile Court	Juvenile Justice Coordinator	11–19
Deanna Hasman	D-S Animal Rescue	Director	3–5
Taylor Johnson	The Write Place	Writing Center Coordinator	6–10
Denise Spantonos	Skin Cancer Institute	Community Outreach Coordinator	20+
Brad Jacobson	Wildcat Writers	Advisory Board Member	1–3
Christine Hill	Teenage Outreach and Pregnancy Services	Grant Writer and Outreach Coordinator	1–3
Renee Kirkpatrick	Blue Devil Poppers	Special Education Teacher	11–19
Sarah Gonzalez	TruthSarita	Founder	6–10

^a. Pseudonyms.

Lydia Moore supervises volunteers and staff, meets compliance regulations, educates volunteers, staff, and parents, and manages public relations.

Ethan Cox is the director of development at the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation, an organization that provides services to people with HIV/AIDS and works to educate the community to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. Ethan has spent more than 10 years in the nonprofit field, and he has crafted a vision of development that positions relationship-building as central. Roxana Matiella holds the position of juvenile justice coordinator of the Pima County Juvenile Court, where she focuses especially on promoting justice regarding the disproportionate numbers of minority youth involved with the court. Deanna Hasman founded and coordinates D-S Rescue, an organization focused on taking in a variety of animals in need, nursing them to health, providing training, and rehoming them.

Brad Jacobson works with Wildcat Writers as an advisory board member, in which he mentors high school and college teaching pairs and helps to design teacher training curriculum. Taylor Johnson also serves on the Wildcat Writers advisory board and has been a long-time business writing community partner, sometimes representing Wildcat Writers and sometimes The Write Place Writing Center, a student-staffed writing center she directs that offers free writing mentoring to high school students. As the community outreach coordinator for the Skin Cancer Institute, Denise Sparonos works with oncologists, dermatologists, health educators, and various university constituents to educate others on skin cancer prevention, detection, and treatment. Christine Hill is grant writer and outreach coordinator for Teenage Outreach and Pregnancy Services, an organization that supports parenting and pregnant teens and provides information to help young adults make informed decisions about sexual health. Relatively new to the nonprofit world, Christine holds a master's degree in rhetoric and composition, positioning her with insight into academic and nonprofit contexts.

A special education teacher at Sunnyside High School, Renee Kirkpatrick used her entrepreneurial spirit to launch a popcorn business, Blue Devil Poppers, with her special education students, offering hands-on learning to her students and a funding source for life skills field trips. And finally, Sarah Gonzalez is the founder of TruthSarita, a social justice consulting company committed to creating space for youth and adults to learn about inequality and collaborate on action.

These community partners speak from a wide range of backgrounds, personalities, and perspectives, sharing in common only the experience of working with college writing students: participating in an interview with students, responding to a proposal, offering feedback on a deliverable draft, and receiving a final deliverable. Still, several themes returned again and again in our discussions with community partners. We turn next to their stakes in the deliverable collaborations, seeking to understand why this diverse group chose to partner with college students in spite of busy nonprofit schedules and competing demands. The data suggest a set of productive tensions to be negotiated to create successful service-learning collaborations. These tensions include four main paradoxes: receiving resources requires giving resources, community partners are both teachers and clients, partnerships must involve clear plans but flexibility, and meeting community partner interests requires meeting student interests.

Receiving resources requires giving resources

One underemphasized aspect of service-learning is the fact that service is not truly “free” for community partners: working with students on deliverables requires staff time, technology access, and often money from nonprofit partners that may be facing significant resource limitations. Although members of our field are well aware of community partners’ resource limitations, we may be less attentive to the scope of the issue for nonprofit organizations. In the interview with Susie Spay of Animal Shelter, she emphasized that student understanding of technology resource constraints were significant to the success of her student-nonprofit collaborations. When asked about the challenges of working on service-learning projects, Susie explained that “setting time and the

computer space aside for students to use our computers is difficult” (interview transcript). Because Susie wanted students to use a computer program that was not available in our primary instructional lab for the course or even other open labs on University of Arizona’s campus, Susie and her assigned student consultants had to overcome this challenge by negotiating time to use Susie’s technology. Interestingly, Susie also discussed with students the ways in which such resource challenges affect her work, leading to an unforeseen benefit of the project. She noted that students “get to see what it is like to really work with limitations of a nonprofit” (interview transcript). Sally Jones of White River Meal Delivery also voiced concerns about student understanding of nonprofit resources, but for her, knowledge of the financial constraints of document production was the main resource constraint. In addressing her challenges to produce the project hard copy, she saw a significant issue with “explaining or portraying to them [students] our limitations . . . they might come in with a great idea, and we can’t afford it” (interview transcript). Sally even discussed her own desire to produce an effective document that “wasn’t too flashy” because her donors would be less apt to contribute if they felt White River Meal Delivery had a budget to produce such documents.

