What's at Stake? Strategies for Developing Stakeholder Relationships in Service-Learning Projects

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DEVELOPING STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS: WHAT'S AT STAKE?

ABSTRACT
Reflecting upon current research and my own pedagogical practices teaching and administering client-consultant projects in business and technical writing courses, I outline how critical stakeholder theory can help to establish an ethic of care among the participants in client-consultant projects and connect students' professional and civic lives.

Service-learning, "real world" projects, and client-consultant models, all are emerging as significant pedagogical contributions to professional writing. From business and technical writing service courses to undergraduate professional writing courses for majors, instructors are finding ways of moving professional writing classes out of the rooms or labs in which they are taught. Rather than relying on cases, simulations, or textbook assignments, professional writing instructors are using service-learning and client-consultant models to engage students in "real world" contexts. As much of the recent professional writing scholarship outlines, teaching such projects can provide an "actual" rhetorical situation, highlight the importance of civic awareness and responsibility, and hone problem-solving and critical thinking skills (Huckin; Spears; Tucker, McCarthy, Hoxmeier, and Lenk; Wickliff). Less well discussed, however, are the challenges we face as instructors and administrators when we take on the teaching and supervising of client-consultant projects. In their study of service-learning in one of their courses at Brigham Young University, Catherine Matthews and Beverly Zimmerman emphasize such issues as "defining service as charity, working with students who felt frustrated with their roles in a nonacademic setting, and counseling students who experience group conflict" (391). While these challenges are balanced by many of the same benefits already noted, Matthews and Zimmerman nonetheless raise important questions about the experiences of students participating in such projects. James Dubinsky also urges professional writing instructors to think through the problematics of student assumptions about helper, charity, and practical applications of client

work and to "expand the notion of service by working at the hyphen" of service and learning (70). For service-learning to develop and be seen as a viable academic endeavor, we need to complicate assumptions that service-learning is about "vocational training" or "do-goodism" (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters 15). If we are to strive for more critical and rhetorical instantiations of client-based projects, we should encourage students to consider the complexities of their professional subjectivities, civic responsibilities, and communication practices.

Like so many of my professional writing colleagues, I have experienced both the benefits and complications of creating, facilitating, and supervising client-consultant projects. At Purdue University, I taught a required web development client project in my junior-level technical writing courses, created my own client-consultant project for undergraduate professional writing majors, and mentored new professional writing instructors to teach client-consultant projects. Currently at the University of Arizona, I teach another self-developed client-consultant project in my junior-level business writing courses, and as an administrator of business writing courses, I supervise other instructors' teaching of client-consultant projects as well. Based upon these experiences with service-learning, I recently have become concerned with how to situate the complex relationships established through client-consultant work without defining those relationships in easy, transparent, or universal ways.

While my discussion here attends to student roles and expectations, I want to emphasize that we as professional writing teachers and scholars also must reflect on the complex relationships among all persons involved in client-consultant projects. Those persons—students, teachers, clients, community members, volunteers, and administrators among others—affect one another and the work we do together. As many of us know, however, the impacts of these relationships can become obscured as the daily and weekly tasks of the project move to the fore.

For example, teachers might not consider the role of the client-contact person negotiating the on-site aspects of the project or university administrators might not know how to evaluate or support teachers, students, and community members participating in service-learning projects. All in all, each constituency can lose sight of the larger relationships being negotiated through client-consultant work.

To create an analytical framework to consider this complex network of participants, I attempt to situate participants as stakeholders: "a stakeholder in an organization is (by its definition) any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objective" (Freeman 46). In its critical interpretation, stakeholder theory is grounded in Foucauldian and feminist ethics that support local dialogue where "good" is constantly being made and remade based upon the context. In this article, I first define stakeholder theory and its usefulness to complicate, rather than mask, the complexity of client-based relationships. Then, I outline the major components of my own client-consultant project. While stakeholder theory applies to the interrelationships of all parties affected by the client-consultant projects in my courses, I specifically attend to students and their roles as stakeholders. Drawing upon student examples, I review both a professional inventory assignment and stakeholder mapping practice that help to foreground stakeholder relationships for students in the course. Through these assignments and class discussions, students begin to identify and question the types of skills valued by their professions, situate their own commitments in their professional and civic lives, and engage other stakeholders in the client-consultant project as equally, although differently, invested participants. By discussing some of my own pedagogical struggles to enact a critical interrogation of client-consultant relationships, I hope to contribute to our on-going discussion of our service-learning professional writing pedagogies.