Although technology and financial resources issues affect the community partners, time concerns were also addressed by many participants in their interviews. When asked about the challenges of working on service-learning projects, Lydia Moore responded, “Time coordination—because there are times when they have to get the whole team together and then I am busy” (interview transcript), Nina Libson mentioned the difficulty scheduling face-to-face meetings due to her busy calendar (interview transcript), Renee Kirkpatrick described the steep time commitment required to respond to multiple student groups (interview transcript), and Susie Spay explained that “time is the biggest challenge” and the amount of time required is a key factor when she is determining whether to work with students (interview transcript). Because of time challenges, community partners appreciated when students streamlined partnerships to avoid needless tasks. For example, Nina Libson, Roxana Matiella, and Renee Kirkpatrick suggested designating one contact person per student group to avoid repetitive questions, “maximizing and honoring people’s time” (Matiella interview transcript). As Nina noted, “It can take days contacting many students making sure they are getting e-mail. They aren’t wasting my time if I have a point person” (interview transcript).

Time constraints were also mentioned by all the participants in their questionnaires. The majority of participants selected between 4 and 7 hours as the time they felt that they could devote to one service-learning project. This time commitment emphasizes that community partners have a stake in interacting with student consultants, but they do not want the responsibility for making every decision about the projects students are managing. In fact, Nina Libson of Mentoring Children explained that she wants students to “take charge and [she] didn’t want to micromanage the team” (interview transcript), and Denise Spartonos of the Skin Cancer Institute said, “I don’t see this as the type of project where I would be holding their hand all the way through . . . I don’t see that as a realistic role, and I don’t see that as a good lesson for them” (interview transcript). This project autonomy comes from the community partners’ sense that students are gaining a strong understanding of the practices, limitations, and concerns of the organization. This understanding was affirmed by Lydia Moore of Educating Parents. Lydia wanted to see students who could adapt to “time constraints” and be assertive enough to “ask for clarification” (interview transcript). She saw these characteristics as part of “confidence and savvy” that help students overcome the resource limitations that arise during service-learning projects (interview transcript). Lydia described this type of initiative when she noted that some former student consultants working with her learned a new software program to complete the project she had wanted. In her own words,

I assumed that they [students] knew the program I wanted them to use. I could see on their faces, even though they were very professional, they had no idea. I said something about them knowing the program, and they said no but they will find out. Instead of saying we can’t do it because we don’t know how, they learned it. (interview transcript)

Student initiative in this case saved the community partner valuable time, as Lydia was able to trust the students to adapt to her technological needs rather than teaching the students the new software herself, or learning software that students already knew. Community partners expressed a genuine desire to guide students engaged in the projects, but they also wanted savvy students ready to take on the challenges of resource issues such as those discussed here.

Resource allocation for these community partners is one of the main rhetorical considerations, and those resources extend beyond financial factors to include time, space, and technology. Echoed in their interviews and questionnaires were concerns that instructors teach students about resource allocations as part of any service-learning project. The community partners suggested that the budget section of the proposal that students create in the pedagogy of our service-learning project is an important component in helping to address resource issues. Jane Martin of the Duck Foundation Food Bank even revealed that student expertise about production and maintenance costs of the deliverable was a primary motivator in the organization's decision to actually produce and distribute copies of the annual report. These participants, then, had a stake in helping students translate their work in the classroom—which may seem less constrained at times—into more practical and bound situations requiring intelligence and adaptability.

Sapp and Crabtree (2002) stressed the significance of the sponsoring faculty's roles in helping students understanding the broader context of the nonprofit organization, a role that becomes especially important considering the "attitude of scarcity" that can sometimes characterize nonprofit organizations (McEachern, 2001). As instructors, we need to understand, but not universalize, the resource challenges that our community partners face. Rather than assume that all nonprofits exist in a state of financial crisis, we can impart to students that nonprofit resources are not stable across contexts. Money, time, staff, technology, space, and other resource factors should be considered at all stages of the projects' development. For example, Turnley (2007) discussed incorporating analysis of technology into every stage of her student deliverable project in a technical communication course, including intensive field research on community partner technology resources. She argued that inviting students to reflect on the social, political, and rhetorical dimensions of technology in service-learning projects under the frame of critical approaches to technology can encourage not only better technological literacy for students, but also more rhetorically effective deliverables for community partners. Preparing students to assess community partner resources can be one means of helping them achieve their own project goals while helping them meet some of the goals that their community partners articulate as well. These more nuanced discussions with students are possible when we move away from representations of community partners as only in need of receiving a deliverable, and consider the ways that working with students to produce deliverables requires community partner resources, as well.

Community partners are both teachers and clients

Throughout the interviews, community partners revealed that their motivations for participating in service-learning extended beyond the opportunity to receive a client deliverable: The majority also valued the opportunity to act as educators. Deanna Hasman of D-S Animal Rescue, for example, described herself as a "teacher," and Susie Spay of Animal Shelter defined her role in relationship to student-consultants as a "mentor." Susie Spay explained, "I think the most successful projects have resulted from working in a mentoring role" (interview transcript). Similarly, Lydia Moore of Educating Parents described herself as "an educator as well as a consumer" (interview transcript). Such comments were further supported by responses in the community partner motivations section of the questionnaire. All 14 community partners selected motivations related to developing students, such as "Helping University of Arizona students understand research and writing projects in a professional setting," or "Supporting the intellectual development of University of Arizona students" (questionnaire) as some of their reasons for working on the service-learning project. This finding about community partners' self-perception as teachers resonates with Henson and Sutliff's (1998)

discussion of community partners as invested in the service-learning projects for the educational value the work offers to our business and technical writing students (p. 200), and Stoecker and Tryon's (2009) study of nonprofit staff that engage service-learning students across the disciplines. Stoecker and Tryon found that many community partners participate in service-learning not primarily for the service received, but for the chance to contribute to students' learning.

Stoecker and Tryon (2009) also reported that community partners valued the opportunity to teach students about their nonprofit organization and the social issues that surround the organization, another finding that was echoed in our study. Of the 17 factors in community partner satisfaction on the questionnaire, "students learn about the history and mission of your organization" was one of the three most highly ranked options. Community partner participants wanted to have a chance to introduce their organization, its missions, history, and goals, to student consultants, in addition to helping students develop as writers. Deanna Hasman described agreeing to the partnership because "it's educating them. You know, not only with their writing, but to the needs of the community. To the needs of the rescue [her organization], specifically" (interview transcript). Similarly, when describing the factors that she considered when determining whether to work with university students, Susie Spay discussed weighing "how much of an opportunity is it to expose them to issues of animal welfare. I always try to make time to give them a tour and talk about animal welfare issues" (interview transcript). Jane Martin of the Duck Foundation Food Bank discussed the benefits she sees in "sheltered" students meeting people who are experiencing food insecurity (interview transcript), and many community partners selected "Raising social/political issues for University of Arizona students" as key motivations for participating in the partnership (questionnaire). These data suggest that community partners are moving beyond hyperpragmatist frames in their work with students, welcoming the opportunity to discuss complex social problems and to take the time to mentor students even if these activities do not directly contribute to their own career gain.

Although every community partner may have labeled his or her role differently, from "leader" to "facilitator" to "teacher" (interview transcript), all of the community partners were clear that community partner commitment to student development should be evidenced by responding to student drafts, understanding and helping students achieve their project goals, being patient with students, communicating their needs to students, and allowing students to learn throughout the process (interview transcript). This commitment to student development meant that community partners understood that the focus was not exclusively on the deliverable product. In response to a question about advice she might give a colleague who was considering working with students on a service-learning project, Nina Libson with Mentoring Children offered this advice, "You need to know what you want. You need to take time to teach. You need to accept the possibility that the project may not be perfect" (interview transcript).

However, we are not arguing technical communication teachers lose sight of well-designed projects with community partners, but rather that we approach the situation as being both about the relationship and the product. As mentioned, Lydia Moore of Educating Parents described herself as not only an educator, but also a consumer:

Consumer in the sense that I want the project. I'll just put it out there—I have to look at it like how can I get a project done when I don't necessarily have the money to pay someone or the time to do it myself. (interview transcript)

Susie Spay, in her discussions of factors that determine whether or not she will collaborate with a student group, also mentioned the opportunity to fulfill tangible needs such as brochures, and Nina Libson reported that student collaborations were a "[h]uge benefit because we have an output, this end result product that we can use in the agency," citing an especially successful annual report deliverable that the agency sent out to 500 people (interview transcript). Similarly, Ethan Cox of the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation discussed how nonprofits with "crazy limited budgets" often struggle to find funds for publicity materials, which can be considered "the frills" (interview transcript). Ethan described how challenging it would be to convince a board that they need to

spend \$4,000 dollars on an updated agency video, the rate he had been quoted by professional videographers, and the students provided the labor for free. In the interviews, virtually all community partners expressed their hope that they would come out of the experience with a usable deliverable that they might not otherwise have had time or money to produce, and in our questionnaire, almost all community partners indicated that receiving a hard and electronic copy of the deliverable was a key factor in their satisfaction with the project.