DEFINING STAKEHOLDER THEORIES

Prompted by R. Edward Freeman's 1984 book, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, stakeholder theory emerged as both a foundation for business ethics and a topic for empirical research in the business disciplines. As a counter to more traditional shareholder theories that emphasize the relationship of shareholders and a corporate entity, stakeholder theory demands a complex view of business constituencies and their relationships. In recent years, stakeholder theory has grown with "about a dozen books and more than 100 articles" (Donaldson and Preston 65). This growth of literature on stakeholder theory has not gone either unnoticed or unquestioned in business and legal communities. From management to finance, business theorists have defined, critiqued, and argued about stakeholder theory and its potential contributions to business practices. Thus, stakeholder theory, like most theories, cannot be represented as a single, unified school in either its definition or deployment. For the purposes of thinking about the client-consultant projects, I concentrate on the major aspects of stakeholder theory rather than providing an extensive explanation of its application to fiduciary responsibility and legal accountability. My presentation, then, demonstrates stakeholder theory's potential as a framework to delineate relationships in professional writing client-consultant projects.

To better understand *stake*holder theory, we first must understand *share*holder theory. Shareholder theory was, and still is in many business circles, a way to understand the responsibilities of corporations to the community at large. Often defined at the "Friedman Paradigm" after its proponent, Milton Friedman, shareholder theory argues 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" (32). Friedman's view is supported by decades of

corporate legal histories and practices, tracing back to the famous 1919 legal case of *Dodge Brothers v. Ford Motor Company*. Suing Henry Ford, the Dodge Brothers argued that his business practices were negatively affecting the interests of the corporation's shareholders, chief among them Horace and John Dodge. The Michigan Supreme Court sided with the Dodges, requiring Ford to pay a special dividend to shareholders and stating in its judgment that "while Ford's sentiments about his employees and customers were nice, a business is for the profit of its stockholders" (Dodge Brothers). In effect, the court's ruling granted permission for corporations to provide for their shareholders over all other constituencies. To this day, legal and economic theorists continue to support the tradition of shareholder theory as a basis for social, legal, and civic action (Coelho, McClure, and Spry; Jennings).

The primary challenge to shareholder theory is stakeholder theory. This theory, as suggested previously, argues that corporations must consider a range of persons and entities who affect or are affected by company decisions. Freeman suggests, for example, that shareholders, investors, employees, customers, suppliers, and residents of the community, all qualify as stakeholders. Using Freedman's articulation of stakeholder theory as a means to oppose shareholder theory, others interested in refiguring corporate responsibility, social action, and ethics turned their attention to developing stakeholder theory as a methodological framework for further research into business practices. Notably, Thomas Donaldson and Lee E. Preston propose that stakeholder theory can be classified in three significant ways: 1) *descriptive* which defines the corporation, 2) *instrumental* which measures the achievement between stakeholder practices and stakeholder goals, and 3) *normative* which argues for the legitimacy and intrinsic value of all stakeholders even those groups or individuals who might not necessarily forward the interests of the corporation (65-67). Donaldson and Preston assert that, while these three classifications are

mutually supportive, the normative aspects of their system are at the center of stakeholder theory (74). Following a similar line of argument, Thomas M. Jones claims that "*firms that contract (through their managers) with their stakeholders on the basis of mutual trust and cooperation will have a competitive advantage over firms that do not*" (emphasis in original 422). These articulations of stakeholder theory, however, still posit the control of stakeholder relationships to be with the *managers* of the corporation. That is, management is supposed to consider other constituencies in its decision-making processes and policy initiatives, but those other constituencies rarely have any direct input in the actual development and implementation of corporate agendas. Thus, despite the fact that the normative view of stakeholder theory positions other members of the stakeholder community as valuable, there is no real evidence that management will enact practices that support those members' needs.