The importance of deliverables was further evidenced when community partners discussed instances where the deliverable was unusable or never finished. Lydia Moore, Sally Jones, and Nina Libson all described negative past experiences with student-consultants who never completed promised work. Phone calls were made, projects commissioned, and the students never “came through.” For Nina Libson, an incident with a student from a different class who never completed a Spanish-language brochure had a particularly damaging effect on her agency. She described the difficult position of having to tell her staff that even though she said a student could complete the project, he had not contacted her, and recognized that her staff members were “stuck”—and therefore may have a “jaded view” toward future student collaborations (interview transcript). Missing or poorly constructed deliverables can represent a loss of precious resources, especially to those who have invested time in working with students and are counting on receiving a strong deliverable.

In addition to the deliverable itself, many community partners are also genuinely interested in the new ideas students bring to the deliverable process as consultants. Sarah Gonzalez of TruthSarita discussed participating in the project partly because of the opportunity to have “outside eyes”—from outside the field of social justice education—look at her materials (interview transcript). Sally Jones of White River Meal Delivery echoed this same sentiment as a benefit in collaborating with student-consultants. She noted that “using their fresh, modern ideas” and “having a different perspective” were benefits to her nonprofit (interview transcript). Sally followed up with “they [students] are looking from the outside, and they can see things I don’t see” (interview transcript). Similarly, Roxana Matiella described the benefits of having people who were unfamiliar with court systems discuss court documents, saying, “The kids [sic] had a lot of really good questions that we don’t think about, because we’re jaded sometimes in the system. We know, and we assume everybody understands, the language and the process” (interview transcript). In other words, though students may view their outsider or student status as a detriment, this perspective can actually be an asset for community partners.

Roxana Matiella went on to explain, “Some of [the students] had some really good ideas. I think that’s what we liked about the entire project,” offering the example of a student group who came up with the “incredible” idea of putting court information on magnets (interview transcript). Remarkably, this stake of student ideas was sometimes discussed independently of the deliverable itself, such as in the case of Christine Hill of Teenage Outreach Pregnancy Services, who explained that she did not expect a usable deliverable but that “their [the students’] ideas were wonderful” (interview transcript). Roxana Matiella also described the ideas that appeared not only in the deliverables, but also in the discussion that occurred during the informational interview with students. Susie Spay of Animal Shelter discussed the significance of new ideas and perspectives in completing her own outreach mission to the community. Because her work included public relations, she acknowledged that the student-consultant perspective afforded her the chance to collaborate with members of her audience rather than be entrenched in a particular way of approaching an issue. Susie stressed that “new ideas are always a plus. You are set in your ways and they [student-consultants] suggest a different way, and you say, ‘WOW! What a great idea’” (interview transcript). In sum, though community partners recognize their roles as teachers, they also have a stake as clients, and they hope to benefit from the student deliverables and ideas.

Balancing community partner roles as educators and clients can be a delicate negotiation for technical communication instructors. Positioning community partners as teachers—through efforts such as terming them “community teachers” in class, offering stipends to recognize their work as educators (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009), or inviting them to coteach or participate in class discussions—

can open valuable avenues for students to learn about professional contexts and pressing social issues. Given the finding that community partners value the opportunity to share their passion for their organization, instructors can provide avenues for community partners to discuss the social implications of student deliverables, perhaps by assigning field research or suggesting interview questions that address the “big picture” of the nonprofit organization. Yet complexities can also arise in positioning community partners as teachers when they may not have time or expertise to act in this role. For example, nonprofit staff may be seasoned in responding to writing as clients or supervisors, but they may not have had formal training in how to respond to student writing. If instructors and community partners are interested in expanding the role of community partners, technical communication instructors might be able to facilitate the process by providing guidelines on how to respond to student work—a resource several community partners reported valuing during interviews (interview transcript). Instructors can discuss with community partners how best to honor the stake of nonprofit staff as educators in a way that fits the particular partner’s interest, availability, and expertise.

Technical communication teachers can also take an active stance in ensuring the community partner stakes in receiving a product are met.⁵ For example, Roxana Matiella of the Pima County Juvenile Court described a situation students were sending too many e-mails with the same questions, and the instructor noticed because she was cc’d on all communication with the community partner. The instructor was able to step in and help students coordinate their communication to better use Roxana’s time. Nina Libson stressed the importance of professor involvement in ensuring quality deliverables and suggests that instructors set out benchmarks for students to “make sure their ideas are fine and in the right direction” (interview transcript). If a student group fails to complete a deliverable on a high-stakes project, professors might also consider repartnering with the nonprofit the next semester on the same project and assigning a particularly invested student group, or even standing in the gap and offering to finish the project in place of the students. Although such a move requires a time investment from instructors who often have limited time resources themselves, providing a usable deliverable demonstrates commitment to the community partnership and could open possibilities for research. Grabill (2001), Bowdon (2004), and Crabtree and Sapp (2005) have argued that technical communication as a field is particularly poised for the integration of teaching, research, and service around service-learning, sharing examples of their own technical writing projects for nonprofits that have led to research projects. In other words, meeting community partner stakes for usable deliverables may offer the chance for mutual stake holding between professors and community partners.

Strong partnerships require plans and flexibility

Community partners emphasized that to achieve the student and community partner goals of the project, there must be open and consistent communication about the plan and its progress. They asked for clear outlines of the expectations of the partnership. In the student factor section of the questionnaire, community partners ranked factors on a 4-point Likert scale with 1 (*not important to your satisfaction*), 2 (*somewhat important to your satisfaction*), 3 (*important to your satisfaction*), 4 (*very important to your satisfaction*), and N/A (*not applicable*). The highest ranking item was “students discussed their expectations about collaborating with you and your organization” (questionnaire). Other factors that scored higher than 3.0 include, among others, “students provide you with a timeline for the project,” “students provided you with their contact information,” and “students maintain contact with you throughout the project” (see [Figure 1](#) for full display of participant responses to the student factor section of questionnaire).

Lydia Moore of Educating Parents discussed the importance of “an agenda for the work” with well-defined expectations. She described other student groups who “have no idea—they are just not clear on the work or the reason for it” and appreciates when instructors facilitate the process of

<i>Factors^a</i>	<i>Participant Ranking</i>
Students discuss their expectations about collaborating with you and your organization.	3.7
Students provide you with an electronic copy of the writing project.	3.6
Students understand how their writing project relates to your organization.	3.6
Students learn about the history and mission of your organization	3.6
Students provide you with a hard copy of the writing project.	3.5
Students offer you drafts of the project before it is completed.	3.5
Students interview you about your organization.	3.5
Students prepare a proposal before beginning their writing project.	3.3
Students provide you with a timeline for the project.	3.2
Students provide you with their contact information.	3.1
Students maintain contact with you throughout the project.	3.1
Students observe an activity related to your organization.	2.9
Students write you a thank-you note or e-mail at the end of the project.	2.7
Students collect sample documents representing your organization.	2.6
Students participate in an activity related to your organization.	2.4
Students dress professionally during their interactions with you.	2.2
Students interview other members of your organization.	2.2

^aTable has been reordered to show factors from highest to lowest score. Ranking options included 1 = *not important to your satisfaction*, 2 = *somewhat important to your satisfaction*, 3 = *important to your satisfaction*, 4 = *very important to your satisfaction*, and N/A = *not applicable*.

Figure 1. Factors motivating community partner participation in service-learning projects.

defining expectations, to avoid ambiguity around “timelines, workload, or other aspects of the projects” (interview transcript).

Although community partners asked for a plan, they also recognized the importance of maintaining flexibility in response to the rhetorical situation. Jane Martin with the Duck Foundation Food Bank revealed the need for students to adapt when she noted that “they [students] have to be able to roll with the punches when things change. We have a new priority and we have to shift our approach [to the project]” (interview transcript). Community partners also know that they too must be ready to revise their priorities as the project unfolds. On this note, Sally Jones claimed that community partners must be ready to “[a]djust your expectations” (interview transcript). Jane Martin aptly described the tensions between planning and flexibility, noting that a successful collaboration included “hav[ing] your project articulated ahead of time—What you are looking for?—and you have to be flexible to take in their [students’] good ideas. By articulated, I don’t mean set in stone. I mean you have to create the environment for success” (interview transcript).

The key to negotiating this tension between set plans and shifting priorities, for community partners, was communication. Throughout the interview and participant questionnaire responses, many former community partners noted communication as the decisive factor in the project’s success and their continued participation in service-learning relationships. Susie Spay of Animal Shelter asserted that “the more we [students and community partners] maintain communication the more successful the project will be” (interview). Sally Jones from White River Meal Delivery explicated her position on student-partner communication, stressing that “I would like communication, and even if they [students] are only telling me that they don’t have anything completed yet. I like updates on their progress” (interview transcript). The community partners want to know that students are moving forward with the project and want to answer student questions and concerns.