With this realization, more critical perspectives on stakeholder theory have emerged. For example, Brian K. Burton and Craig P. Dunn argue for situating stakeholder practices in feminist ethics that reject traditional ethical paradigms that rely on a view of knowledge as abstract, universal, impartial, and rational (134). Burton and Dunn further suggest that feminist ethics can inform stakeholder theory through a discussion of responsibilities and concrete, lived realities versus rights and abstract principles. As continuing proponents of stakeholder theory, Freeman and Daniel Gilbert, Jr., together call for a rethinking of corporate systems declaring that "principles not of competition and justice but cooperation and caring" be the ways we develop business practices and policies (9). In a similar move to refocus stakeholder theory away from only management's role and fictional scenarios, Jerry M. Calton and Nancy B. Kurland posit that stakeholder theory must be predicated on a "postmodern epistemology" (164). Requiring both a decentralization of management voice and an inclusion of dialogue where multiple voices are

heard to achieve "shared goals and mutual growth," Calton and Kurland draw attention to the

way that grand narratives about management and community can disallow for critical social

action (170). Further, Mark Starik contends that environmental concerns must influence

definitions of stakeholder theory to include non-human nature (207). As Starik urges, the

inclusion of non-human nature in stakeholder theory recognizes the important relationship

between business and the environment; acknowledges the ethical and socio-emotional, legal, and

physical aspects of interrelationships; and affords an opportunity to bring more "voices" to the

issue of who affects and is affected by corporate environmental practices (212-213). These and

other critical perspectives on stakeholder theory demonstrate the many debates surrounding the

theory's definition and application (Boatright; Reed). They also reflect a growing concern for

business members to enact civic responsibility and contribute to the social and emotional well

being of their local communities in critical ways.

CRITICAL STAKEHOLDER THEORY & SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS

Stakeholder theory can serve as a means to articulate the complexity of relationships

among project participants and the community. Applying stakeholder theory to account for

relationships other than those in for-profit markets is a productive extension of the theory's

application. As part of their construction of an ethic of care in stakeholder theory, Burton and

Dunn argue for compensated release time for corporate representatives who want to perform

volunteer work and engage in other community activities ("Stakeholder Interests"). They also

note that stakeholder theory predicated on an ethic of care model requires that members of

corporate organizations and non-profits assess their expertise and experience in order to make

the most valuable contributions to the community. In his work on *pro bono* desktop publishing

service-learning projects, Gary R. Hafer argues that connecting student professional talents with

organizations in need of those talents can help "students to write in the working world, to achieve civic awareness in their communities, and to address the needs of local nonprofit agencies" (412). Discussions of corporate social responsibility, civic action, ethic of care, and critical stakeholder perspectives can allow us professional writing service-learning teachers and administrators a way of challenging the problematic binary of activism and vocationalism.

In addition to my own application of critical stakeholder theory as a means to connect students with their non-profit clients, it also can be deployed to address the diversity of relationships being negotiated in other service-learning models. In his early introduction of service-learning into technical writing pedagogy, Thomas Huckin defined service-learning as "a form of experiential education in which students apply their academic skills to the needs of local nonprofit agencies" (50). To date, service-learning projects in professional writing have emerged to encompass projects for small business organizations, corporate organizations, university members, and campus organizations. In their recent article on service-learning, Robbin D. Crabtree and David Alan Sapp articulate three different examples of service-learning practices in professional writing. These examples include clients such as a university research team, several non-profit organizations, and small business where the instructor is also a volunteer. The student participants also represent a range of positions: undergraduate research assistants, graduate students in a communication and social change course, and undergraduates in technical writing service course. Knowing that professional writing service-learning projects extend to such a diverse group of clients and students means that instructors must think about the divergent, sometimes conflicting, investments of the participants. Rather than assuming that differing investments must be reconciled, critical stakeholder theory presupposes that those differing "stakes" must be acknowledged and that dialogue and reflection are critical to understanding and

working across those differences. The theory also positions those differences within a discussion of professional life. As Crabtree and Sapp denote, the professional aspects of service-learning pedagogies extend not only to student participants but also instructors who can present, publish, and receive service credit for their work (420). Because service-learning projects are situated across overlapping professional and civic communities, we professional service-learning instructors need frameworks, such as critical stakeholder theory, for thinking through participant relationships.