Interestingly, open communication was most often discussed when we asked community partners to describe an “unsuccessful” service-learning collaboration. Susie Spay offered, “Well, one in which communication is minimal—it [the project] isn’t as much as a learning process for them and the end product isn’t as good” (interview transcript). Nina Libson of Mentoring Children responded with “lack of communication and no support structure” to define an unsuccessful collaboration (interview transcript). Brad Jacobson of Wildcat Writers suggested that the “minimal” communication he had from students may have contributed to problems in their final deliverable, and Denise Spartonos of the Skin Cancer Institute shared a story of a “communication breakdown” that occurred in her partnership in which the final student deliverable did not match the proposed project. Students were struggling to accomplish what they had promised in the proposal, and rather than negotiate with her about revised expectations, they decided on changes themselves; in Denise’s words, “It was just, ‘here you go’” (interview transcript). This project ended up being unusable to Denise and The Skin Cancer Institute. The negotiation of the service-learning work is integral to these community participants’ definitions of a successful collaboration.

Community partners also mentioned the importance of instructor communication. Roxana Matiella, Renee Kirkpatrick, Ethan Cox, and Lydia Moore discussed the significance of the initial phone call, e-mail, or meeting with the instructor outlining the goals of the course and the components of the collaboration, and several community partners also expressed appreciating when teachers sent timelines or syllabi at the beginning of the semester: community partners value a clear plan for the collaboration from the instructor. Clarity in this initial contact “lays the groundwork” and “allows someone to know whether or not it [the partnership] is for them” (Lydia Moore, interview transcript). This finding signals to us that technical communication teachers implementing service-learning projects must have some interaction with community collaborators to better know if they understand the project goals and are willing to work in a committed way with the students. Based upon past disappointments with the lack of commitment and failed communication, some potential partners may be participants in service-learning projects merely to “help out” the students and teachers of their local college or university. Just as we hope to avoid student senses of charity, teachers must be prepared to articulate the goals of service-learning projects with potential community partners. In her scholarship on client-based projects, Blakeslee (2001) argued that we must ask ourselves, “Who will the client be? What is the nature of the client’s work? What genres does the client typically produce?” (p. 190). All of these questions can help us as we map out our community partner choices, but we also can involve the community partners even more directly by opening channels of communication about goals for the project—ours and theirs.

These open lines of communication are also important for flexibility in responding when the situation does not proceed according to plan. When discussing whether she would consider working with service-learning students in the future, Nina Libson of Mentoring Children stated that an important factor in her decision is open communication with the instructor. She values a partnership where “if a student isn’t working up to the expectation, I can call [the instructor]. Professor involvement is so important” (interview transcript). Taylor Johnson reported that she is most satisfied with a teacher “who checks in regularly and helps troubleshoot issues that may arise” (questionnaire). Calling or e-mailing community partners to provide our contact information, our goals for the project, and even a general timeline allows us to respond to issues and may also help to reduce community partner apathy or disengagement, especially because many community collaborators may not have the same definition of *service-learning*. In particular, instructors may benefit from drafting a “Memorandum of Understanding” that outlines key aspects of the project and includes structures for how to shift plans if necessary. Through a sharing of our stakes in the project, we can better hope to create, as one community partner put it, “win-win” situations (Renee Kirkpatrick, interview transcript).

Motivation: Meeting the interests of the community partner requires meeting the interests of students

In the questionnaire and interview sessions, community collaborators reiterated a primary motivation for their participation is the enthusiasm and energy that students bring to consultant projects. In fact, the former community partner who pilot tested the questionnaire added, “Bringing new energy and enthusiasm to my organization’s program” as one of the options that motivate nonprofit staff participation. A majority of the community partners selected this option as one of their “motivations for working with University of Arizona students on their business writing projects” (questionnaire responses). In the words of Denise Spartonos, “I get a lot of energy from student ideas and when they come around” (interview transcript). In her response to the factors she considers when deciding to collaborate with students, Jane Martin of the Duck Foundation Food Bank states, “I like to see energy” (interview transcript), and in the open-ended responses to the questionnaire, community partners reported they were most satisfied with the collaboration when students “show a genuine interest” (Hasman, questionnaire), “show excitement about their involvement” (Kirkpatrick, questionnaire), and “show empathy and interest in the high school students and their community” (Johnson, questionnaire). In fact, Lydia Moore of Educating Parents explained that she sometimes chooses not to work with students who lack this motivation: “We also don’t have a lot of patience when it seems like it is just an exercise. If the passion or interest is missing, we don’t manufacture it” (interview transcript). Nina Libson with Mentoring Children places a similarly significant emphasis on the issue of enthusiasm, arguing that,