THE CLIENT-CONSULTANT PROJECT & JOB ANALYSIS UNIT

Before I turn to the specific role of stakeholder relationships in my pedagogy, I want to outline the semester-long client-consultant project that I teach. Spanning the entire sixteen-week semester, the client-consultant project is separated into four units. As I explain to students, such divisions are artificial since their work in the course is intimately connected both practically and theoretically. Before students join teams or meet their clients, they individually prepare a job analysis unit that includes a scannable resume, three job advertisements, and a professional inventory document. During unit two, students bid for clients and are placed into teams with one or two other members of the course based upon their ranking of the clients, rationales for client selection, and desire to work with particular class members. In this unit, student teams create emails of inquiry, conduct field research, prepare field notes, and draft and deliver client proposals outlining their writing projects. After student teams and their clients negotiate any potential changes to the type of written documents, plans, budgets, or other aspects of the project, students begin unit three. In this unit, teams develop the actual document for their organizations and deliver oral progress reports to our class. After exchanging multiple project drafts among teams, their client contacts, other members of the organization, and me, students

work to complete the documents by the end of our semester and prepare unit four. This last unit includes a self- and peer-evaluation, a thank you email addressed to the client contacts and organization, and a reflective assignment where students individually draft their reflections in the medium (web page, newsletter, report, etc.) that best suits their own process. I support the client-consultant project through a general timeline, workshops, research days, and conferences. These various pedagogical forums allow students and me to discuss and question our experiences.

To prepare students for their roles as consultants, I ask them to analyze their own professional commitments and assess their professions' practices and values. Insight into their chosen professions and potential career responsibilities provides students with the means to contemplate their roles in an organization, explore the values implied by their professions, and conceptualize their potential impacts on the stakeholders of that community. For most students in the business writing course, this understanding is neither natural nor given. In other words, many of the students have little knowledge of the responsibilities that await them in their future day-to-day professional lives or how those responsibilities reflect the values of their chosen professions.

A majority of the students enrolled in the business writing service courses at University of Arizona are juniors in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, which requires either business or technical writing for all its majors. Representing such diverse disciplines as family studies, retail and consumer science, and race track industry, students in the course have equally diverse professional aspirations from childcare administrator to product merchandiser to racing secretary and trainer. In addition to students from this college, a handful of English, business, journalism, and fine arts majors enroll in the class. I situate critical stakeholder theory through a professional analysis project—one where students identify their commitments and priorities as future members of their profession. This emphasis on students' future professional lives is not to

suggest that we in the professional writing community work toward a skill-based model. Instead the assignment is intended to help students position their client work as both civic responsibility and professional development. That is, rather than imply that students' roles as citizens are some how detached from their future professional lives, I want to foreground how their own professional commitments are always already influenced by civic life and participation with a range of stakeholders in the community.

SITUATING STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS: THE PROFESSIONAL INVENTORY

At its most practical, the professional inventory allows us as a class to outline expectations about the client project. Since this inventory is completed *before* students ever meet their non-profit clients, it sets the stage for their consulting. Just as Melody Bowdon and J. Blake Scott suggest that instructors prepare students to avoid the "seduction of empathy" that can lead unrealistic expectations, I too ask students to think about a reciprocal relationship with their client and others in the community (5). As part of the job analysis unit, each student first creates a scannable resume and collects three job advertisements for a specific professional category. While students end up with usable scannable resumes for themselves and some even identify internships and actual positions that they later apply for, the main purpose of this unit is the assessment of their future working lives. Students compare the experience evinced by their current resumes with the desired duties, tasks, abilities, and interpersonal traits emphasized in their selected job advertisements. Knowing that job advertisements can be ideal and even incomplete versions of a particular professional position, I recommend that students talk with others who work in professions that they wish to enter and gather more information. Students must think about some of the demands placed upon them in their future professions—to make more "real" their future work-a-day worlds.

Through this assignment, students outline a range of professional positions such as buyers, public relations specialists, and technical editors, and thus their professional inventories vary widely. As we discuss their professional inventories as a class and in small groups, students start questioning the potential realities of their future work lives. Since the students have diverse career aspirations, they uncover how their peers' value and prioritize their future roles. One student entering the accounting field offered this listing as her top three priorities of the twenty requested on the inventory:

> Continue working on people skills – listen to people, provide appropriate responses, positive body language, positive words, maintain eye contact, maintain interest in the conversation, help others or be a resource able to point them in the right direction, remember names.

> Develop a better understanding of diversity issues facing people today (this works hand in hand with people skills) – Take a class or attend a seminar on diversity, challenge yourself to examine your vocabulary and behavior, use campus resources such as the Diversity coordinator for Residence Life, *Name Omitted*.

> Develop a better understanding of the issues facing auditors in today's world – interview current auditors and ask what they see as the big issues they are facing, read business publications such as the *Wall Street Journal* and *News Week*, collect articles about auditors and auditing firms that are in the news, develop a better understanding of the role that Arthur Andersen played in the downfall of Enron, develop a better understanding of Arthur Andersen's own downfall, research other firms to get a better idea of where they stand on the market, visit accounting firm's websites regularly to keep on top of what is going on like Pricewatterhouse Coopers, Ernst and Young and Deloitte and Touché (Student Professional Inventory).

In talking about their exploration process, students often share new understandings and considerations about their future job searches and professional lives beyond their list of priorities. For example, through her job advertisement search, one student located the position of "child life specialist." She explained that as a one-time nursing major turned family studies major, this professional position offers her an opportunity to attend to the emotional and developmental needs of children and families facing healthcare stays and potentially stressful

health issues. Before her analysis through the inventory, the student had not known such a position even existed.

Still other students become uneasy about certain aspects of what they had thought would be their future career paths. One such student wanting to pursue a career in public policy determined he would first rather work in the non-profit sector as a mental health advocate before attending graduate school in public policy. As he explained, graduate work would be more meaningful to him if he could connect it to "real" life experiences in the field. Since yet another aspect of the inventory requires students to propose plans, they outline workshops, internships, volunteer opportunities, courses, and other ways to connect their future professional lives with their current day-to-day lives.

Let me stress that students' identifying certain aspects of their professions, while important, is only the initial step in developing a critical understanding of how their professions will impact their civic lives. After each student identifies specific skills and attributes, he or she then can work on the more complex task of theorizing how those practices represent certain values and affect different stakeholders. Thomas P. Miller aptly argues that "[i]f we are to teach technical writing as social practice, we must discover ways of developing students' ability to interpret how traditional values and assumptions speak to practical problems. We can foster such 'practical wisdom' by developing a pedagogy that contributes to our students' ability to locate themselves and their professional communities in the larger public context" (68). Since many students have little practical knowledge of what their working lives will be like post-graduation, the professional inventory makes their future roles less abstract and prompts them to question their investments in their professions. By consider their needs, goals, values, commitments, and

roles as professionals, students begin thinking in terms of learning more *with* other stakeholders in the project.

As we talk about critical stakeholder theory and the goal of establishing reciprocal relationships, students are also encouraged to think about how their work affects and is affected by others. Much of our discussion centers on how to establish trust and a mutual sense of value in the work that will be done in collaboration with their clients. We also review professional and civic connections in the larger context of their future professions. To begin this conversation, we read reports on the Domini 400 Social Index, which rates companies on their social and environmental responsibility (http://www.domini.com/domini-funds/index.htm#), and I ask them to comment on the ideas and philosophies of organizations like Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), which offers "companies of all sizes and sectors to achieve success in ways that demonstrate respect for ethical values, people, communities and the environment" (http://www.bsr.org/Meta/About/index.cfm). With the exception of the family studies majors in the course, most students have little experience connecting their future professional lives and civic responsibility. They voice concerns, as the student professional inventory example denotes, over corporate "wrong-doing" and recent cases of corporate corruption, yet they talk about these cases in detached ways—never necessarily imagining their own roles in corporations or other business environments. Although student work on the inventory and our discussions about corporate social responsibility do not resolve potential problematics with connections between professional and civic life, these activities allow us to question models of professional responsibility that emphasis only the corporation or its management. Further, as a class, we reflect on ways to establish client-consultant relationships that strive for dialogue, mutuality, and reciprocity.

MAPPING STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

As part of the students' field research, they are asked to move beyond their own individual contributions to think about the range of participants in the client project. To encourage a sense of the "network" of participants, student teams create maps of stakeholders. From themselves, their client contact, other non-profit workers, the non-profit's clients, the families of those clients, non-profit volunteers, non-profit donors, other related community organizations, their classmates, and me among others, students articulate a range of stakeholders thinking about how their work and relationship impacts others. A partnership of two students[1] developed a chart of their stakeholders to include:

Example Stakeholder Chart					
Student One	Volunteer Coordinator	Volunteers	Program Clients	Board of Directors	Granting Agencies
Student Two	Program Coordinator	Program Staff	Families of Program Clients	National Non-Profit Organization	Financial Donors
Instructor	Program Coordinator				
Class Members	Program Coordinator				

This chart represents just some of the participants who had a "stake" in the annual report project that this team was developing. In this map, the student team lists two of the client organization's main contacts for their project—the volunteer coordinator and one of the program coordinators.