I think that—and I do this when I hire a staff person—I hire on personality because I firmly believe that I can teach the tasks. I can teach someone how to do this stuff [the work on nonprofit projects], but I can’t teach you to have contagious enthusiasm about your work. (interview transcript)

She describes valuing student energy over the final deliverable, defining her key stake as:

[t]he reception, the feedback, the interaction with the students and if it is positive. They may come into me with something that isn’t sharp and polished, but if they have really been enthusiastic in working with me, then I respond more to the person than I do the product. (interview transcript)

This attention to student energy was a factor that can be easily taken for granted by those of us teaching technical communication courses. Because we work semester after semester with many engaged, motivated students, we can overlook the ways that their energy for such work is a primary factor in community partner participation.

Although nonprofit staff valued the motivation of students, they also expressed an understanding that this motivation stemmed from student investment. Implicitly, the community partner participants noted the positive impact of students defining their own stakes in the project. Lydia Moore of Educating Parents commented that “I want them also to see how it [the project] is going to help them and to value what they will gain from the experience” (interview transcript). Mutuality helps define a positive service-learning collaboration between students and community partners. When asked about her main reason for working with student-consultants, Lydia Moore asserted that:

It [her motivation] is the ability to work with students and help them fulfill the commitment they have made to the class or to a project, but we are not just in this to give. We want a mutual relationship. . . I want them also to see how it is going to help them. To value what they will gain from the experience. (interview transcript)

Community partners did not suggest that students should be looking to achieve the exact same goal as them. Instead, nonprofit staff claimed that students who were able to set their own learning objectives were also more likely to foster a satisfying partner–student rapport and in turn create a better product. Jane Martin with the Duck Foundation distinguished service-learning projects from student volunteer projects, noting that “there was something at stake [with student-consultants] and that makes all the difference” (interview transcript). She followed up this assessment by noting that

student consultants need to be honest and open about the type of goals and experiences that they want and need. Jane Martin affirmed that:

if the project I suggest doesn't resonate with them [students] or they can't get excited about it, I would rather they tell me so someone else can get the chance to do that work and we can move on to something that would be satisfying for them. (interview transcript)

Community participants in this research agreed that student commitment was significant to their desire and even ability to work well with students.

Community partner interest in working with energetic, bright, and engaged students places more responsibility on the service-learning instructors. Because nonprofit staff may assume that students are motivated and engaged, community partners may be disappointed if students do not participate in a manner that meets this expectation. Although we instructors and administrators may have pedagogical, professional, and even personal stakes in designing and supervising service-learning pedagogies, we may assume that our own positions and rationales are transparent when it comes to teaching such projects. Matthews and Zimmerman (1999) talked at length about students who feel disengaged with service-learning efforts because it can appear that these collaborations “fall outside the boundary” of technical communication (p. 392), and other students may have engaged the project with enthusiasm because they identify their contribution as charity (p. 392). Our efforts must acknowledge the range of potential student responses by discussing community partner motivations with students, articulating that student energy and ideas are valued by nonprofit staff. This means, however, that instructors have to learn more about community partners and work to ensure that the community partner motivation and project expectations are integrated into the service-learning practices.

Technical communication instructors teaching service-learning projects must strive to establish an environment for mutual stake holding. This position may be achieved in a variety of ways from allowing students to select their own community partners—in hopes of providing a stronger commitment to the project—to understanding our own local classroom and university contexts where some students may be reluctant to participate because of either their own resource constraints or even their status as clientele of the nonprofit organizations. We also must understand that student learning goals need not be exactly the same as the goals of the community partner or teacher. Students can work on service-learning projects with a set of articulated purposes that are not exactly the same as our own.