In the "Reflection Section," I will further articulate the significance of this chart to the actual work accomplished by the team. For now, I want to explain that from such maps—not all of the students choose to represent the stakeholders in such a hierarchical form—we, as a class, discuss how project stakeholders have different roles, interests, and goals in relationship to the

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[1] "Student One" contributed the professional inventory example (see the previous section), and "Student Two" contributed a reflection on her relationship (see this section).

project and the organization. As just one example of their consideration of stakeholders, many of the students do not meet donors through their work with the project, but they invariably think about the ways their client deliverable can impact the non-profit's financial support. Students also acknowledge differences in their own investments and commitments to the project. For example, "Student Two" working in this partnership explained in her reflective project that "[t]he client project also taught me how to collaborate with someone who has a very different work style than I do. I worked great with my partner, but I had to learn how to not procrastinate since [*Name Omitted*] is much more organized than I am. I was able to teach myself how to communicate with someone who is very different than myself" (Student Reflective Project). Just like this student, others in the class discuss learning to work with and learn from others— teammates, client contacts, volunteers at the organization, and me. Still other student teams discuss the impact of their projects on lawyers, clients who use the organization's services, other non-profits in the community, and their own families. For example, some student teams have worked with their client organizations' lawyers on the details of policies written in handbooks and manuals they are creating. Other students note their personal commitments to work with the organization because they have a family member who needs the organization's services or who contributes his or her volunteer time to a different branch of the national organization. As students begin mapping out the relationships and visualizing them, they quickly learn that the impact of their project can be more far-reaching than they initially imagined. Through this mapping practice, students are prompted to think about the complex network of relationships that are represented by their work and the various investments that these stakeholders might have.

APPLYING STAKEHOLDER CONSIDERATIONS TO CLIENT-CONSULTANT PROJECTS

The professional inventory, mapping exercise, and discussions on professional and civic life help guide students in their work with clients. Keeping in mind my emphasis on the student application of critical stakeholder theory, I offer an example from a three-person project team working with a non-profit organization that hosts outdoor activities for at-risk youth. In their initial interview with the non-profit's director, the team learned that he was frustrated by the lack of volunteer commitment to the organization. The director explained that while his organization had sufficient financial support through a partnership with a state-funded agency, it often lacked volunteer help to host events. To promote the organization, the student team proposed developing a brochure that could be circulated in the local community to help gain the much-needed volunteers. The director agreed that a brochure would be an excellent means of soliciting new volunteers, but he also suggested that the team develop a two-page volunteer contract, a document requesting that current and future volunteers commit to the program for one year and sign on for a specific number of weekly volunteer hours. The director speculated that a contract might resolve his problems of maintaining volunteer commitment.

After leaving their meeting with the director, the team reflected on the director's situation and considered whether or not he, they, and other stakeholders would best be served through the development of a contract. Wanting more guidance, the team planned a conference with me to talk about their assumptions and brainstorm projects to address the director's concerns. In that meeting, the three team members explained their growing unease with the contract approach to establishing volunteer investment in the organization. Their interview with the director reveals his vision for the document:

> a sales pitch to buy into the organization. I would love it to be a contract, but it can't be done legally. There should be some responsibility statement or consequence statement. It should make the point, "if you don't sponsor us, then don't waste our time" but in a friendlier way. (Interview Transcript)

After considering the director's goals, the students wondered about the rhetorical effectiveness of a document articulating *only* the responsibilities of the volunteers. Based upon the director's input that his volunteer pool includes male outdoor enthusiasts between the ages 18-55, the students counted themselves as part of the director's target volunteer pool. The students started brainstorming what type of information might encourage them to "buy into the organization" as the director hoped. Rather than stressing the workload, the document could emphasize the rewards of participating in the program. They also speculated that the contract language might make the relationship between mentors and mentees seem more like a *legal* obligation rather than a meaningful friendship. In our meeting, the team and I continued to discuss the range of stakeholders invested in the situation: current and future volunteers, at-risk youth participating in the program, the director, board members, the students themselves, lawyers, and other non-profit agencies. The students clearly wanted to accommodate the director's need for explicit volunteer responsibilities but felt the "friendlier way" of doing so could be achieved through attention to the *benefits* of participation.

What struck me about our meeting was the students' struggle to meet the director's goals without compromising the needs of other stakeholders involved in the project. The students identified multiple constituencies and their stakes in the organization: the director and his anxieties to gain volunteer support, the future volunteers and their hopes to create reciprocal relationships, donors and board members of the organization and their goals to gain future funding for the organization, and their own interests in thinking more rhetorically about the client context and communication situation. Instead of either arguing against writing any document to help foster volunteer commitment or telling the director they were not qualified to write a contract, the student team decided to propose writing a volunteer orientation packet. In an

attempt to acknowledge the director's frustrations, they noted that this packet could include an explanation of the different volunteer opportunities, the positive impact of volunteer contributions, the rewards of volunteering with the organization, and a tear-off page to be signed by the volunteer denoting that he had read the volunteer orientation packet. They even consulted with me about the best way to recommend a new category of volunteers for the organization— one-time event volunteers who could work at events on an as-needed, as-mutually-convenient basis. Again, seeing themselves as part of the director's target audience of potential volunteers, the students understood that they and their college peers would likely contribute to such one-time opportunities as opposed to committing their time on a once-weekly, year-long basis. The students assessed that such volunteers could ensure the hosting of planned events and even help spread a positive message about the non-profit and its activities.

Our consultation demonstrates the students' commitment to understand the complex relationships of the many stakeholders working directly or indirectly on this project. Often citing the ways they wanted to make a positive contribution to the organization and meet the director's requests, these students also had the opportunity to work toward some of their own commitments of "establishing client rapport, being more confidant, solving problems before they escalate, being open to other's contributions, and building better team relationships" (Student Professional Inventories). In the end, the student team's memo to the director articulated their proposed volunteer orientation packet citing positive ways such a packet could gain volunteer support for the organization. Even their choice of memo reflected their concern for the director and other stakeholders as they explained to me that the director could both share the document with the board members with whom he frequently consulted and think through the team's ideas without having to respond "on the spot" in a face-to-face meeting. The memo yielded positive results.

The director agreed with the students' proposal, and the student team completed the brochure and volunteer orientation packet for the organization.

My goals for situating critical stakeholder theory as a framework for client-consultant projects are to encourage students to establish thoughtful, reciprocal relationships with their clients and to understand that their professional and civic lives need not be separate. This team's investment in the project, their relationship with the client, and the impact of their project on all persons involved reflects these aims. This student team and other teams in the course contemplated the potential effects of their projects for themselves, others in the community, and the organization's administrators, current and prospective volunteers, and clients. For some students, this work also reaffirmed or established a new desire to work within the community. One of the students on this team stressed in his reflective project that "[f]rom experiences with [Name Omitted], I understand the wide-range of rewards from this involvement. I hope to continue this involvement as I move on in my life and provide my resources to non-profit organizations, like [Name Omitted]" (Student Reflective Project). The other team members also emphasized the positive influence their work with the organization had on their sense of their role in the community. Further, in response to my email about any suggestions for future revisions to the project, the director praised the team for its work and stressed his gratitude to the students for providing him with usable projects. The openness of these participants is both part of what I strive for in the interactions among the project participants and an aspect of the ethic of care that critical stakeholder theory supports.

REFLECTING ON INTEGRATING STAKEHOLDER THEORY

In reflecting on my integration of critical stakeholder theory, I want to acknowledge that I am not naïve to the dangers of bringing such a theory to our field and applying it to our own

pedagogical situations. In my view, one of the most significant risks includes preparing students to be the kind of future employees who only participate in civic life as a means to increase the prestige of their employers. In his inquiry on the term *professional* as it is interpreted in the professional writing community, Brenton Faber, citing the work of Patricia Sullivan and Jim Porter, argues that "the role of the professional who communicates (my term) 'is not to better represent the company to the public but, rather, to help the company better understand the needs and interests of the public'" (311). These scholars point out the difficulty of situating our work within the network of corporate and academic professionalism. That is, stressing the relationship of students' professional lives and civic responsibilities may set up a situation where volunteerism and financial contributions are leveraged as "good business practices" versus civic contributions. Despite these risks, professional writing instructors cannot ignore the fact that for our students to strive for more democratic practices, they must first understand larger networks and diverse commitments. To be sure, the integration of critical stakeholder theory into service-learning projects must be motivated by the idea that critical stakeholder theory can ethically, critically, and rhetorically situate client-consultant work. Critical stakeholder theory, however, also must be continually refigured through a range of practices.