Conclusion

Technical communication teachers and scholars have demonstrated a continued and growing commitment to service-learning projects by writing textbooks based on community-based pedagogies (Bowdon & Scott, 2003) and building the new Service-Learning Opportunities in Technical Communication Database to facilitate the process of matching students with community partners from across the country (Youngblood & Mackiewicz, 2013). Our commitment, however, includes key players: the community partners. As we continue to pursue relationships with nonprofit partners we must question the ways these partners are represented by us and our students. Introducing students to ever-complex interpretations of partner contexts, rhetorical situations, and civic responsibility are just a few of the goals that help to evince technical communication teachers' own commitment to service-learning pedagogies. Presently, we may be able to better achieve these goals through a deeper, richer understanding of community partner motivations, expectations, and roles in service-learning projects. Through our starting research on community partner stakes in such projects, we have found a need to be more careful in our own casting of community partner roles. Our findings indicate that community partner stakes often include but move beyond the need for an efficient and well-planned production of a deliverable: community partners are also considering the resources that must be expended in student collaborations, their roles as educators, the

need for flexibility, and the importance of tapping into student stakes and motivations. We decided to present our findings from this article as a set of tensions or paradoxes rather than simple recommendations to illustrate the complexities of community partner positions, and to suggest that these tensions must be actively negotiated with particular partners—there is no single representation of what community collaborators desire, and no comprehensive, “universal” set of rules for creating successful partnerships. There is also no easy answer to how technical communication should prioritize the multiple stakes of students, faculty, nonprofit partners, and others, when these stakes are in conflict. In fact, one common critique of stakeholder theory is that it cannot provide a clear-cut set of recommendations for weighting the interests of stakeholders when they are in tension (Donaldson, 1989, p. 45). What stakeholder theory does do, however, is bring these complications to the fore by calling for explicit exploration and consideration of the stakes of various participants.

Although there are no simple answers to including community partner perspectives in our service-learning pedagogies, we must integrate pedagogical practices that emphasize community partner stakes. One way of helping to achieve a more subtle, rhetorically situated understanding of community partners for instructors and students is to open lines of communication about the community partners’ interests in service-learning projects. Calling and e-mailing community partners with our goals for the project and our contact information, setting up a shared digital work space (Walsh, 2010), inviting them to visit our classrooms if time permits, and asking them to share their feedback throughout the project: all can be means of opening dialogue with community partners.

Another way of gaining a richer perspective on community partner stakes is to build relationships with community collaborators beyond a single course. Technical communication teachers and programs can establish a database of community partners with contact information, partner goals, and the scope of the partners’ projects. This resource can be a useful tool to help instructors situate their own work with service-learning projects. Building relationships with a community partner over multiple semesters is a useful strategy for strengthening collaborations, allowing overextended technical communication instructors to conserve the labor that would be required to continually initiate new relationships and learn different organizational contexts while enabling partnerships to respond to feedback from nonprofit collaborators about how the service-learning course could better meet community stakes.

We also must honor our commitment to community partners and teach our students to do the same. In other words, community participants were negatively affected by students who did not follow up on initial inquiries or did not provide them with a deliverable. And lastly, we must conduct more technical communication service-learning research to include community partner perspectives. Continued, broad-based research with community partners on their views of service-learning collaborations will help us further strengthen the many benefits of this curricular approach to teaching technical communication and help us create innovative ways of integrating rhetorical practices into our pedagogies for the betterment of students and their community partners.

Notes

1. A note on terminology: *client-consultant projects* is a common way of describing pedagogies in which students create deliverables for partner organizations outside of the classroom. This term is wider, because it incorporates partnerships with university or industry partners in addition to nonprofit collaborators, and it may resist the charity frame that can occur with the term *service* in *service-learning*. However, using the term *client* invokes relationships similar to those in the business world and may therefore encourage the hyperpragmatist frame we critique in this article. For this reason, we primarily use the term **service-learning**, rather than *client project* even though we acknowledge the challenges scholars have made to the term *service-learning* (Hessler, 2000; Keith, 1998).
2. Blakeslee’s article reports on a project with business clients rather than nonprofit clients.
3. See also Dush (2014) for a description of a project in which students and nonprofit staff together worked around hyperpragmatism by critically developing and deploying new media projects.

4. This pseudonym was selected by the interview participant and reflects her commitment to her work.
5. In early meetings with partners, technical communication teachers can also frame service-learning so that partners understand collaborations will not always result in usable projects, as this is student rather than professional work.

Notes on contributors

Amy C. Kimme Hea is Associate Dean for Instruction in Social and Behavioral Sciences and associate professor of rhetoric, composition, and the teaching of English at the University of Arizona. Her scholarly interests include computers and composition, writing program administration, and technical communication. She is an executive board member for the Council of Writing Program Administrators and serves in an officer role on the Consortium of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition.

Rachael Wendler Shah is an assistant professor of composition and rhetoric at University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She formerly coordinated the University of Arizona Writing Program's Wildcat Writers service-learning initiative with local high schools, and she has published on service-learning ethics, technology, and progressive-era engaged pedagogies.

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