I see such opportunities to refigure my own practices of the professional inventory and mapping assignments. In the professional inventory assignment, I presently recommend that students talk with members of their future profession, but I do not require it. Gathering more information from practicing members of their fields, professional organizations, and research into the history of their professions can allow for more explicit critical and historical inquiry into the values of their field. Depending upon instructor goals, this work can make central the power dynamics and institutional relationships reflected in students' professions. Melinda Turnley and I

developed such a project during our work at Purdue University. Featured in *Professional Writing Online*, the Analysis of Professional Context project involves students in a range of data collection processes—interviews, observations, and textual analyses (Porter, Sullivan, and Johnson‑Eilola). Through such research, students draft a report analyzing their professional context through instantiations of power/authority, knowledge/expertise, status, worker-worker relationships, management-worker relationships, initiation of contact and discourse, and completion of contact and discourse. Adding a project where students more clearly connect aspects of their future professional roles with their client-consultant experiences can be a rich site for critical reflection and analysis.

At present, the mapping exercise occurs as students are conducting their initial field work with clients. While students found it useful in identifying key stakeholders, they did not continue these mapping practices throughout the semester. In the example provided previously, the students listed the stakeholders, but they were not advised to continue the mapping practices throughout the term. If they had, students would have been able to chart the changing stakeholder dynamics they experienced. In the chart noted previously, the two-person student team spent most of its pre-proposal time with the volunteer coordinator, but after the volunteer coordinator approved the proposal, the team worked almost exclusively with a program coordinator and her staff. The student team had briefly talked with the program coordinator prior to the development of its proposal, but the students had not learned, at that time, that the program coordinator would be consulting with her staff on all aspects of the annual report that the student team would be producing. While the students admired the program coordinator's integration of staff input, the team discovered both practical and political considerations related to the process. Practically, the students found that their project plan had not accounted for the difference in

management style—having worked with the volunteer coordinator and having received quick responses, the team scheduled the production of the project around the volunteer coordinator's pace. Politically, the students learned from the program director that her involvement of her staff, at least in part, grew from her own resentment of the volunteer coordinator's lack of asking others on her team to contribute. The students and I rearranged the client project deadlines, and this reconfiguration allowed the students to work productively on other course projects and still accommodate the management practices of the program coordinator. While the initial maps serve as a means to think about the potential participants and their investments in the project, multiple maps at different stages in the project can provide students with a visual history of the shifts in participants and relationships created throughout their work. In turn, students could use these visual histories as source of contemplation for their reflective projects. In fact, both students in this situation reflected on the need to meet with more stakeholders in the project throughout its development.

From my own work to incorporate critical stakeholder practices as a means to situate client-consultant relationships, I believe it best to integrate a range of practices *throughout* the project. This approach also can include incorporating more research into the clients' stake in the project. At present, I encourage students to develop interview questions that ask the client about that commitment. Those questions usually translate into the client contact's expectations for the project, his or her past experience working with student teams, and even the ways the project might impact the organization. If students shared their own professional inventories, maps, and other "behind the scenes" project materials with their clients, however, they might develop even stronger understandings of the purposes and impacts of their work for a range of stakeholders. To this end, members of the stakeholding community such as board members, volunteers, and

participants can be invited to speak to the class about their commitments. The exchange can extend further to those stakeholders like me and other university members who are invested in student learning and community-university collaborations. The list of potential changes to further integrate critical stakeholding practices can easily fill many pages, and those potential practices, just as those discussed here, would not be without their limitations.

In his well-cited discussion of rearticulating the role of the technical communication as symbolic-analytic work, Johndan Johnson-Eilola argues that we "connect education to work; question educational goals; question educational processes and infrastructures; build metaknowledge, network knowledge, and self-reflective practices; and rethink interdisciplinarity" (263). These same strategies apply to the effort of building pedagogical infrastructures for client-consultant projects. Those of us committed to client-consultant projects in our professional writing courses must resist either/or constructions of students as either professionals in need of highly sought after "excellent communication skills" or citizens delinquent in their contribution to the community. Instead, we must strive to connect students' roles as professionals and citizens and encourage them to see their work as bound in a range of complex power relations where outcomes and understandings are constrained but not predestined. Through critical stakeholder theory as one analytical practice among many, professional writing teachers and administrators can hope to establish an ethic of care among the participants in client-consultant projects and refigure the role of professional life to include civic responsibility.

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